Narratives of Decline in Roman and Chinese Historiography

by

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Dedication

I should like to express my gratitude and affection to those who inspired and sustained my commitment to graduate study. Among the ultimate inspirations for this dissertation is my uncle Neil H. Buchanan, who long ago formed my favorable first notions of higher scholarship and academia, and whose perseverance and rigor were an example for me. My thanks are also owed to Ross A. Buchanan for his insights into the process of authoring a dissertation and for his good example as a scholar, a thinker, and an older brother. David C. Mallinson and Benjamin D. Sironko have also been subtly but profoundly influential in the development and expression of my ideas over the years. But any merit in this project, and any worthwhile attainment I may here or henceforward claim, I owe to my parents Christine A. Ardley and Douglas R. Buchanan, to whom I dedicate this dissertation.

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Preface

This project touches upon three main topics: early Roman historiography, early Chinese historiography, and Tacitus's histories. Although the dissertation as written now ends with Tacitus, it was with Tacitus that I began my inquiry into historiographic narratives of decline. I desired to understand, from that incomparably subtle historian's occasional remarks about the further past, how he viewed the trajectory of Roman history. After taking a graduate seminar on 'temporality,' I began more generally to consider the question of how Tacitus treats time. Tacitus's rather striking statement at *Annales* 3.55.5, *Nec omnia apud priores meliora* ("Nor was everything better for earlier generations"), prompted me to think more broadly about the trope of decline in Roman historiography. As Tacitus's originality in this regard as compared with Livy and Sallust became clearer, the next question became whether he might have an underappreciated connection with earlier historians such as the elder Cato. This line of inquiry opened the second focus of the dissertation, the early Roman historians' notion of decline. It soon transpired that many excellent scholars have assumed that the early Roman historians wrote with a pessimistic view of Roman history akin to their eminent successors. This view, I soon found, did not conform with the surviving evidence and depended rather upon an assumed continuity with later historiography, as if some common denominator might be extrapolated from the surviving historians and inferred to obtain across the many lacunae in the extant Roman historiographic tradition. But the scantness of the evidence on early Roman historiography seemed an insuperable barrier to anything more than conjecture.

I soon found that Bruce Frier had offered an apparently unique observation about the value of comparative evidence for understanding the Roman annalistic pontifical chronicle, which was long (and, it may be, erroneously) viewed as integral to the later Roman "annalistic" tradition:

> If genuine progress is now to be made, it may well be necessary to set the chronicle within a broader context defined by comparable, but better known, preliterary chronicles from other societies. Admittedly, such comparative scholarship is both difficult and risky; our meager sources will hardly benefit from imposition of a preconceived model. But we may at least be able to establish a clearer notion of the limits of the possible.[1]

Inspired by this remark, I thought immediately of the relative abundance and approximate contemporaneity of Chinese historiography. This became the final layer of the dissertation, and the most difficult to integrate with the other two. I hope that the modest and incondite study offered in this dissertation marks the beginning of a larger and more exhaustive inquiry into the nature of early annalistic historiography, and that it may be an illustration of the potential value of comparative study in historiography.[2]

[1] Frier (1999) xviii–xix.

[2] Comparative historiography appears to be getting more attention, but mainly in the form of edited volumes assembling the studies of specialists: Woolf, Feldherr, and Hardy (2011), Mutschler and Mittag (2008), and, in some places, Wang, Michihiro, and Li (2022). For an outline of the problem, see Mutschler (2003). See also Luraghi's and O'Gorman's chapters in Pines, Kern, and Luraghi (2024), which was published too late for me to integrate into my dissertation.

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Abstract

This dissertation answers two related questions: When did Roman historians first treat their history as a narrative of decline, and how did this narrative evolve? The answer emerges from three main areas of analysis, namely the fragmentary beginnings of Roman historiography, comparison of these fragments with the early historiographic tradition of China, and examination of the later reception of the decline narratives in Tacitus's histories.

The argument first defines the 'decline' as constructed in historiographic narrative in distinction to the formulation of decline as a general theory. Then, by considering the earliest Roman historiographic fragments in the context of the Second Punic War and its aftermath, it undermines the common assumption that pessimism in the style of Sallust and Livy prevailed *ab initio*. Probably it emerged only in the later second century B.C.E., perhaps in the annals of Piso Frugi. The argument then addresses the issue of how the form of annals and chronicles can accommodate grand narratives such as that of general decline. The early Chinese chronicle *Chunqiu* 春秋 and its annalistic commentary *Zuozhuan* 左傳 demonstrate that grand narratives can emerge by deliberate implication from the selection and shaping of anecdotes. On this model, we can see in Calpurnius Piso Frugi and other Roman annalists the possible vestiges of an implicit, thematically complex narrative of decline that has been obscured by the later, explicit accounts. A further evolution of the decline theme, particularly in the ways that Tacitus's histories respond to Republican and Imperial narratives, also belies the assumed ubiquity of Sallust's and Livy's visions of a golden age followed by decay. Thus the answer to the initial questions is that a decline narrative was absent

in the earliest historians; later, in Piso and others, it may have emerged in a form quite different from Sallust and Livy.

Chapter 1

When and How the Narrative of Decline Formed

Tacitus (d. ca. 120 C.E.), discussing early Roman history, concedes *nec omnia apud priores meliora* ("Not everything was better for earlier generations," *Ann.* 3.55.5). This remark is the exception that proves the rule: conventionally, Romans preferred antiquity to the present. Livy's (d. ca. 17 C.E.) 142 books canvassing the length of Roman history up to 9 B.C.E. begin with a preface that characterizes the present as a time when luxury has so demoralized society that Romans could "bear neither [their] own vices nor the remedies thereof."[3] About fifty years earlier, in the first fully extant Roman histories, Sallust (d. ca. 35 B.C.E.) had decried the decay of morals from a supposed age of concord, weaving together several distinct traditions of when and why Rome's moral decay began and progressed.[4] The one-hundred and seventy years between Sallust and the first Roman historian, Fabius Pictor (fl. ca. 216 – ca. 200), are attested by some forty historians, who survive in scant, often obscure fragments.[5] Modern scholars are therefore left to wonder when

[3] … *ad haec tempora quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus perventum est* (*pr.* 9).
[4] E.g., Sall. *Cat.* 5.8–12, 37–39. *Iug.* 5.1–3, 8, 15–16, 29, 31, esp. 41–42.
[5] In *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, Cornell (2013) identifies thirty-eight historians before Cicero (d. 43 B.C.E.), some of whom are identified by a single reference. On the calculation of Lebek (1970) 207, the total verbatim remains of the pre-Sallustian historians total about twelve OCT pages without Cato, seventeen with him.

and how the narratives of decay, decline, and decadence that are so pronounced in Roman historiography from Sallust onward originated and developed.[6]

Answering the questions of when and how the narrative of decline formed helps to address two major problems in scholarship about early Roman historiography. The first is the incautious assumption that Roman historiography was *ab initio* pessimistic in the fashion of Sallust. This assumption, as Chapter 2 demonstrates, is almost certainly erroneous, because neither the earliest fragments themselves nor the context in which they were written suggests that Roman history was depicted in part or whole as a descent from higher standards. The second problem is that even nuanced debate about the narrative of decline in historiography, as in Biesinger and Vassiliades, has stalled on the insoluble question of whether the decline narrative in historiography was initiated by Sallust or by an earlier, fragmentary historian. Calpurnius Piso Frugi is often identified as a possible originator of a decidedly moralistic history, based on a single fragment (fr. 40, possibly also fr. 24).[7] Despite its obscurity, the fragment implies more than mere carping at the morals of

[6] The narratives in Sallust were already well established: see Earl (1961) 44. In the broadest terms, scholarship on the question of decline can be divided between that which understands the question literally and identifies potential historical causes, and that which considers the question as a matter of discourse in historiography. The historical–historiographical divide is fairly strict. The historical approach is of great antiquity and prodigious volume, reaching its summit in Demandt (1984), who exhaustively surveyed every published theory explaining the decline and fall of Rome, from *aberglaube* to *zweifrontenkrieg*, albeit with minimal analysis of plausibility of each explanation, in a handbook of decline indifferent to whether the theoretical basis is, for example, economic or racist. See a list of these causes in Galinsky (1992) 71–73 ("The following 210 reasons have been cited for the decline of the Roman empire"). Lintott (1972) succinctly and, more thoroughly, MacMullen (1988) read the conventional contemporary views of decline and attempt to measure them against other indices. For Lintott, those are mostly other historical sources. MacMullen uses quantitative arguments to assess the true the prevalence of the corruption lamented in the sources. Even more strictly quantitative, and writing on the topic of decline in Europe more generally, is Thompson (1998). Some scholars go even further in their faith in quantitative arguments.

The trope of decline and decay as a rhetorical strategy in the Roman historians received its first definitive treatment in Biesinger (2016). The most extensive exploration of the narratives in Sallust and Livy is Vassiliades (2020), whose argument also touches on early Roman historiography and concludes that Sallust originated the narrative of decline in Roman historiography, in the form of an history which addresses primarily this theme. See below for further discussion.

[7] E.g., Cornell (2013) and Bispham in their commentary *ad* Pictor fr. 24 consider whether there is a decline narrative. They find the subject of a narrative of luxury and decadence "an attractive possibility, but [it] does not seem to us to be conclusively proved by the text of the fragment as it stands," 41. The assumption that Roman narratives of the past were pessimistic is pervasive in readers of the historians from Augustine (who commented extensively on Sallust). Of modern historians, e.g., Luce (1986) 342, on Tacitus' *Dialogus*: "How remarkable not to be attracted into that attitude

'kids these days,' but is it therefore evidence of a pessimistic schema akin to Sallust's? These two problems can be solved first by following a simple but, I hope, useful definition of 'the narrative of decline' in historiography that does not assume Sallust as its epitome. Second, in Chapter 3 I demonstrate that comparison with the earliest historiographic tradition of pre-Han China offers heretofore unappreciated possibilities, both of the form that a pre-Sallustian narrative may have taken, and of the process by which the narrative may have assumed that shape.[8] This broader view of early historical narratives shows that decline can be articulated in many ways from many motives, with origins that are a complex convergence of factors, including the formal biases of oral traditions that have been incorporated partially or wholly into the literary tradition; the structure, content, and accessibility of the chronicles and other records that served as the historians' raw material; and the rhetorical exigencies facing the individual historians who formalized the first historical narratives. The formalization of the theme of decline was also likely a gradual process, about whose earliest phases we can only make educated guesses. Given the dearth of new information about the Roman tradition and the vast tradition of scholarship, the greatest promise of illuminating the dark age of early Roman historiography lies in comparison with other, comparable traditions. Of particular relevance is the earliest extant history from China, the *Zuǒzhuàn* 左傳 (largely completed ca. 350 B.C.E., though see discussion below), which is a complete annalistic history that amply illustrates the thematic potential of the form, as described below.

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so beloved by all cultures, but never more than by the Roman, that the past is better because the men who live then were better!" The assumption that a decline narrative permeated Roman literature may be found in Earl (1961) 41–46, 113–121; Badian (1966) 5–6; Goodyear (1970); Crawley (1971) 24; Lintott (1972); Koestermann (1973); Williams (1978); Döpp (1989), whose nuanced view is that the reign of Augustus was an exception in an otherwise constant sense of decline in Roman literature, 95; Galinsky (1992) 69, "According to Roman authors, decline was constant," for which sentiment he adduces Sallust, Livy, and Horace; Evans (2008) 8, ,with some reservations, 78–83 about the universality of the decline narrative, as in Lucretius and Juvenal; and Luce (1986).

[8] This is the position of Frier (1999) xviii–xix: "If genuine progress is now to be made, it may well be necessary to set the chronicle within a broader context defined by comparable, but better known, preliterary chronicles from other societies," reaffirmed Frier (2023).

Among the more important implications of my argument is that narratives of decline in historiography are not timeless, universal, or archetypal, nor were they an inevitable or permanent feature of Roman historiography. Rather, they have a complex provenance that happens to be obscured by the accidents of preservation. This understanding offers an additional reason to study this question, namely that the narratives' contingent origins help explain the especial significance of the Roman narrative tradition to modern notions of decline, which are direct descendants of their Roman forebears. A further, perhaps obvious implication is that the question of when Roman historians began writing of history as a decline turns on the definition of decline, particularly on the extent to which its most irrefragable theorist, Sallust, is allowed to define it. The question 'Did Piso *begin* the narrative?' is misleading when the affirmative requires that he be a proto-Sallust, and that Sallust be the ineluctable telos of earlier historiographers.[9]

The Relevance of the *Chunqiu* and the *Zuozhuan*

The relevance of the *Zuozhuan* is analyzed in detail in Chapter 3, but some remarks about it are in order here to clarify its especial relevance to the Roman question. The work is, roughly speaking, a commentary on a version of the authentic chronicle of the minor state Lǔ 魯, in modern southwest Shandong, called the *Chūnqiū* 春秋.[10] This chronicle, arranged by year and season, was recorded contemporaneously for twelve 'dukes' or 'lords'[11] (公 *gōng*) of Lu, from 722 B.C.E., the ascension of Lord Yin, to either 481 B.C.E., the capture of the mythical *lín* creature (or, as it might be better

[9] This question is, in fact, what Danto would call a "narrative sentence," i.e., a sentence containing a "project verb" such as *begin*, which assumes Piso to be part of a continuous process. See Danto (1985) 143–81 and Ankersmit (1985) 374–75. Danto devoted scrupulous attention to the metaphysical assumptions about the past that individual words imply. Hayden White, discussed below, had similar concerns.

[10] 春秋 *chunqiu*, lit. 'spring–fall,' is a synecdoche for the year that refers generically to annals. Much as in ancient Greece, the year was reckoned differently by the various states of the Yellow River valley. The ambiguity of the term *chunqiu*, which in Western Han usage can denote both the chronicle and the commentary together, is discussed below.

[11] I generally follow Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) in using 'lord,' though 'duke' is the more traditional English translation.

known in English, the *qílín* or, from Japanese, *kirin*), or to 479, the year of Confucius's death, as in the slightly divergent version of the *Chunqiu* embedded in the *Zuozhuan*. The ancient tradition of the works' origins has in the past two centuries been the subject of intense philological analysis and debate, which in Anglophone, Chinese, and Japanese academia over the past twenty-five years have produced some compelling hypotheses of the text's actual origin and development.[12] A brief comparison of the traditional and modern accounts of the *Zuozhuan* will illuminate the text's main interpretive issues.

By a tradition current at the time of the *Mencius* (completed ca. 280 B.C.E.), the *Chunqiu* was Confucius's immaculately edited recension of the official chronicle of Lu, where Confucius had served as an advisor.[13] A legend, only attested explicitly two centuries after the *Mencius* but possibly concurrent with it, held that Confucius's purpose in editing the chronicle was to apportion praise and blame of historical actors through extreme subtlety of diction[14] and through the careful omission of events that the reader was expected to know otherwise.[15] In this telling, as the Confucian disciples' posthumous oral exegesis yielded to dispute of the master's true intentions, five commentaries developed, of which three survive.[16] By far the largest and most historically minded

[12] Although considerable uncertainty still attends the origins of the *Zuozhuan*, the clearest assessments of what can be said about the *Chunqiu*, *Zuozhuan*, and the other commentaries are ibid. XXXVIII–LIX and Schaberg (2001) 256–312 and 315–324. See also Yang Bojun (1981) 39–42; Cheng (1993); Zhang (1998); Pines (2002) 26–39; Blakeley (2004); Vogelsang (2007). Schaberg (2001) passim and Li (2007) 33 n.9, reference the principal Japanese scholarship. More generally on the authorship and transmission of early Chinese texts, see Boltz (2008). A much narrower, but still influential, method of dating the text is A. T. Brooks (2003).

[13] *Mencius* 3B.9 (= ICS *Mengzi*: 6.9/34–35, 孔子懼，作《春秋》, "Confucius was afraid and made the *Chunqiu*"). 4.B21 (= ICS *Mengzi*: 8.21/42/24, 魯之春秋 "*Chunqiu* of Lu").

[14] *Wei yan da yi* (微言大義 "subtle words and great significance"), as frequently paraphrased from the sixteen-character passage at *Hanshu* 30.1701.1–2.

[15] In the rigorously moralistic and philological *Gongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries, even obvious textual errors, such as the omission of a word, were interpreted as an expression of authorial intent. These commentaries also received imperial favor, after the *Shiquge* 石渠閣 debates of 51 B.C.E. Although they comment more directly on the *Chunqiu*, by repeating and explicating passages, the version of the *Chunqiu* upon which they comment differs slightly from the version of the *Chunqiu* upon which the *Zuozhuan* is based. For a brief overview, see Cheng (1993). The moralistic reading of the *Chunqiu* must date to before the recording of the originally oral *Gongyang* commentary under the Han emperor Jing (r. 156–141 B.C.E.). See Queen (1996) 124–25.

[16] The legend is that of Sima Qian's *Shiji* 14.509–10, with further elaboration in Ban Gu's *Hanshu* 30.1715.

of these is the *Zuozhuan*. The *Zuozhuan* comments extensively, though not exclusively, upon the entries of the *Chunqiu*, by providing context, speeches, dialog, dreams, prophecies, and occasional moral pronouncements in the voice either of an unidentified "gentleman" (*jūnzi* 君子) or of Confucius himself.[17] The official narrative of the *Zuozhuan*'s origin, first related in Sima Qian's *Shǐjì* 史記 (completed ca. 90 B.C.E.), held that the work had been written by a single disciple of Confucius, Zuǒ Qiūmíng 左丘明 (hence, it seems, the title *Zuozhuan*, 'Zuo's Commentary' or 'Zuo's Tradition').[18] Such was the official account by the time of the work's now-lost first edition, produced by Liú Xīn 劉歆, under the child emperor Ping (r. 1 B.C.E.–C.E. 5), by which time Confucianism had been firmly established as state doctrine.[19]

From early on, however, intermittent doubt attended Liu Xin's edition of the work, first because its incorporation of so many events extraneous to the *Chunqiu*, including detailed accounts of years that are empty in the chronicle, belied its direct association with the chronicle; then, as the occasionally non-Confucian character of its moral pronouncements belied its attribution to Zuo

[17] The *Zuozhuan* comprises just fewer than 180-thousand characters—or 195,792 characters, per Brooks and Brooks (2007), which must include the attached *Chunqiu*, which contains, per Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) XXIII, less than 17 thousand. Besides the also extant *Gongyang* and *Guliang* commentaries are two lost commentaries, the *Zou shi* 鄒氏 and *Jia shi* 夾氏, listed in the *Han shu*; on which, see Cheng (1993) 67–68.

[18] The standard account is that of Sima Qian (145?–86? B.C.E.), who refers in the *Shiji* 13.509–10 to *Zuo's Annals* (左氏春秋 *Zuoshi Chunqiu*), in which he claims that after Confucius's death (in 479), disagreement among his disciples prompted Zuo Qiuming of Lu to preserve the correct teachings by consulting the master's written records. He and his father Sima Tan made extensive use of the text, which they cite as merely *chunqiu*. On the ambiguous use of *chunqiu*, which in the Western Han could refer both to chronicle and their appended commentary but in the Eastern Han referred exclusively to the chronicle, see Schaberg (2001) 264 and 319–20; and Durrant (1992) 297–301. Ban Gu (32 C.E. – 92) in the *Hanshu* uses both the title *Zuoshi Chunqiu* and *Master Zuo's Tradition* (*Zuoshi zhuan* 左氏傳). The change in title corresponds chronologically with the editorial work of Liu Xin (46 B.C.E.–C.E. 23) and his father Liu Xiang (79–8 B.C.E.). The title *Zuozhuan* and the format which interweaves the *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan* were established, at least in part, by Du Yu (C.E. 222–284).

[19] Liu Xin's relation to the text is recounted in the *Hanshu* 30.1715. See Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) XCII n. 207, summarize the issue especially well: "Gongyang and Guliang scholars primarily interested in elucidating the significatory principles supposedly embodied by the *Annals*, from He Xiu 何休 (129–82), Fan Ning (330–401), to Liu Fenglu and Pi Xiru, fault *Zuozhuan* for straying beyond exegesis of the *Annals*. Those using the *Annals* or the *Gongyang* tradition to enunciate a political vision, from Song scholars like Hu Anguo to the Qing reformer Kang Youwei, find the historical details in *Zuozhuan* inconvenient and irrelevant. From a less partisan perspective, those who recognize the historical veracity of *Zuozhuan* (e.g., Zhu Xi, Gu Yanwu) often implicitly question its exegetical filiation to the *Annals*."

or to any single author or philosophical tradition.[20] Over nineteen centuries of scholarship, these and other problems were answered by many theories that, in an extreme but popular form advanced by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), argued that parts of the *Zuozhuan* had been fabricated by Liu Xin to justify the controversial regency of Wang Mang.[21] Modern scholarship, however, has since Bernhard Karlgren's refutation of Kang and others largely reached a consensus on the biggest questions.[22] The present consensus holds that the entries of the *Chunqiu* were indeed written more or less contemporaneously with the events they record, and that they were likely compiled in the late fifth century by one, or perhaps a few, persons, who made minor emendations, if any at all, to the text.[23] The commentary is a multi-authored compilation of information drawn from diverse oral and archival sources, including other states' annals. When Lu's *Chunqiu* was published (evidently in more than one version) around 400 B.C.E. by a process that remains unclear, these various other sources accreted over the decades within the framework of Lu's annals.[24] Only some of this material is direct commentary on the chronicle; most originated independently.[25] The compilers were working in the early Warring States period (453[26]–221), a time of great turmoil, when

[20] See Shen and Liu (2000) 110–11; Li (2007) 34f., esp. n.10.
[21] Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) LVI–LVII. The debate is a continuation of the ancient *jinwen–guwen* (今文古文, 'new text – ancient text') debate, on authenticity and reliability of texts written in the ancient, pre-Qin script and in the 'new' script. Cf. Nylan (1994)..
[22] See Karlgren (1926) and (1931).
[23] Nylan (2001) 257. Nothing, as Nylan notes, *ibid*., connects the text of the *Chunqiu* to Confucius. This tradition appears to originate with the *Mencius* 3B.6, cited above. For the consensus view, see the authorities cited n.12, above.
[24] The *Zuozhuan*'s narrative in the main ends in 468 B.C.E., with the final entry describing an event in 463 (Zhi Yao's siege of Zheng), and a mention of an event in 453 (Zhi Yao's death). This is the last event mentioned. Cf. the *Gongyang* and *Guliang* commentaries, which do not extend beyond the *Chunqiu* to which they are attached, which ends with the capture of the *qilin* (*Gongyang* 28.355, *Guliang* 20.205, and *Zuozhuan* Lord Ai 14.1. For an analysis of some probable, especially archival, sources of the *Zuozhuan*, see Pines (2002) 221–46, who, contra Schaberg, tends to underestimate the oral origins and overestimate the archival origins of the sources.
[25] The *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan* were not interwoven until the edition of Du Yu 杜預 (d. 284 C.E.). In Liu Xin's lost *editio princeps*, the *Chunqiu* may have been included separately at the beginning. See Vogelsang (2007) esp. 944–45, on the early textual history of the *Zuozhuan*.
[26] The precise beginning of this period is a matter of long-standing debate. Of the better options (viz., 481, the traditional date of 475, 453, and 403), I select 453, because the *de facto* partition of Jin in that year is the event on which all the other dates are centered.

even the notional primacy of the Zhou court was moribund.[27] They considered themselves Confucian at a time when Confucianism was only one of many contending schools of thought, a time of philosophical ferment known as the "Hundred Schools" (*zhū zǐ bǎi jiā* 諸子百家) period. The work is coherently multivocal: it is multivocal in that anecdotes have diverse origins that sometimes argue contradictory morals. Its coherence is both obvious, as in many anecdotes' extensive prolepsis and occasional analepsis, and profound, as in the complex thematic interrelation of anecdotes as they cluster around themes.[28] Among the largest of these themes is the centrality of *lǐ* 禮 ('ritual propriety') and *dé* 德 ('virtue'), whose gradual diminution betokens the growing chaos.[29]

The *Zuozhuan* is analogous to the Roman annalists of the second century B.C.E. in its intermediate relation to the chronicle. With greater certainty than can ever attend the fragmentary Roman historians, we can say that it conveys an intentional but implicit theory of decline that governs the whole as a sort of major theme. Sallust, by contrast, is explicit about his theories in both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, whose narratives serve as an exegesis of the theory. In further contrast, Tacitus (whose histories are the topic of Chapters 5 and 6) shows that references to decline can appear as minor themes, which are internally coherent and consonant with the major theme but do not determine the structure of the whole.[30]

Together, these eminent examples delineate a loose typology of decline narratives that can serve to shape an educated guess about the nature of the earlier, more obscure works. The

[27] For an overview of the period, see Lewis (1999).
[28] Schaberg (2001) 300. A. T. Brooks (2003) provides a more detailed illustration of how 'layers' accrete around a certain theme. Brooks (2003) provides a more detailed illustration of how 'layers' accrete around a certain theme.
[29] This thesis is advocated most extensively by Schaberg (2001) 276–93, esp. 277; and Li (2007) 343–71.
[30] Livy, as well as lesser historians like Velleius Paterculus, also contain these narratives at a lower level, in whom they are, as it were, undigested. The historians and works that are my focus share the advantage of being complete, perfect works, whose authors carefully deliberated each part to make an harmonious whole.

remainder of this chapter is concerned to explain this typology. In sum, it is this: decline, as it is defined below, may be a major theme, governing the selection and arrangement of passages throughout an entire work, or a minor theme, uniting parts of a work by a logic that does not govern the whole. The idea of decline may be explicit or implicit. Either way, decline may be comprehended as either an overarching theory of history or as a configuration of interrelated events.

Nostalgia, the Golden Age, and Ancient Theories of Historiography

What is the 'narrative of decline'? [31] A good definition will justify the study of a question that the Romans themselves did not ask as such. It will also improve upon where the waters have been muddied by distinctions that are useful for comparing one ancient historian's model of decline with another's, but which thereby bias us to assume that all historians participated in these distinctions. On the first point, it should be acknowledged that the Romans did not have words corresponding precisely to 'narrative,' 'decline,' and 'historiography,' and thus that the question 'When did the narrative of decline begin in Roman historiography?' could not be easily asked of a Roman in those terms.[32] Specialized as they are in modern academic discourse, the terms correspond to

[31] The distinctions among 'decline,' 'decay,' and 'decadence' are slight and may all be subsumed under the idea of "things getting worse." 'Decadence' tends to refer to art and morals, 'decline' to society more broadly. By extension, 'decadence' tends to seem more subjective, 'decline' more objective. Other connotations have been noted. See Vassiliades (2020) 18–19: "décadence est l'état de C.E. qui va tombant; le déclin, l'état de C.E. qui va baissant. La décadence amène la chute et la ruine; le déclin mène à l'expiration et à la fin." Thus in French, 'déclin' is terminal; 'décadence' leads to ruin, but not to death. Cf. Morley (2005) 574–78, for whom 'decline' is part of the cycle of growth and is more associated with historiography, 'decadence' with aesthetics or morals. The fullest discussion and bibliography is Biesinger (2016) 18–21, who favors the term 'Dekadenz' precisely for its subjective quality, 20: "Wenn wir „Dekadenz" als eine zwar hochgradig subjektive, aber deshalb nicht unpräzise… zeitgenössische Analysekategorie auffassen, dann ist ihre potentielle Omnipräsenz kein Problem, sondern eine Selbstverständlichkeit. Selbstverständlich kann immer ein Teil einer Gesellschaft für einen Teil des gesellschaftlichen Lebens den Verlust (subjektiv) erhaltenswerter Qualitäten behaupten. 'Decline' at bottom tends to make a claim to objectivity, as in Thompson (1998), Spengler (1926), and Gibbon (1788). In preferring 'decline' to 'decadence,' then, I am emphasizing the ancient historians' belief in their descriptions of things getting worse, rather than the rhetorical pose of saying so, as in Biesinger.

[32] 'Narrative' and 'decline' each have a Latin root, but the words in English are of recent origin (1539 and 1327, respectively, cf. *OED* s. vv.). The semantic range of Latin *narratio* nears that of English "narrative," albeit with strong connotations of rhetorical practice, where it denoted the disposition one gave to events (v. *ThLL* s.v. II B; *Rhet. Her.* 1.3.4 *narratio est rerum gestarum aut proinde ut gestarum explicatio*). Cf. Wiseman (1979) 35, "*Narratio* in a speech,

broader ideas of universal significance. We might therefore rephrase the question as 'When did Roman writers about the events of the past begin describing these events as a story of things getting worse?' Whereas Romans debated the beginning of the series of crises of the later second century B.C.E. onward, our question is when any discourse akin to those debates first appeared and how they changed. The simple definition of decline as 'things getting worse' also obviates the risk that a more specific definition would tether the analysis to irrelevant distinguenda. Some, particularly older-fashioned historians, have tended to take the term at face value. For them, decline is to be studied wherever other historians, ancient or later, refer to it. Demandt holds the logical extreme of this view, as 'the decline' of Rome for him entails 'the fall' and thereby comprises every explanation offered for the fall of Rome, including the climatological, the cultural, and the explicitly racist.[33] Lintott confines his analysis of when decline began to the dates and events that Roman historians themselves adduced, but unlike Demandt he assesses the probable validity of the claims by holistic evidence.[34] More recent approaches, most eminently Biesinger's and Vassiliades', are interested not in the presumed fact of decline and fall but in the literary and theoretical constructs of decline.[35] They interpret decline not as the superordinate category, but as one species of 'things getting worse,' with its congeners 'decadence' and 'crisis.' They make distinctions based on the general diminution's being of long or short duration, or being reversible or terminal, or cultural or

designed to persuade, is not the same as narrative in a history, designed to report. When a historian writes *rhetorice*, he is allowed to invent as an orator invents, to add point or conviction to his story, but the reader is expected to be able to recognize what he is doing…" "Decline," however, with its implication of a long, inevitable process (on which see below), does not fully coïncide with Latin *tabes*, which denotes a sickly wasting away, nor do *ruina*, *lapsus*, *occassus* vel sim., which respectively denote a sudden collapse, a more general movement downward, or a setting. *Occasus* was originally applied to the setting of the sun, but, in extended usage, it often simply means 'death' without implying that it is gradual (*ThLL* s.v. II). I do not believe, *pace* Vassiliades (2020) 75, that Plin. *Pan.* 26.6 necessarily refers to demographic 'decline': the collocation *occasum accelerare* follows the analogy of *mortem adcelerare* at Lucr. 6.772 and *consulatum adcelerare* Tac. *Ann.* 3.75. Pliny probably means merely that the empire will "fall sooner," not "decline faster."

[33] Demandt (1984).

[34] Lintott (1972)

[35] Biesinger (2016); Vassiliades (2020).

economic. These differentiae obscure the unity that subsists behind narratives of decline: it is a story about things getting worse, in which 'things' (notwithstanding its inelegance) is reasonably understood to refer not to an evanescent inconvenience or indisposition, as of feeling hungry in the mid-afternoon, but to a change in nature or state. Hunger *may* be a property of decline, if it comes to characterize one's conditions more broadly, as during a famine. A trifling change for the worse, however, is not 'decline.'

In the complaint that things are getting worse, it is tempting to hear the pang of nostalgia and the wistfulness of the *laudator temporis acti*. Decline, however, is not nostalgia. 'Nostalgia,' as coined by Johannes Hofer in his brief 1688 *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia* [also printed *Νοσταλγια*], *oder Heimwehe*, the term meant "an unhappy mood arising from an intense desire to return home" (*tristem animum ex reditus in patriam ardenti desiderio oriundum*).[36] Its later, temporal usage rests upon a metaphor of homesickness that maps place (home) onto time (the past). [37] More recently, especially since the nineteen-forties, it has been applied to a specific desideratum, as in being nostalgic *for* something, such as a smell or for the good old days of something (e.g., "nostalgic for the good old days of wrestling").[38] The term itself is an early-modern creation, but the sentiment that it denotes is ubiquitous. It is manifest in, for example, Nestor's speeches in the *Iliad* (e.g., *Il.* 1.260–73), where the agèd warrior longingly recalls the greater strength of men in

[36] Hofer (1688) Th. II. He also offers the more colloquial "Maladie du Pays."

[37] 'Nostalgia,' from *nostos* 'homecoming' and *algia* 'pain,' is first attested in English in 1688, as a calque for the Swiss-German *heimweh* (*OED* s.v.). The sentimental, basically unreflective nature of nostalgia is amply illustrated in Lowenthal (2013) 31–54. The *ad hoc* definition of nostalgia here given does not essentially differ from the prevailing definition in modern psychology, which views nostalgia as a "culturally inflected mixture of basic emotions," in Dodman (2017) 199 n.3. On ancient emotions, the locus classicus is Konstan (2006), who differentiates the social construction of ancient emotions from their apparent modern equivalents. Konstan's approach therefore precludes a study of nostalgia.

[38] Mazer, Sharon. (2005) "'Real' Wrestling / 'Real' Life." In *Steel Chair to the Head*, ed. Nicholas Sammond, 67–87. Durham: Duke University Press, 86.

his youth.[39] Although nostalgia implies a temporal structure, in which a past time is starkly differentiated from the present, and a moral structure that prefers the past, nostalgia is itself an emotion, not a theory or a narrative. As such, it can attend, perhaps even inspire, narratives of a lost golden age, but thereafter its explanatory power to answer the question of whether something was written *because of nostalgia* dissipates into psychological conjecture.[40] Rather than a cause, it were better seen as first a *reaction* to a certain narrative structure which could elicit any number of other feelings, such as disgust, disappointment, or rage. It is not the structure itself, nor is it a necessary cause of decline narratives.

Nostalgia' remembrances of an irretrievable idyl approach the idea of a lost golden age. The idea of the golden age is often used to describe *any* desirable past that has been lost, and hence begets the temptation to see in any narrative of decline the notion of a golden age. But the differences between 'decline narrative' and 'golden age narrative' illuminate the question of how narratives of decline in historiography might be usefully contrasted with those in myth. As a topos of literature, *the* Golden Age originated in the 'myth of the metals' that Hesiod apparently invented, and which he related in his *Works and Days* (106–201). There he describes in moralistic terms a succession of races (not 'ages,' as in English, and in Latin *aurea aetas* and *aurea saecula*), defined metaphorically by metals of decreasing value—gold, silver, bronze (as well as a distinct age of

[39] Ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ καὶ ἀρείοσιν ἠέ περ ὑμῖν | ἀνδράσιν ὡμίλησα, καὶ οὔ ποτέ μ' οἵ γ' ἀθέριζον. | οὐ γάρ πω τοίους ἴδον ἀνέρας οὐδὲ ἴδωμαι, | οἷον Πειρίθοόν τε Δρύαντά τε ποιμένα λαῶν | Καινέα *κτλ.* | κάρτιστοι δὴ κεῖνοι ἐπιχθονίων τράφεν ἀνδρῶν·| κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις ἐμάχοντο *κτλ.* | καὶ μὲν τοῖσιν ἐγὼ μεθομίλεον *κτλ.* | καὶ μαχόμην κατ' ἔμ' αὐτὸν ἐγώ· κείνοισι δ' ἂν οὔ τις | τῶν οἳ νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο·| καὶ μέν μευ βουλέων ξύνιεν πείθοντό τε μύθῳ·("Yes, and in my time I have dealt with better men than | you are, and never once did they disregard me. Never | yet have I seen nor shall see again such men as these were, | men like Peirithoos, and Dryas, shepherd of the people, | Kaineus *etc.* | These were the strongest generation of earth-born mortals, | the strongest, and they fought against the strongest *etc.* | I was of the company of these men,… | And I fought single-handed, yet against such men no one | of the mortals now alive upon earth could do battle" *etc. etc.* [transl. Lattimore]).

[40] The fundamentally static nature of nostalgia is comparable to that of antiquarianism, which may be defined as the practice of discovering the particulars of the past without regard to their being part of an historical narrative. See Walther, Gerrit. "Altertumskunde (Humanismus bis 1800)," in *Der neue Pauly*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider (Antike), and Manfred Landfester, 2006.

heroes), and iron.[41] For Hesiod, the myth functioned in part to explain the presence of bad strife (ἔρις—as opposed to good strife, also ἔρις, which fosters ambition) in the world. His narrative, however, ends with a description of the abhorrent qualities of the present, iron race (174–201), which he castigates for its vices and for which he predicts imminent annihilation amid abject depravity. It is an aetiological and moralizing tale of a kind with that of Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Pandora, which immediately precedes it (47–105). As is implied by Hesiod's opening invocation of the Muses, the succession of the races is known by revelation, not inquiry. Its scope begins and ends in a remote past that includes no specific historical event.[42] The account stops at the threshold of historical time.

Distant as Hesiod's golden race may thus seem from historiography, the myth of the Golden Age was transformed from aetiology to prophecy under the Augustan program of moralistic cultural renewal after the civil wars (as discussed in Chapter 4). The transition from an indefinitely past 'race' as in Hesiod to a more obviously sequential 'age' is first marked in Vergil's fourth Eclogue, where the poet refers to the return of an Hesiodic "golden race" (*gens aurea*, 9) in the "final age" (*ultima aetas*, 1), which is the return of an earlier reign of Saturn (*redeunt Saturnea regna*, 6).[43] Under Augustus, the dawning *saeculum aureum*, a time of peace and abundance,

[41] Hesiod refers not to "age" but to γένος 'race,' in an echo of genealogical history. On which see below. Hesiod appears to have invented the association of the distant past with gold—despite, ironically, the absence of gold during its eponymous age. On the invention and irony, see Baldry (1952) 83, and Ovid, quoted below.

Hesiod's logic in associating each metal with its eponymous race is vague and seemingly inconsistent: the Iron and Broze races seem to be named for their characteristic technology, the Gold and Silver races for, apparently, their moral character in relation to the value of the metal. There is no implication that the Gold and Silver races use gold and silver implements, and iron was in fact valuable and was portrayed as such in epic poetry (as West notes, with references, *ad loc.*). There are therefore at least two, non-overlapping criteria, of utility for Bronze and Iron, and, as it were, aesthetics for Gold and Silver.

The origins of the metallic conceit are uncertain, but it has parallels in Zoroastrian and Biblical literature (Daniel 2.31).

[42] Finley (1967) 7, "The Golden Age is firmly located in myth and in mythical time. It serves to define the Iron Age by its opposite, to define and in a sense to explain the evil that man is eternally doomed to live with, above all, to die." Vassiliades (2020) 41 believes Hesiod implies that the cycle will recommence. Cf. West (1978) 173.

[43] Wallace-Hadrill (1982b) 20, "The Roman fascination with the Golden Age theme derives above all from a single epoch-making poem, Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*."

became a centerpiece of imperial propaganda in all media, culminating in the Secular Games of 17 B.C.E.[44] Vergil elaborated the connection in the *Aeneid* (8.314–27). Ovid made an even bolder allusion to Hesiod's myth in his *Metamorphoses* (1.89–215), rewriting it in Roman terms.[45] It is thus a significant contrast with the ubiquitous Augustan cultural program that Roman historiography, of any period, touched tentatively, when at all, upon the Golden Age theme: Hyginus, a freedman of Augustus who served as librarian and seems to have written lost grammatical and antiquarian works,[46] appears to have written on the Saturnian age in the context of foundation myths. Stories about Saturn and Janus appeared in at least Cornelius Nepos and possibly also in Cassius Hemina in a rationalizing, euhemerist connection.[47] The *Origo Gentis Romanae* (late fourth century C.E.) begins from Janus's and Saturn's arrival in Italy, but here it cites the authority only of the *Aeneid* (*OGR* 1). Roman allusions are thus acutely conscious of Hesiod and stand in an elevated, poetic register.[48] Thus, although the theme of the Golden Age would seem, like nostalgia, to be closely associated with notions of decline, its connection to historiography is tenuous. For historians, the topos could appear either in the tradition of foundation stories, as in the foundation stories of Italian cities collected by the elder Cato in his *Origines*, or as an authoritative token of primacy, declaring that the historian's account was starting from the very beginning. When even Sallust deplores the loss of a more idyllic past of *concorida* and *boni mores*, he does

[44] Zanker (1988) 167.
[45] Ironically, at *Ars Amatoria* 2.277–78: *Aurea sunt vere nunc saecula: plurimus auro / venit honos, auro conciliatur amor* ("Truly now is a golden age: great esteem comes by gold, love is won by gold").
[46] His relation to the mythographer Hyginus is unclear.
[47] Hyginus F10 C (= Macr. 1.7.19–26) and Serv. *Aen.* 7.678. Cornelius Nepos, probably in myths of ancient Rome recorded in his *Chronica*, fr. 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d C (=Tert. *apol.* 10.7 [also = Hemina F1] and *nat.* 2.12, Min. Fel. 23.9, and Lact. *Inst.* 1.13.8). The reference to the orator Cassius Severus is probably, as the reference to Tacitus is certainly, mistaken.
[48] Evans (2008) follows the Roman reception of the Golden Age mainly in Vergil and Ovid. Her section on Tacitus, 147–54, and other Roman prose writers attests to the commonalities between Hesiod's Golden race and the prose writers' depictions of agrarian idylls in ethnography and moral writings, but not in historiography. Likewise Finley (1967).

not resort to a myth of the Golden Age. Beyond this, the topos had no thematic power in organizing an historical narrative, nor explanatory power for the specific events of the recorded past. In its Augustan form, the topos focused not upon decline, but upon present renewal and future joy. Myths of the Golden Age are therefore a separate phenomenon from narratives of decline in historiography.

Myth in general, however, coincides with historiography in an important respect: both are narratives, that is, they comprise a sequence of related events. The distinction between myth and history was first made by the ancients. In Greek, the terms *mythos* and *logos* (or *to mythōdes* and *to saphes*, among others) respectively were prominently, if not uniformly, used to distinguish narratives that are primarily oral, traditional, and unverifiable, from those that are verifiable.[49] Even with inconsistent terminology, the distinction is clear from the first writer of prose history, Hecataeus, whose preface to his *Genealogiae* affirms both his commitment to write what seems to him to be true (ὥς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι), and to correct the improbable accounts of others in accordance with his own sense of plausibility.[50] His successor Herodotus reinforces the historian's commitment to preserve the verifiable in his scathing criticism of Hecataeus's credulity, while his own sometimes fantastical and credulous accounts were in turn censured by his successors.[51] Thus

[49] In modern scholarship, estimations of the terms *mythos* and *logos* have ranged from foundational distinction in ancient thought to mere mirages of meaning. For a history of the argument, see Fowler (2011) 46–49, who strongly argues for the general validity, with caveats, of the mythos–logos distinction in ancient thought. Feeney (2007) 78–86, offers the nuanced and convincing argument that ancient historians regularly distinguish mythos and logos while placing their demarcation at various points in time, and while often using the distinction no less as a marker of genre than as a statement of actual method.

Herodotus uses *muthos* twice: at 2.23, where he believes the Ocean to be a *muthos* related by Hecataeus, invented by Homer; and 2.45, on the *muthoi* of Herakles' coming to Egypt, which is unbelievable for its ignorance of Egyptian custom (with which Herodotus claims to be personally acquainted) and for its exaggeration of Herakles' slaughter.

[50] *FGrHist* 1 F1a (=Ps.-Demet. *De Eloc.* 2): Εκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τάδε γράφω, ὥς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοί τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν.

[51] Feeney (2007) 74: "Throughout his history Herodotus is extremely scrupulous in marking what he will vouch for and what he will not, on the basis of his claims to knowledge, maintaining systematically the distinction of his second preface 'between the myths that are "said" and what "we can know."' This issue is regularly misunderstood by scholars, especially those who wish to deny Herodotus a developed interest in demarcating between his new 'history' and the

Thucydides is clearly contrasting his methods with Herodotus' when he claims to make a rigorously objective account of the Peloponnesian War, in effect going even further in his rationalistic account than his predecessors.[52] Thucydides, as Marincola notes, sharply raises the standard for excluding the improbable and focusing on what can, by various means and to various degrees, be verified.[53] The result was not that all material beyond living memory was thereby excluded: Ephorus composed an influential universal history, as did, to less acclaim, Timaeus.[54] Polybius expatiates upon the superiority of 'pragmatic history,' that is histories written by those who participated directly in the events that they relate. While individual authors might vary in their methods and in their confidence in recording the remote past, all shared a commitment to differentiating, by whatever standards seemed best to them, the true from the fabulous.[55] Fabrications, mendacity, and credulity are objects of harsh criticism.[56]

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old stories." He is quoting Moles (1993) 197. The *mythos–logos* distinction is similar, but not identical, to the discussions of the relative value ancient historians (esp. Herodotus and Thucydides) placed on *akoē* 'hearing and *opsis* 'seeing.'

On this vast topic more generally, see Marincola (1997a) *passim*; Fornara (1983) 1–46; and Potter (1999) 63–71.

[52] Herodotus, despite his avowèd commitment to truth, was widely criticized by his successors for *pseusmata* ('lies') and *plasmata* ('fabrications'). See, e.g., Ctesias *Persica* (*FGrHist* 688 T 8), Plut. *Her. Mal.* 854 F.

[53] Marincola (1997a) 118: "It is a tribute to the influence of Thucydides that after him myth could only with difficulty be rescued or redeemed. In later historians we can see only three possibilities: avoid myths altogether; try to 'rationalise' or 'de-mythologise' them; or… include them but leave their credibility to the reader to decide. If one included them, one had to defend oneself." Cf. Fornara (1983) 8–9, who believes that, with Hecataeus ending at the return of the Hericleidae and Ephorus beginning at that date (conventionally, 1069 B.C.E.), this event was the established watershed for Greek historians.

[54] Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F9, attests to the view that detailed accounts of events long past were regarded with suspicion, while details of more recent events were a mark that a writer was "most trustworthy" (πιστοτάτους). Περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς γεγενημένων φησί τοὺς ἀκριβέστατα λέγοντας πιστοτάτους ἡγούμεθα, περὶ δὲ τῶν παλαιῶν τοὺς οὕτω διεξιόντας ἀπιθανωτάτους εἶναι νομίζομεν, ὑπολαμβάνοντες οὐτε τὰς πράξεις ἁπάσας οὐτε τῶν λόγων τοὺς πλείστους εἰκὸς εἶναι μνημονεύεσθαι διὰ τοσούτων ("[Ephorus] says: 'For about events that have occurred in our own time, we consider those who speak the most accurately to be most reliable, but about ancient events, we believe those who thus explain them are most unreliable, as we suppose it unlikely that, after so much time, either all the deeds or most of the words would be recollected'").

[55] Eventually, as Marincola (1997a) 118, notes, mythical material might be included in historians as a digression.

[56] See also Cic. *Leg.* 1.5, on epic or historical poetry vs. history: *cum in illa ad vertatem <omnia>, Quinte, referantur, in hoc ad delectationem pleraque* ("In the one [i.e., in history], Quintus, everything is tied to the truth, while in other [i.e., in poetry] most things are tied to enjoyment"). Cf. *De Orat.* 2.36, *Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia* etc.; 2.62, *Nam quis nescit primam esse historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat? Deinde ne quid veri non audeat? Ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo? Ne qua simultatis? Haec scilicet fundamenta nota sunt omnibus.* On the influence of Cicero's views in Roman historiography,

To moderns, the ancient practice of historiography can none the less seem closer to myth in at least three respects: the criteria of evidence were looser, the license for elaboration was greater, and, most importantly for the fashioning of narratives, the latitude for arranging stories was broader. Thus Thucydides molded his year-by-year account of the Peloponnesian War to incorporate the larger plot structures and themes of contemporary tragedy.[57] At a finer level, despite his commitment to *akribeia* ('accuracy') as professed in his desire to quote all actual speeches verbatim if he could, he admits to fabricating, albeit scrupulously, many of the speeches in his history (1.22). Similarly, Greek and Roman historians often blended epic diction and narrative unity into their telling of events.[58] The most explicit illustration of ancient historiography's tolerance for 'emplotment' (described further below) and embellishment is Cicero's famous letter to Lucceius (*Fam.* 5.12, esp. 5.12.4), where he speaks of "embellishing" or "commending" (*ornare*) the story of the Catilinarian conspiracy, observing *nihil est enim aptius ad delectationem lectoris quam temporum varietates fortunaeque vicissitudines* ("For nothing is better suited to the reader's pleasure than the variety of circumstance and the vicissitudes of fortune"). Lucian's (n. ca. 120 C.E.) *Verae Historiae* attest to historiography's continued tendency into late antiquity to become primarily a rhetorical exercise, or an exercise in style, which indeed it became, as the paucity of notable or original historians after Tacitus attests.[59] Historiography, then, has since its emergence been

see Rambaud (1953) 121–34. Cf. Thuc. 1.21.1 and 22.4; Arist. *Poet*. 1451b4. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.6.5 ἐμοὶ δέ, ὃς οὐχὶ κολακείας χάριν ἐπὶ ταύτην ἀπέκλινα τὴν πραγματείαν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τοῦ δικαίου προνοούμενος, ὧν δεῖ στοχάζεσθαι πᾶσαν ἱστορίαν... ("And to me, who advert to this task not for flattery's sake, but rather in consideration of truth and justice, which must be the aims of each history…").

[57] Cornford (1907) x. Cornford's notion of the tragic historian is to be distinguished from the use of the "tragic" (perhaps merely 'dramatic') elements that Polybius criticized (2.56.7–12). Cf. Walbank (1960) esp. 230.

[58] On the use of themes as structural elements in Thucydides, see V. Hunter (1982) 226–29. The earliest Roman historiography in Latin simultaneously comprises Ennius's *Annales*, which is an epic, and Cato's prose *Origines*, whose diction preferred terse archaism.

[59] Williams (1978) 50, "Tacitus could not foresee how quickly literature was going to die out in the second century." In historiography, Williams likely held a dim view of Cassius Dio, the *scriptores Historiae Augustae*, and Ammianus Marcellinus. He may also have in mind the *breviaria*, or handbook synopses of Roman history, such as those of Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and others. Tacitus himself seems to have had little appreciation in his own time: Cassius

explicitly concerned with recording events accurately, even when the devices for structuring those actual events, and the ornaments of the language describing them, invite doubt about the strict veracity of the account. The core is fact, with occasional elaboration, the extent of which varies by historian.[60] It is in the selection of events and their explicit or implied connection that historians truly 'invent' the past they are writing.

Defining the Narrative of Decline with Ancient and Modern Theories

Modern philosophers of history have reached similar conclusions in more precise terms that illustrate how ancient historians could construct narratives differently from those in myth. Hayden White's 1973 monograph *Metahistory* renewed the ancient recognition that historiography is partially fictive or dramatic, in the sense not of fabricating events, but because they select and dispose (or 'configure') their histories using many of the same rhetorical and structural considerations as writers of fiction. Historians select their events, arrange them, and correlate them with a coherence that has tenuous objective manifestation, that is to say, they describe past actions as constituting a sensible whole with a meaningful but arbitrary beginning, development, and conclusion.[61] White's insight rests in part upon Northrup Frye's argument that the contours of an historical narrative, as in fiction, are determined by "pre-generic plot-structures" and archetypes which 'emplot' events.[62]

Dio shows no awareness of his work. The *Historia Augusta*, Tac. 10.3, attests to the sense that Tacitus' popularity was late. On Tacitus' belated appreciation, see also Schellhase (1976) 3–16. Potter (1999) 34–35, observes "the differential speed at which works of literature could have an influence" from the 2nd c. C.E. onward as compared with the Republic. Part of the reason was the normative preference for the earliest available historian on a subject. Cf. Marincola (1997a) 281–82.

[60] See, e.g., Marincola (1997a) 161–62, aptly citing Lucian *Histr. conscr.* 51.

[61] Hayden White developed this idea most fully in *Metahistory* (1973), whose thesis is succinctly recapitulated in (1974) 278, where historical narratives are said to be "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as they are *found* and [sic] the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences." See also Mink (1987) 43–47, for an overview of earlier views than White's, namely among them Arthur Danto's, 45. See 45 n.3 for bibliography. For a historical overview of narratology as applied to historiography, see Fludernik (2005) 43. These theories have been pervasive since the early nineteen-nineties: see, e.g., Grethlein and Krebs (2012), with bibliography.

[62] Frye (1957) and (1963) 53–54. The phrase "pre-generic plot structures," although apparently quoted by White (1974) 279, does not appear in Frye's work. It is none the less a useful phrase.

Both literary theorists were in turn inspired by the philosopher R. G. Collingwood's argument that historical thinking (i.e., extrapolating what happened in the past) is a distinct form of reasoning, neither scientific nor philosophic, in part because the past can be neither repeated nor controlled.[63] This line of argument, in short, sees historians not exclusively as scientists uncovering discrete events or data to recite to contemporary audiences a sequence of related events, but as narrators who configure facts and events in conformity with rhetorical considerations which may or may not include the truth.[64] As we have seen, ancient commentators were keenly aware of the tension between historians as reporters and historians as story-tellers, and more generally of the plastic relationship between language and reality, as Marincola observes, and as Wiseman, Woodman, and others have emphasized *ad absurdum*.[65] All historiography, in short, makes a claim to the truth of the events as such, even as it depends upon non-veridical criteria to configure those events into a meaningful narrative.

Events, whether factual or fictitious, can be woven into narrative. The act of mind that holds these events in a coherent fabric was analyzed by Louis Mink, who argued that readers comprehend, or "grasp together," the discrete phenomena which successively present themselves to consciousness, in one of three irreducible modes of understanding, namely, the theoretical, the categoreal, and the configurational, as described below. Historiography relies mainly upon the

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[63] Collingwood (1946) 1–13.

[64] The view that historiography can achieve an approximately veridical correspondence with the events described is habitually denoted by the apothegm of Leopold von Ranke, who promised to describe the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen ist" ("as it really was"). Danto and White are foundational for the post-modern view of historiography in the anglosphere. Astonishingly, neither was aware of the other's work, as Ankersmit (1985) 388, describes, even though both attended Wayne State University and found inspiration in the history professor William Bossenbrook. On the "linguistic turn" which they represent in the philosophy of history, see Batstone (2009) 25–30 , with bibliography. On the problems translating and interpreting Ranke's apothegm, see Gilbert (1987). See also Finley (1986) 47–53.

On configurations: Mink (1987) 53, defines a "configurational mode" of understanding, which is the particular configuration of events that gives any one event its meaning, in contrast with theoretical and categoreal understanding, as in science and philosophy, respectively. For him, it is a distinct mode of comprehension, i.e., of relating phenomena to each other.

[65] Wiseman (1979) and Woodman (1988) provide extensively referenced arguments for the largely fictive content of especially the early historians, of which I provide only a *précis* below. See also V. Hunter (1982).

configurational, and to some degree upon the theoretical mode. Whereas Frye construed narrative as a mode of signification that imitates the archetypal patterns derived from nature, and Gallie ascribed to it a power of producing meaning primarily by the choice and disposition of the ending, Mink observed that narratives produce meaning by the complex of overlapping descriptions that apply to each constituent part. For example, one's first day of work is only the 'beginning of one's career' if viewed from the assumed retrospect of many such days in succession that are latterly comprehended as a 'career.' The relation between these two descriptions is not causal, but coincidental: the first day does not cause or produce the career, nor does the latter perception of a career cause the 'first' day *in toto*, but merely the description of its being first; both 'first day' and 'career' are comprehended under a common idea, which gives them a retrospective or prospective meaning. Similarly, Vergil's Aeneas is not merely building the city Lavinium, he is founding what will, indirectly, become Rome. Lavinium coincides with Troy in the past and Rome in the future, even as Aeneas' founding Lavinium does not *cause* Romulus to found Rome. Aeneas himself is also the locus of overlapping descriptions as the putative forebear of Augustus, who in turn becomes a refounder of Rome upon his accession. Events thus acquire meaning both by looking forward (as in Gallie) *and* backward in their signification. The carefully woven web of associations that authors and historians make configures the sequence of events into a meaningful whole, in which causality is only one possible relation. Configurations provide a complex rubric by which the words, sentences, and chapters of a narrative are selected and constructed in a network of signification. Historical narratives are generally configurations of events considered to be factual, related by something more than associative fancy, even if not by strict causality (though causality is certainly one way they can be related). This is the configurational mode of comprehension.

Of the theoretical mode of comprehension, we have already encountered an example in the works of Sallust. This mode consists in deriving a general, abstract principle, which may be expressed by a concise and elegant formula, and which may serve as a key to unlock the mysteries of nature or history. The instances that confirm and illustrate this principle are valued not for their own sake, but merely as proofs or demonstrations of the theory. Primarily this is the mode of comprehension in the sciences, where no single experiment or proof is significant beyond the broader conclusion that it supports. But the theoretical mode is applied to historiography when the historian propounds a theory explaining and governing the events that he relates. Sallust's disquisitions on earlier history in the monographs represent the course of history as a gradual decline from virtue to vice and from concord to discord, of which trend the Catilinarian conspiracy and the Jugurthine war are notable examples.[66] The disparate events of the *Zuozhuan* are likewise comprehended by a tacit, but thereby no less forceful theory, that when *lǐ* is neglected and *dé* fades, chaos ensues. As the theoretical mode is, for its formulaic reducibility, the decline narrative *par excellence*, it may appear to be either the truest—or the only—configuration of narrative that may be described as a decline. Thus Vassiliades argues that decline in historiography first appears not in Calpurnius Piso's isolated remark that the decline in virtue began at a certain date, which for him demonstrates merely that Romans were attempting to fix the date when virtues yielded to vices, but when the decline is clearly articulated as a theory and rigorously applied to the events of history. It is with this assumption that he speaks of the theories of decline in Hesiod, Plato,

[66] Probably the now fragmentary *Historiae* had a similar, if less neatly argued, theory as these. See e.g., fr. 7 Reynolds, *Nobis primae dissensiones vitio humani ingeni evenere, quod inquies atque indomitum semper in certamine libertatis aut gloriae aut dominationis agit* ("Our first conflicts arose by a flaw of human nature that, restless and unchecked, proceeds in the struggle for liberty, for glory, or for domination"). Cf. also fr. 11, 13, 16, etc.

Aristotle, and others as "*not yet* applied to historiography."[67] The main thrust of his excellent and expansive work is that Sallust first both voiced a theory and rigorously applied it to history. Livy, he believes, developed a similar theory which, in his less focused, more comprehensive narrative, yielded different implications.

On this logic, the *Zuozhuan*, though recognized as the *locus classicus* for the historiographic narratives of decline, would be precluded from consideration as the narrative's first appearance, as would any history written either on the tacit theory or the broader configuration of events turning discernibly, even if not obviously, for the worse. What Vassiliades' inadvertently demonstrates in his survey of Greek and Roman theories of decline is that the extent to which the hypotheses of the philosophers or conceits of the poets were anything more than an occasional ornament in historiography is doubtful. Of the surviving Latin historians, the strongest case by far for a philosophical historian is Sallust; for Livy, in whose extant books philosophical disquisitions are few, sparse, and relatively tepid, the case is weaker. Since, however, ancient readers seem not to have considered Sallust exceptional in his organization or focus, remarking rather on his style, it is possible that an historian of similarly philosophical orientation but less distinctive language would pass unremarked.[68] If, for example, Cassius Hemina's two 'philosophical' fragments are not ornaments but programmatic statements, we would not necessarily know.[69] Only much later did Augustine see in Sallust a confirmation of Rome's early decadence, and have modern scholars marveled at

[67] Vassiliades (2020) 53, "aucun d'entre eux [sc. Thucydides, Polybius, Posidonius, Piso, and Varro] ne semble avoir fait de son récit l'histoire de la décadence de Rome ou d'un autre État. La question de la dégradation morale et politique ne revient que comme un thème qui permet de mieux comprendre le sujet que se fixe chaque auteur comme matière principale de son récit." In other words, before Sallust and Livy, historians spoke of decline only *en passant*. It is thus that he refers to "La décadence dans la littérature grecque: une réflexion philosophique et historique développée, mais *pas encore* une histoire du déclin," ibid. 41 (emphasis added).

[68] As Potter (1999) 69–70 observes, Cicero evaluated historians largely on style; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, on whether the historian either focused on a single locality or synthesized diverse sources into a general or topical history.

[69] Rawson (1976) 690 sees Hemina as little more than "at home with the commonplaces of Greek philosophy." In any case, the scope of Hemina's five books, spanning from pre-Romulan times to the present, would not be conducive to a focused application of theory.

the prominence and extent of his philosophical prefaces. Besides these examples, Posidonius's history of Rome after 155 B.C.E. may be supposed to have applied what appear in his philosophical fragments to be theories of decline, yet nothing suggests that even those Roman historians who would be interested in his work ever read him.[70] Polybius, whose history of Rome's rise Posidonius was continuing, is often credited as the most theoretical of historians, but his concern is with the proper practice of history, for which purpose he devised a specific vocabulary of causality and a self-promoting typology of source-criticism, while giving no sign that his history deviated from its apparent conclusion that the Romans' mixed constitution uniquely evaded the cyclical decline and renewal of anacyclosis. The philosophers themselves reflect that the indifference of historiography toward philosophy was mutual: Plato and Aristotle illustrate the stark divide by their paltry attention to the questions of what happened in the past and how it can be known.[71] Plato has only a passing interest in decline, mainly as it relates to political constitutions. In the *Republic*, constitutions proceed through a regular cycle of political decay and renewal (8.544d–546a). The argument is made not with historical example, but with theoretical principles. Aristotle has minimal interest in theories of decline, cyclical or otherwise. For him, constitutional change is irregular and unpredictable (*Politics* 5.12 1316a1–b24). He does, incidentally, attest to the underlying belief that historiography should tell truthfully of actual events, whereas its opposite, epic, described events that *might* happen. His brief and indifferent definition of historiography in the *Poetics* suggest that he considered the essence of historiography to be the chronicle, in as much as he defines epic by its unity of action in a coherent plot, whereas historiography is a unity of the time within which all

[70] ibid. 703.
[71] Mink (1987) 42 summarizes Enlightenment philosophers' disdain for historiography, referring to Descartes and Hegel.

events are recorded (*Poetics* 1451b and 1459b).[72] Plato and Aristotle were, in short, not particularly interested in matters of history except as illustrations of their principles, and even then they preferred the mythic or naturalistic to the historical example. What Sallust seems to do more than any extant historian is rigorously to apply a theory to historical events.[73] Philosophies of decline can thus tell us much about the intellectual environment of the historian and the types of argument that would be considered persuasive. In light of the gulf between philosophy and history and the singularity of Sallust's theoretical penchant, it is mistaken to view pre-Sallustian historiography as "not yet" applying a theory. Historians had, as they themselves knew and as Mink explains, a mode of comprehending the past that is quite distinct from the philosophers'.[74]

First Frameworks of the Narrative: Oral Traditions and Chronicles

It is clear now that decline can be a theory, and that as a theory it can be explicit, as in Sallust's prefaces. As in the *Zuozhuan*, the theory can also be implicit by deliberate selection and arrangement.[75] What the *Zuozhuan* further demonstrates is that the implicit theory can be embodied imperfectly, as in the inclusion of events and language that so deviate from the prevailing theory that some parts of the narrative seem not to match the spirit or the tone of the whole. These inconsistencies were, as mentioned earlier, the grounds for millennia of editorial disquiet about the integrity and authenticity of the text. Since these doubts have in the last century been largely dispelled, what

[72] Aristotle said notoriously little about historiography and seems to have regarded it as so inferior to philosophy proper as not to merit consideration. That view, however, did not prevent him from practicing historiography. For bibliography on Aristotle's view of historiography, see Powell (2023). Moles (1993) 88 n.1.
[73] Ancient commentary seldom discussed historians' theories. Sallust is mentioned in terms mainly of style, as of Vell. Pat. 2.36.2 and Quint. *Inst.* 10.101 comparing him vaguely to Thucydides. See Scanlon (1980) 166–213 for commonalities of theme, style, and specific allusions. As the extent to which an historian was 'theoretical' was simply not a matter of evaluation, if any lost historians were equally theoretical, it would not be obvious to us.
[74] See also the discussion in G. W. Bowersock (1994) 1–27.
[75] Potter (1999) 12–19 provides a referenced summary of ancient historians' discussions of the criterion of discovering 'the true' (*to alēthēs*). In short, ancient historians saw the true as their object, even as the best methods of discovering it was a matter of contention.

we should conclude is not that the fourth-century compilers were inept, but that their professional integrity preserved inconvenient matters of fact in the record. They thereby illustrate that, whereas philosophers may tell self-contained anecdotes of an historical nature as proofs of a theory (thus prominently in Plato and Confucius), and although historical narratives are partially fictive, historians were always constrained by the existence of an objective reality which they must by common consent report, and by the fact that only small pieces of that reality are preserved and transmitted, and no less by the fact that the preserved pieces are distorted by their sources' biases. For the first historians, who configured the events available to them into narrative, those biases can be classified as being of two major types, the bias of oral traditions and the bias of chronicles. The oral tradition is of especial importance for two reasons: first, because it probably supplied the preponderance of the events and their details preserved in the earliest histories; and second, because it preserved much of the information in the vehicle of the anecdote, whose durable form smuggled some of the features of oral tradition into literary history.

Anecdotes are the smallest element of oral transmission that pertain to historiography.[76] Before we consider their form, we must justify our dismissing units smaller than the anecdote. We come to the question of whether a language indelibly encodes the temporality of its morphology and syntax into its speakers' conception of time. This can be a tempting hypothesis. After all, the earliest that one can trace the human mind's conception of the past and its relation to the present is through linguistics.[77] The inquiry, however, quickly becomes conjectural and soon founders on the evidence that linguistic determinism has weak predictive power. In short, we might simply

[76] Particularly insightful on oral history are, in general, Vansina (1985) and, as relates to ancient Greek historiography, Thomas (1992).

[77] On the conception of time in early language, see Binnick (1991) 3–9, esp. 4. Certainly, the notion of 'three times' (sc. past, present, and future) is prehistoric, 3. Cf. also Kullmann (2004) 390, on time in narrative and speeches in the *Iliad*. Early conceptions of time can also be found in the study of oral traditions. See, e.g., Vansina (1985) 174–78.

remark that, in as much as speakers of languages in which past, present, and future times are left unmarked can in fact form notions of time and aspect no less complex than those of speakers of languages which necessarily mark this information, the correlation between language and the grasp of time and causality is, for most speakers of most languages, very slight at most.[78] Linguistics at present can say little about conceptions of time or the origins of historiography. 'Linguistic determinism' might more accurately be called 'mild linguistic predilection.' It has no demonstrable effect on the semantic unit that interests us, the anecdote.

Essentially anecdotes are self-contained narratives developed in conversation, which can drift among contexts, often with adjustment to details but a discernible core of persons, deeds, quotations, and events. The Roman *exemplum* may be considered a species of anecdote that is cited to illustrate a specific point, that is to say an anecdote becomes exemplary when it is used to illustrate a virtue, vice, or some other point.[79] They are useful in our analysis because of their intergeneric flexibility: they can be digested into philosophy, biography, horography, and any variety of history, while at the same time they are complex enough to reflect, in microcosm, a larger story of decline. In the early Roman tradition, anecdotes are difficult to discern. That they were both of a long history and extensive influence can be little doubted, as the existence of the compilation of exempla by Valerius Maximus attests. The *Zuozhuan*, among other early works of Chinese literature, is

[78] On "tenseless" language, see Binnick (1991) 444–47.

[79] This definition is my own. I have yet to discover an exhaustive definition of anecdote or a comparison of anecdotes with exempla. Schaberg (2011), writing on the anecdote in early Chinese philosophy and historiography, does not explicitly define the difference but implies it at, e.g., 411: the *Lüshi Chunqiu* "catalogue[s] anecdotal knowledge, but reduces it to a relatively weak exemplary function." He refers elsewhere (e.g., 397) to the citing of anecdotes to prove a point. Thus the *exemplum* is a narrower application of the anecdote. Anecdotes, moreover, have certain formal features—viz., a beginning, middle, and ending—that can be evoked for an exemplary function. From these observations we may conclude that anecdotes are best defined by form, exempla, by function. It would thus be appropriate to say that the *Zuozhuan* comprises anecdotes, but that they are not presented as *exempla*. Cf. *Shiji* (1959) 76.2375, where it is recorded that the itinerant advisor–scholar Yu (虞卿者，游說之士也, "Official Yu was an itinerant *shì*") composed a book of extracts from the *Chunqiu* classified by topics including "Standards and Principles," "Titles and Terms," "Second-guessing," and "Political Consultations" (節義、稱號、揣摩、政謀, tr. Nienhauser), "with which he critiqued the successes and failures of statecraft" (以刺譏國家得失, tr. sec. Nienhauser).

built principally upon anecdotes of wide circulation, as many are also retailed, with variation of detail and emphasis, in the *Guoyu* 國語.[80] As anecdotes are often either protreptic or apotreptic, their details and the orientation of their narrative derive in part from a moral topic of concern, such as *crudelitas* or *pietas*, *lǐ* (ritual propriety) or *bào* 報 (nemesis). Their strong tendency toward moralism, and their assumed equation of past events with current events bespeak a dualistic conception of history to which we will return in connection with oral traditions.

The correlation between language and memory is well established by empirical research, particularly as regards how events are narrated, how narratives are remembered, and how associations are formed between words and referents.[81] For the origins of historiography, we should remark the distinction between individual or personal memory and collective memory. Collective memory is a social form of memory which consists in the interaction of the fragmented knowledge of the past distributed among multiple individuals and shaped by its material preservation in monuments and non-literary memorials.[82] Either type of memory has its peculiarities of selection and organization, but certain features are common. For example, the serial-position effect refers to the individual's tendency to remember the first item in a series (called the primacy effect) and the last item (the recency effect). Similarly for collective memory, the corpus of stories about a people's past broadly displays what Vansina termed the 'hourglass shape' and the 'floating gap.'[83] The hourglass shape describes the tendency of collective memory to cluster its lore around events in the remote past, often at the Creation, and in the recent past, of living memory, while intermediate events gravitate

[80] On the anecdotal nature of early Chinese historiography, see Schaberg (2001) 163–90 and passim. See also Schaberg (2011) 395–96.
[81] E.g., Corballis (2019) and Schott et al. (2005).
[82] The idea of the collective memory was developed by Halbwachs (1980).
[83] Vansina (1985) 168–69.

toward the primaeval or, more commonly, are forgotten.[84] On this model, the past and present are not continuous, as they are either strongly differentiated or absolutely equated, and either things that once existed no longer exist (such as that the gods once walked among men), or things that exist now have always existed.[85] This apparent distaste for gradations of change illustrates memory's propensity for what Goody and Watt termed, on the physiological analogy, 'homeostasis.'[86] In short, as more events occur, they displace older memory, and the gap of oblivion proceeds, while Creation floats at a constant remove in the past. The advancing span which obliviates intermediate events is the 'floating gap.'

The floating gap is a feature of the fundamental dualism of oral traditions, by which the past and the present are irreconcilably sundered. Oral traditions produce stories of the distant past as if it were another world, inhabited by a golden race or by giants, gods, or other creatures of fantasy. The types of historical, that is to say factual, information that oral traditions preserve, such as genealogies, tend to be reshaped to fit this dualistic conception. Oral genealogies leap from the mythic past to the present, with minimal gradation. A poet, as so often Pindar, may recall a distant, even mythic ancestor, to whom he promptly likens the honorand while the intervening generations are simply forgotten.[87] Athenian funeral orations appear also to have referred not to historical deeds within memory, but to the mythic deeds of ancestors.[88] Likewise Nestor's reminiscences

[84] Wiseman (1979) 44–45 notes that, even in relatively literate Rome of the second and first centuries B.C.E., the ancestors were conventionally placed on "an undifferentiated continuum which included everything from the regal period to the generation immediately before the speaker's oldest living contemporaries." See also n.20 with references to *prisca virtus* in Ovid and Martial.
[85] Invented traditions are a good example of this. See Hobsbawm (1983).
[86] Goody and Watt (1963) 308 use the term 'homeostasis' to refer to the reorganization and elimination of needless information (e.g., myths or traditions) to suit the conditions of the present, "which [process] may be regarded as analogous to the homeostatic organisation of the human body."
[87] Thomas (2007) 199.
[88] See also Thomas (1992) 104: "Even in classical Athens the epitaphic topic of the 'ancestors' consisted mainly of mythical achievements. As Momigliano remarked, Greek funeral orations and songs in honour of the dead did not apparently give rise to anything approaching biography"; see further ibid. 196–237.

quoted above: once upon a time, men were strong; now they are weak. There is no development or course of events between the two poles. Within this pre-literate genealogical framework, which in oral traditions fulfills the same chronologically organizing function as chronicles and, later, chronographies, anecdotes attach to individuals and events. The temporally dualistic configuration of this information, in which the exemplary past is directly analogous to the present, can affect the organization and substance of the early histories that depended upon this information. Anecdotes lack context. Exemplary thinking lacks context. Early histories initially lack context but gradually add it as they seek narrative coherence. They retain the assumption of the past as a model whence the present is a deviation.

How, then, do often moralistic anecdotes and other materials founded upon a dualistic conception of past and present become a continuous history? Mainly, they require a framework that puts disparate events on a single timeline. The Greek tradition of establishing a framework begins in some measure with Hesiod's *Theogony*, but more critically in Hecataeus's attempt to regularize a genealogy in historical times.[89] The Greek historiographic tradition before the mid-fourth century appears to have had little recourse to archival material, much less to chronicles.[90] Roman and pre-Han historians, however, have in common the elevation of a single, authoritative chronicle extending centuries beyond living memory. At Rome, the pontifical chronicle seems to have had no competitor. The Lu chronicle that is the *Chunqiu* had by its association with Confucius an insuperable authority.

[89] Fornara (1983) 4–6.
[90] Thomas (1989) 69–70 does not believe that archival evidence was commonly used for chronology, and for historical research more generally, until the mid-fourth century. Thucydides' citation of documents in book 5 is an early and usual instance. For striking examples of the chronological confusion in Herodotus, see ibid. 122.

Chronicles, at bottom, are the record of a date and an event (Quint. 2.4.2; cf. Asellio F1 C = Gell. 5.18.8).[91] There is no precise point at which a chronicle becomes either the 'annals' of the Roman annalists or, more elaborately, an *expositio rerum gestarum*, but in practice the indeterminacy is not a problem, because the continual, official act of recording the chronicle and the individual, deliberate, and focused act of compiling chronicled events into either annals or a narrative produced discrete, distinctive works.

The availability of an authoritative chronicle had at least two major effects on Roman and Chinese historiography. The first is that it allowed for the compilation of data from diverse sources. For early Roman historians, this includes the researches of Timaeus and other material that could be synthesized with local material, such as the *libri lintei* (the 'linen books'), and perhaps senate and family archives.[92] Synchrony was a laborsome, centuries-long process, which required its own specialization in the form of chronography, but it was made possible by the development of regular timelines such as those of Olympiadic or consular dating.[93] Among the major courts of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, tradition holds that three calendars were in use, with Jin using the Xia calendar and Lu using the Zhou calendar.[94] But the *Chunqiu* permitted not just the integration of non-chronicle data from Lu, but from other states as well, as much material is

[91] Cf. Sempronius Asellio's definition of *annales*: *annales libri tantummodo, quod factum quoque anno gestum sit, ea demonstrabant, id est quasi qui diarium scribunt, quam Graeci* ἐφημερίδα *vocant* ("Annals would merely report what happened and in what year it was done, like those who keep a diary, which the Geeks call an *ephēmeris*," fr. 1 C = Gell. 5.18.8).

[92] On Fabius Pictor's sources, Cornell (2013) 1.175; on Timaeus specifically, ibid.: "Although direct dependence cannot be conclusively proved in any given instance, many of the fragments of Fabius are reminiscent of the interests, methods, and outlook of Timaeus, and in general Timaeus is frequently, and rightly, seen as an indispensable source of both information and inspiration for the first Roman historians. Timaeus on early Roman history: *FGrHist* 566 T9b (= Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 1.6.1).

[93] The process began, apparently, with Hippias of Elis, in the late 5th c. B.C.E. On Greek–Roman synchrony, see Feeney (2007) *passim*.

[94] Shaughnessy (1999) 20. The principal difference was the relation of the new year to the Winter solstice, viz., the second new moon afterwards (Xia), the first new moon afterwards, or the first day of the lunar month containing the solstice (Zhou). For bibliography on the use of different calendars internal to the *Zuozhuan* to identify its source material, see Pines (2024) 22.

certainly from outside Lu sources. The integration of material was early, but imperfect. Livy, for instance, still has problems with early chronography, as when his attempts in books 31 through 45 to reconcile the consular year with Polybian, seasonal dating lead some events to be misplaced by a year.[95] So slow was the process of synchrony that even in Gellius's time embarrassing anachronisms were common (*NA* 17.21.1). But synchrony, however imperfectly effected, was only possible within the framework of absolute, rather than relative, dating.[96]

Chronicles help synchronize key events, but they offer very little in the way of detail about those events, and little if anything of explanation. In both Roman and Chinese historiography, that omission leaves open the question of how the meager chronicles relate to the annals and histories that were built upon them. From later sources, we know that Cato's *Origines* comprised seven books; Hemina, four or five; and Pictor, presumably fewer. These numbers explode to perhaps ninety-seven books of Cn. Gellius, some seventy-five for Valerius Antias, and slightly fewer for Claudius Quadrigarius (whose history only began at the Gallic Sack of Rome, in 390 B.C.E.). But as we know only the numbers of books and a few fragments of their contents, we can say neither whence nor whereof the expansive new material. Badian proposed a simple, seductive solution: Gellius invented his material, for he "set himself the task of filling in what had hitherto existed only in outline," for which purpose, finding a dearth of material, he "must have used to the full the freedom that Hellenistic historians allowed themselves of inventing the verisimilar to eke out the meagre truth."[97] In other words, Gellius saw a list of events and made a romance out of it. Badian

[95] Examples in Rich (2011) 6–7. Cf. Luce (1977) 59–64, who attempts to explain some of Livy's chronological inconsistencies as a matter of grouping thematic material. On the Second Macedonian War, he was simply mistaken, ibid. 65.
[96] Cf. Cato's *Origines*, which appear to have used primarily relative dating.
[97] Badian (1966) 11–12.

implied that this phenomenon included more than just Gellius and termed it "the expansion of the past."[98]

This argument is profoundly flawed. First, it should be noted that Badian argues for the expansion of the past by referring only to two historians, Gellius and Piso. As it turns out, however, Badian does not really mean that Piso *expanded* the past; he merely *distorted* it, which he infers indirectly from a single fragment. That leaves Gellius's large history as the sole instance of a proposed general phenomenon. As it happens that Gellius's work is among the least known of the early historians, Badian gestures first to Gellius's access to the *Annales Maximi*, which he supposes to have supplied enough material to inflate Gellius's books a little while spurring him to enliven the drab account with the colors of drama. As a precedent for these fabrications, Badian next gestures to the fictions of "Hellenistic historians," omitting mention of either the Greeks' or the Romans' severely censorious attitude toward precisely this species of historical fabrication, as we described earlier.

This small idea, abortive at its germination, would likely have withered when Frier removed the *Annales Maximi* from consideration as a source for Piso, but that Wiseman transplanted it to richer soil, where it has proven more tenacious. Wiseman expanded copiously upon Badian's conjecture in the following form: Piso, he believes, was the first annalist, and as an annalist he must have ordered his narrative by the consular year.[99] Gellius must have seen that Piso's annalistic account displayed gaps in the record that Gellius, impelled by an *horror vacui*, filled with the artifices of his imagination. The one firm stone in the foundation of this argument is the fact, as observed by Luce, that the historian Valerius Antias *did* undoubtedly fabricate large portions of his history, and that there is therefore at least one Roman historian who defied the professional

[98] ibid. 11.
[99] Wiseman (1979) 14.

norms so strenuously asseverated elsewhere.[100] This is scant evidence, which Wiseman supplements with a reference to Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing some thirteen centuries after Piso, who perhaps more plausibly attached fantastical material to the framework of chronicles.[101] But Wiseman's inferences that therefore the unaccountably voluminous Gellius must have likewise fabricated the bulk of his histories, and that he did so because of the gaps in annals, are built on sand. The very premise, moreover, that Piso must be the first annalist is based on nothing more than his being the first historian whose work is preponderantly cited by the title '*Annales*,' despite the fact that his work is not uniformly cited by that title, which is also applied to other, roughly contemporaneous historians, and that in any case none of our citing authorities reliably transmits the titles of the early historians' works.[102] In short, the argument at every juncture is tenuous.

Further errors in Wiseman's analysis can help lead us to a clearer view of the relation between chronicles and the material that attaches to them over time. Wiseman believes that Piso created a chronicle out of consular and triumphal lists to name a magistrate for every year of the Republic.[103] He also believes that there was little detail where events *were* reported and that little or nothing might be recorded as events for some years.[104] The *horror vacui* which he attributes to Gellius,

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[100] Wiseman's *horror vacui* is a reference to Luce (1977) 65, *horror vacui temporis*, in which a discrepancy of dates between Polybian and consular dating left Valerias with a period of seemingly inexplicable period of inactivity. Unlike Wiseman, Luce's use of the term does not propose a systematic theory of filling in the gaps of the chronicle. Badian notes the expansion of the past more generally and attributes it to inventive power. Wiseman synthesizes and systematizes the two ideas, suggesting that all chronicles have gaps, and all historians suffer *horror vacui* that prompts them to invention.

[101] The argument at Wiseman (1979) 21–22 appears to be that because the Roman annalists and Geoffrey faced a similar paucity of sources and abundance of legend, their reactions were identically inventive. This ignores that the early Roman annalists were later censured by Hemina, Cicero, and others precisely for *not* being exciting or inventive. Cf. Fornara (1983) 25, who believes Hemina was the first annalist; Frier (1999) 255–71, esp. 271, and Rich (2011) 16–18, who argue that annalistic arrangement probably began with the first historian, Pictor.

[102] Wiseman (1979) 12–13. For example, Coelius Antipater, who certainly wrote a monograph, on the Second Punic War, is cited ten times (all by Nonius) as *annales*, and ten times as *historia*/*historiae*. See Frier (1999) esp. 216–24, on how the Romans themselves differentiated 'annalists' and 'historians.' In short, the distinction was contested. See also criticism in Verbrugghe (1989) 197 n.13, who remarks that Livy 9.44.4 "implies there were *annales* available for Piso's consultation."

[103] Wiseman (1979) 17. But, as the discrepancies in Livy demonstrate, Piso does miss years.

[104] ibid. 18.

unless it is to be understood to refer merely to Gellius's supposed sense that Piso's history was deficient in a total meagerness of detail, must refer to a desire for a more even distribution of events across years, to 'flesh out' the "skeleton" of the annals.[105] The analogy of the *horror vacui* both misapplies the analogy from physics and misreads the sense in which Luce used it. As a matter of physics, we have already seen that, unlike particles, events do not seek even distribution, whether in memory or in the record, nor even an hourglass or inverted-pyramid shape. Rather, they cluster, even in Livy.[106] More importantly, 'gap' years seem not to have greatly bothered even the annalists, as again Livy speaks only briefly of years of the Middle Republic where almost nothing happens. Moreover, where Luce used *horror temporis vacui*, he was describing a very specific circumstance in which Antias—not Gellius—did not *see* a gap, but rather erroneously inferred a gap. That gap was not in the annalistic record *per se*, that is to say, it was not a visible lacuna, but rather a mirage borne of the mistaken conversion of the consular and Polybian dating for the events of 200–199 B.C.E. Thus in one prominent case where we *can* see clear invention, it is not by Gellius, and it is not in response to an eventless year.

We may compare the Roman situation, in which invention seems to have been quite restrained, with the *Chunqiu.* In some places the *Zuozhuan* fills in a year which is empty in the *Chunqiu* chronicle, but as there are likewise *Chunqiu* entries for which there is no corresponding *Zuozhuan* commentary, our conclusion should be that the early Chinese historians, like their Roman counterparts, first prized neither the sheer mass of history nor the even distribution of events across the years, but rather employed the chronicle as a temporal frame upon which to hang the fruits of

[105] ibid. 24: "… the consular and triumphal lists, that skeleton on which the later annalists fleshed out their narratives, could themselves provide ready-made historical material by the application of one simple principle," namely, the license for invention without the bounds of plausibility.
[106] Rich (2011) 11: "Livy passes rapidly over some years and sometimes over a whole series of years in order to make space available for extended treatment of key episodes."

research that was by the standards of the time avowedly scrupulous. Historians like Timaeus and Antias were censured for their blatant fabrication.[107] More generally, then, early historians were not 'topping off' a year or 'fleshing out the skeleton' of the chronicle; they were answering questions and compiling information from multiple sources. The chronicle, moreover, did not delimit the topics of the history by restricting elaboration only to those events preserved in the chronicle. In the Roman tradition, Cato complains of dry-as-dust entries in the *tabula dealbata* of the pontifex maximus and Asellio reproaches the writers of *annales* as writing jejune stories for children, yet we know that Pictor, in whose time the *tabulae dealbatae* may well have been a significant source for dating events, preserved a great deal of mythological material that cannot have been in the pontifical chronicle, while the annalist Piso, too, whatever the infelicities of his style, wrote on events that are very unlikely to have been preserved in any known known Roman chronicle. Where chronicles do determine the content of the histories that grow upon them is in the genre of direct commentaries on the chronicle, as in the case of the *Gongyang* and *Guling* commentaries that explicate the *Chunqiu* line by line. The chronicle, in sum, was a tool for ordering and correlating events. It did not foster the fabrication of events to fill gaps, nor did it limit historians to the character of the material in the chronicle.

Where there is evidence that chronicles fostered invention, it was not at the gaps in the record, but at the record's beginning. Chinese historiography in particular had a pronounced tendency to expand backwards, as the king lists of the Shang, and later the Xia, dynasties expanded just as Han historians such as Sima Qian and Ba Gu filled out their histories. In part this posterior gravitation was for rhetorical reasons. As Chinese rhetorical practice placed extraordinary weight upon the antiquity of any precedent or exemplum, anecdotes were strongly attracted to the earliest plausible

[107] Livy on Valerius Antias's mendacity, 26.49.3: *adeo nullus mentiendi modus est* ("there is no end of the lying"). Also 33.10.8, 36.38.7, 38.23.8.

date.[108] Thus when the early Western Han dynasty (202 B.C.E. – 9 C.E.) was seeking foundations for its legitimacy after the fall of Qin, the remote past of the early Zhou, Shang, and Xia offered abundant and fertile ground for imperial fictions.[109] Although Rome already had a Greek pedigree by the time of its empire,[110] the past was standardized and greatly expanded in the late Republic and, finally, as an act of imperial legitimation under Augustus.[111] In short, origins, not interstices, beget expansion.

What, then, is the role that chronicles play in the formation of historical narrative? The second-century Roman annalists probably, and the compilers of the *Zuozhuan* definitely, inherited a chronicle that served as a frame for events that seemed to them both historically plausible and thematically relevant. That the criteria for selection could permit the inclusion of exceedingly dull, or else abstruse, material does not preclude the careful and intentional selection and editing of other material. As we have already seen in the case of Sallust, an historian's 'theoretical' sophistication was very seldom cause for comment or citation in the citing authorities upon whom we depend. If the *Zuozhuan* survived only in fragments—even in a great many fragments—, it would be all but impossible to argue for its thematic unity.[112] If, for example, the passage about Chong'er's virtuous

[108] Poo (2008) 85–86. The discovery that, in the Chinese tradition, the later the text, the earlier its supposed beginning of historical narrative, is among the key intellectual contributions of Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980). See *Gu shi bian* 古史辯 1 (1926) 60 ("Discussing Ancient Historiography with Mr. Qian Xuantong"《與錢玄同先生論古史書》), which formulates three principles: 1) the later the legend, the earlier its historical claim, 2) the later the legend, the more exaggerated its key personages, and 3) the less is known of a matter, the more detailed a legend's description (1. 時代愈後，傳說的古史期愈長。2. 時代愈後, 傳說中的中心人物愈放愈大。3. 即不能知道某一件事的真確的狀況，但可以知道某一件事). For an English-language interpretation of Gu's views, see Schneider (1971) esp. 200–202. For an overview of works on early myth and history in China, see Lewis (2009) 543–48.

[109] The process of expanding the early dynastic past under Han Wudi is described by Queen (1996) 129 and passim.

[110] The relation of early Roman literature to Greek models is the subject of Feeney (2016). See esp. 152–78.

[111] More general comparisons between the Western Han, especially under Chengdi, and Augustan Rome, can be found in Nylan, Vankeerberghen, and Loewe (2015).

[112] It is this fact which should prompt far greater caution than would allow for Vassiliades' premise, that historians before Sallust and Livy did not take decline as a major theme, but only as minor theme that reflects on the main subject of the story ("La question de la dégradation morale et politique [sc., in authors such as Piso and Varro] ne revient que comme un thème qui permet de mieux comprendre le sujet que se fixe chaque auteur comme matière principale de son récit," 53). The basis for this assertion is that the pre-Sallustian authors only exist in fragments, and thus any larger narrative they exposited or implied is irretrievably lost.

conduct retailed at "Lord Xi" 5.27.3c survived in isolation, it might appear to be merely an explanation for Jin's and their allies' victory at Chengpu in the following year, or even merely one of many anecdotes illustrating his character. In the broader history, however, as will be shown in greater detail in Chapter 3, it is possible to contrast it with Jin's defeat at Bi, to connect it with themes of virtuous conduct and victory more broadly, and to see it as an acme whence future episodes might appear to paint a trend of decline. The complete *Zuozhuan* demonstrates a process which shapes pre-existing material into a coherent theme. Thus Piso's remark about the beginning of the decline in fr. 40 implies a larger theme that has simply not been preserved, much as if only one or a few passages of the *Zuozhuan* survived.

It is therefore both conjectural and arbitrary to propose that Sallust is the originator of the narrative of decline, simply because his predecessors' remarks on this theme appear in isolation.[113] A clearer understanding of the origins and development of the narrative of decline must consider the distinct possibility that a coherent decline narrative could have existed before Sallust. A clearer, more flexible typology of the ways that decline can be invoked will help us to avoid categorical statements that exclude certain authors on arbitrary grounds. Given the probably oral nature of many historical sources, it is not looking too far afield to see clearly that Albert Lord's, as well as the neo-analysts', theories of oral composition can be applied to historiography. Lord described how oral poets could compose long, hypotactical epics. His first-hand research of living oral poets in the Balkans discovered that oral poets link together themes, or "repeated incidents and descriptive passages."[114] Themes organize the contents of a narrative at two levels: minor themes are type-

[113] Vassiliades (2020) 53 lacks the evidence to declare, "En effet, les deux historiens [sc., Sallust and Livy] sont sans doute les premiers penseurs de l'histoire à concevoir et à écrire une histoire de la décadence morale et politique d'un État."

[114] Lord (1965) 4. See esp. 92, "In all these instances one sees also that the singer always has the end of the theme in his mind. He knows where he is going. As in the adding of one line to another, so in the adding of one element in a

scenes, such as scene of a warrior arming for battle, that comprises a core of fixed content, the details of which can, in the hands of an able poet, be adjusted to reflect some aspect of the major theme.[115] Major themes are related events which provide the poet's story its overall shape, usually at the beginning and the end, and colors the episodes between them. One prominent example is that the major theme of the *Iliad* is Achilles' rage, which begins in book 1 and is resolved in book 24, which is reflected in approximate microcosm in minor themes, such as the death of Patroclus. These minor themes are in turn built from even smaller themes, and, ultimately, in oral poetry, from verbal formulae. By a slight loosening of Lord's definitions, I believe his terminology can elucidate the relation between part and whole of an historical narrative: 'minor themes' in historiography can include 'type-scenes,' as in epic, such as scenes of plague or rout, but they can also refer to any thematic grouping at an episodic level. 'Major themes' are simply any patterns of concern that are repeated across most or all of the work. Thus in speaking of decline, we may distinguish between historians whose history takes decline as its major theme, as an organizing principle to which minor events are related in some way, or as a subordinate, minor theme. Polybius leaves little doubt that what occupies his creative fashioning of Roman history is how in fifty-three years Rome could attain hegemony. Decline appears as a matter of nature, in part to reflect on the unique durability of Rome's resilience, and in part, perhaps, to cast doubt on its ultimate longevity. Tacitus, too, meditates at times upon the supposed decline in virtue, but it is not the guiding light of his histories. Distinguishing major and minor themes helps to explain how

theme to another, the singer can stop and fondly dwell upon any single item without losing a sense of the whole. The style allows comfortably for digression or for enrichment. Once embarked upon a theme, the singer can proceed at his own pace." The historian is constrained by sources, but just like the singer he can "fondly dwell" on topics of interest while connecting them to the sense of the whole of the history.

[115] See W. Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933), cited in Edwards (1991) 11: Arend "showed that such scenes are each built up of a sequence of elements which normally occur in the same order, some elaborated to a greater or lesser extent to suit the circumstances, others appearing in minimal form or even omitted."

passages of historians can be written in the manner of a decline narrative, even as the history as a whole seems not to warrant it.

Conclusion

When did the narrative of decline begin in Roman historiography? It was not, as we have shown, simply when references to decadence first appeared in historians like Piso, nor when theories of decline were first applied to historiography. The earliest historiography imported some of the Golden Age character of pre-literary historical traditions, without arguing for decline as a fact of history. Where the narrative of decline begins is where historians first configured the events of narrative as constituting a decline. We thus have the groundwork for our remaining chapters. It appears that (I) the earliest Roman historiography was not written in this fashion, as we shall see in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, we shall demonstrate (II) that Chinese historiography presents a model for how both decline as a theory and decline as a configuration of events can coincide, and more-over (III) that pre-Sallustian Roman historians could well have developed decline as both major or a minor theme in their works. In Chapter 4, we shall see (V) that the Augustan age turned decline narratives into a form of imperial discourse that historians could define themselves against. In Chapter 5, we demonstrate (V) that Tacitus's reaction to the Augustan discourse is a sort of minor theme, but, in Chapter 6, that (VI) Tacitus appears not to adopt any one consistent trans-historical narrative..

Chapter 2

The Early Republican Historians' Narrative of Decline

The idea that things of value degenerate over time appears at the very beginnings of Western literature, in Homer and the Old Testament. In Roman culture in particular, the idea is manifest in the notional veneration of the *mos maiorum* ("the way of the ancestors"). Horace's *Odes* 3.6.45–48 succinctly conveys the idea:

> *Damnosa quid non inminuit dies?*
> *aetas parentum, peior avis, tulit*
> *nos nequiores, mox daturos*
> *progeniem vitiosiorem.*
>
> Pernicious Time—what does it not diminish? [Our] parents' age, worse than [our] grandparents', produced us [who are] viler, soon to bear a more vicious progeny.[116]

As is characteristic of oral, genealogical, and more generally 'popular' history,[117] Horace's typology confines itself to living memory.[118] In this, the ode's final stanza, his focus narrows across four generations from the grandsires' generation, which lacks any qualification, to a vaguely "worse" age of the parents, the present "us" who are specifically "viler" or "more worthless," to a future generation that is "more vicious." Tacitus, as we shall see in chapter 5, traces the first corruption to the very beginnings of civilization with the introduction of lust, law, and violence: "The

[116] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by me.
[117] On oral and genealogical history, see Chapter 1.
[118] The earlier portion of the poem admires the Pyrrhic War, the First Punic War, the Second Punic War, and the Aetolian War. Earlier generations degraded when marriage and the family were corrupted.

most ancient of mortals, with as yet no foul lust, lived without offense or crime and thus without punishment or coercion… After equality was cast aside, however, and there arose ambition and brute force instead of decency and restraint, tyrannies emerged and persisted for many peoples without end" (*Ann.* 3.26.1–8).[119]

These examples and the many others like them may seem to suggest that the Romans represented by our sources generally saw the past as morally superior and the present as decaying from old standards, whether because of luxury or inequality or some other reason.[120] It has also seemed reasonable to many scholars to assume *a fortiori* that the recorders of the *res gestae* of the Roman people would be rigorous exponents and explicators of this grim worldview.[121] Sallust's two monographs and Livy's preface appear to be ample confirmation. Among modern scholars of historiography, this assumption is the long-standing norm.[122] Yet it is not supported by any exhaustive inquiry, relying instead upon a presumed congruity of Roman historians' attitudes over time. In this chapter, I treat the question of when and how the Roman historians' narrative of decline began only so far as to suggest that there are grounds to doubt that two of the earliest historians, Fabius Pictor and the Elder Cato, wrote of Roman history in this way. It argues that the narrative's probable absence in the first Roman historian, Fabius Pictor, means that the earliest *moralistic* narrative is best assigned to Cato, while the earliest historical narrative of *decline* may be imputed after Cato, perhaps to the censor Calpurnius Piso Frugi.

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[119] *Vetustissimi mortalium, nulla adhuc mala libidine, sine probro, scelere eoque sine poena aut coercitionibus agebant... at postquam exui aequalitas et pro modestia ac pudore ambitio et vis incedebat, provenere dominationes multosque apud populos aeternum mansere.*

[120] See Baldry (1952) passim, whose derivation of the idea of a 'golden age' from Hesiod's χρύσεον γένος traces the language of decline to agricultural, and hence common, metaphor. Roman comedy, moreover, suggests that the idea of general decline was widely held in the Republican period. In the early empire, Petronius' Eumolpus (88) is, as Williams (1978) 11 observes, also likely to be a parody of the cliché diatribes about decline.

[121] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. P. Putnam (New York, 1954) 46, cited in V. Hunter (1982) 8.

[122] The striking dearth of scholarship on this subject is also noted in Biesinger (2016) 19

Fabius Pictor

Fabius Pictor, by all accounts, was the first Roman historian.[123] He wrote in Greek. He was also a senator of sufficient distinction to lead the embassy to Delphi in 216 (Livy 23.11.1–6) and may thus be assumed to have enjoyed an Hellenistic education and a familiarity with Greek culture, including, probably, with the work of the historian Timaeus, and very likely with other historians writing in Greek. He was writing at the time of the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.). Perhaps he started, as Frier suggests, much as Thucydides began his own history at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War,[124] or perhaps he wrote in outrage at the pro-Carthaginian account of Philinus of Acragas later on, but the fact remains that we do not know when he began writing or when—perhaps at his death, which could realistically be any time from 213 to the 190s—he stopped. From the fragments themselves, we know that his work included material on the foundation of Rome and anecdotes derived from his personal experience of affairs from as early as 233 onward. His history must have at least reached a point far enough in the war that no one, including Polybius, (who cited him as a tendentious authority on the First Punic War)[125] and Livy, felt that Fabius was incomplete. At all events, the latest event for which he is cited is the Battle of Lake Trasimene, in 217.[126] We do not know the title of his work.[127] He was translated at an unknown date into Latin, but we have no reason to believe that the Greek and Latin versions differed substantially, because

[123] He was clearly also recognized as the canonical first historian: Livy refers to him as *scriptorum antiquissimus Fabius Pictor* ("Fabius Pictor, the most ancient of writers," 1.44.2); see also 1. 55. 8, 2. 40. 10; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 7.7.1(= Jacoby T4b), παλαιότατος γὰρ ἀνὴρ τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ συνταξαμένων ("for [he was] the earliest man to compose Roman history").
[124] Frier (1999) 282–83.
[125] Polyb. 1.14–15.
[126] These conclusions follow Frier (1999) 236–39.
[127] Cic. *Div.* 1. 43, *Graecis annalibus* ("Greek annals"); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.6.2. καὶ Ῥωμαίων ὅσοι τὰ παλαιὰ ἔργα τῆς πόλεως Ἑλληνικῇ διαλέκτῳ συνέγραψαν, ὧν εἰσι πρεσβύτατοι Κόιντός τε Φάβιος κτλ. ("those of the Romans who composed the City's ancient deeds in the Greek language, of whom the earliest were Quintius Fabius *etc.*"). The contemporary name for Fabius' work is unknown. For discussion, see Rich (2018) 31, who concludes that "what title, if any, he gave his work is unknown, and the same goes for the other early histories written in Greek."

no source remarks upon this, including Cicero, who seems to have been familiar with both versions.[128] Notably for a relatively well cited historian , no fragment is a direct quotation, with the possible exception of Gellius 5.4.1–3 (= fr. 31 C),[129]. He seems to have been in circulation even in the Greek-speaking world, as is proven by the Tauromenium *dipinto* (discussed below), and to have been read as late as Servius Auctus, in the 4th century C.E.[130]

Might Fabius have written his history as a narrative of moral deterioration, or with traces of a desiderated golden age? A confident affirmative would mean that an historiographic narrative of decline existed *ab initio* in the Roman tradition and is therefore untraceable. A negative offers two interesting implications, namely, that there was a form of Roman historiography which, unlike any extant work, did not presume a golden age or a decline, and that the narrative of decline began at some point within the tradition of historiography and can perhaps be traced in some measure. To answer this question, we can look at Fabius's fragments themselves and at the various levels of context that might color our understanding of the fragments. Beginning with a fairly traditional scholarly view of the fragments, we find no self-explanatory evidence for a decline narrative. It will thus be clear how scholarly interpretations of early Roman historiography have attempted to contort Fabius's fragments into a narrative mold of decline that they do not fit.

Despite the absence of crucial information about Fabius's life, work, and purpose in writing, many claims have been made about his significance to the tradition of Roman historiography. One prominent strand of interpretation, to which we shall return, sees in Fabius an adumbration of the

[128] Cic. *Div*. 1.43 mentions *Fabi Pictoris Graeci Annalibus* ("Fabius Pictor's *Greek Annals*"); in *Leg.* 1.6 he is mentioned in the same breath as Cato the Elder, Fannius, and Vennonius, who all wrote in Latin. Thus Cicero seems to know both versions but does not differentiate them.
[129] All references, including those quoted from others, are to the edition of Cornell (2013).
[130] Serv. *Aen*. 12. 603 (= fr. 2), 5.73 (= fr. 28), 8.630–31 (= fr. 29). Q. Fabius Pictor the historian was also depicted by an ancestor, Numerius, in a coin dating from 126 B.C.E. See Crawford (1991) *RRC* 268.

Sallustian–Livian stereotype of Roman historiography. The most succinct exposition of this attitude remains Badian:

> Nor must we overlook the moral warning in Fabius' message: this Hellenized Roman senator was interested in the relation of morality to history, and he was to pass on this interest to the whole line of his successors. When he mentions the strict moral code ruling in Rome both in private life and in public, *he clearly connected this, as others were to do later, with Rome's rise to greatness*; and, *like his successors, he may have already looked back to a Golden Age, from which standards had now declined*.[131]

In this passage, Badian gathers several key beliefs of the larger myth about early Roman historiography. He offers (1) that Fabius was a moralist, i.e., that his history was concerned to distinguish good and bad actions; (2) that Fabius believed that Rome's ascendency was in some way related to moral action; (3) that Fabius may have believed in a golden age; (4) that the present standards had declined from this golden age; and (5) that, as is implied by "as others were to do later" and "like his successors," Fabius was an originator of a trope in Roman historiography that we see clearly only in Sallust and Livy. Each of these propositions derives its support either from an assumed semblance to Sallust and Livy or from a questionable interpretation of a small number of fragments. Yet the retrospective plausibility of Badian's assumptions has allowed them to permeate even recent and otherwise excellent scholarship.[132] In examining these few fragments, along with others, we will first perceive the tenuousness of Badian's assumptions, then propose instead that there is not only paltry evidence to support a claim of moralism, but that a systematic moralism throughout Fabius were more reasonably doubted.

[131] Badian (1966) 5–6, emphasis added.

[132] Frier (1999) 240–41 (1), 257–57 (1), and 266, shows (1) and (3), where he sees Fabius as decrying the influence of Sabine wealth on public morality, "a theme which became a stock motif in the annalistic tradition." 240–41 and 266 each refer to fr. 24 C, for which Frier (1999) is the most recent commentator cited in Cornell's commentary *ad loc*. (Gabba's 1988 argument in *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 31, 9–17, was, Cornell remarks, anticipated in Mommsen and Poucet.)

In support of his argument, Badian adduces frr. 14, 25; 20; 15; 26, 22, and 24 C as demonstrating Fabius's "concern with morality and its historical influence."[133] On closer inspection, however, the whole of Badian's argument for a deterioration in morals depends upon fr. 24 (a paraphrase, as quoted on page 47, below), of Fabius from Strabo where the Romans are said to have first "perceived" wealth when they "became masters of the Sabines"), because the other fragments neither show an overriding concern with moral behavior nor depict a loss of morality over time. Fr. 14, preserved in Cicero's account (*Div.* 1.55) of a traditional story about a peasant's (*rusticus*) divine punishment upon his repeatedly ignoring a dream from the gods, tells us nothing about its context or significance in Fabius. Cicero is citing the incident among multiple instances of prognosticatory dreams, but the story was so widely and variously reported, and Cicero's citation of Fabius is so vague, that not even the date of Fabius's version of the events can be surmised with confidence.[134] The anecdote appears to be an admonition for *pietas*, or proper ritual observance. In fr. 25 (= *Nat.* 14.89), the elder Pliny gathers historical incidents showing that women were formerly prohibited from wine (*Non licebat id* [sc., *vinum*] *feminis Romae bibere*, "Women at Rome were not permitted to drink it [i.e., wine]," 14.89 = Pictor fr. 25). Among these, he cites Fabius for a story that a Roman matron was punished by her relatives with starvation for opening a box holding the keys to the wine cellar. Here, Pliny, despite being an habitual moralizer, scarcely seems to be moralizing on women's *ebrietas* ('inebriation') at all, as his moral sensibility is a little later (*Nat.* 14.91) roused more by the extravagance and luxury of modern wine than by the sex of

[133] Badian (1966) 3. On Peter's numeration, our frr. Cornell = 15, 27, 24, 16; 20, 25, 28 Peter. Badian names fr. 27 P twice in the same list. I speculate that by the second citation he meant to indicate fr. 28 P (= 26 C), about legal restrictions on Roman magistrates' peculation, which is also cited in Frier. See below.

[134] Other versions are in Livy 2.36.1–37; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.68.3–69.2; Plut. *Cor*. 24.1–25.1; Macrob. *Sat.*1.1.3–5; Min. Fel. *Oct*. 7.3, 27.4; Arnob. *Nat.* 7.39; Lact. *Inst.* 2.7.20; August. *De Civ. D.* 4.26, 8.13. See Wardle (2006) 244–45. Cornell (2013) assigns the Fabian fragment's narrative somewhat misleadingly to 490 B.C.E., but, as is acknowledged in the commentary *ad loc*. (3.30), Cicero's version of the story "strictly speaking preserves a fragment of Coelius, and merely a reference to Fabius and Gellius."

those who consume it. In fact, the historian Piso Frugi's praise of Romulus's sobriety (also mentioned by Pliny, 14.89) implies that crapulence was a problem already at the foundation of Rome, and that Romulus was an exception.[135] On this early customary prohibition there are multiple later sources.[136] Among these, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.25.6.3–7.6) and especially Valerius Maximus (2.1.5) couch the tale in specifically moralistic terms that are quite absent in Pliny's version of Fabius.[137]

Badian does not explain his choice of this fragment. Frier suggests its chronological place in Fabius's history by connecting it to the divorce of Carvilius Ruga, in 231.[138] This seems plausible, but it is needless to connect the fragment to a pre-supposed narrative of decline by suggesting a thematic relevance to fr. 24 (the paraphrase about Romans' first perceiving wealth), to which we shall return. The relevance of fr. 20, which Frier tenably dates to Fabius's participation in the Ligurian campaign in 233, is not clear: Pliny describes (*Nat.* 10.71) Fabius's use of a messenger swallow. Fr. 15, found in the elaborate paraphrase of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom*. 7.70–3), details the opening procession for the Ludi Magni Romani of 490 B.C.E. and strongly implies Fabius's philhellenism, though it is impossible to disentangle his description from Dionysius's. Fr. 26 is the *Suda*'s entry on Φάβιος Πίκτωρ, which tells us that Fabius mentioned the prohibition on Roman magistrates' use of public monies. Cornell, like Badian, again attempts to connect this fragment vaguely to "moral questions," referring to fr. 25 (sc., on women's inebriation). Fr. 22 is

[135] 14.89, *Invenimus inter exempla Egnati Maetenni uxorem, quod vinum bibisset e dolio, interfectam fusti a marito, eumque caedis a Romulo absolutum* ("Among our examples we find that Egnatius Maetennus killed his wife with a club because she had drunk wine from the vat, and he was acquitted of murder by Romulus").
[136] For which, see *FRH ad* fr. 25.
[137] E.g., V. Max. 2.1.5, *Vini usus* ***olim*** *Romanis feminis ignotus fuit, ne scilicet in aliquod dedecus prolaberentur, quia proximus a Libero patre intemperantiae gradus ad inconcessam uenerem esse consueuit…* ("**Long ago**, the use of wine was unknown to Roman women, lest they should fall into shameful behavior, because it was agreed that the next step of intemperance after enjoyment of drink was to adultery…"); and *nulli enim* ***tunc*** *subsessorum alienorum matrimoniorum oculi metuebantur, sed* etc. ("For **at that time**, the eyes of those preying on others' marriage were not a cause for fear…").
[138] Frier (1999) 240, with bibliography.

Polybius's famous recounting of Fabius's belief that the Barcids, and the Carthaginian senate, were responsible for Carthaginian aggression and would seem to undermine Polybius's subsequent characterization (3.8.8) of Fabius's anti-Carthaginian bias. At all events, these fragments, gathered by Badian and marked in Cornell's commentary as moralistic, offer no clear evidence that Fabius was selecting or narrating stories to emphasize their moralistic component, unless one approaches these fragments expecting to find confirmation. The argument for their moralism becomes circular. If these are the most notable fragments, they are remarkable for how *little* evidence they offer of a moralistic view of history.

The one fragment that colors all the others, and is thus the keystone of Badian's view, is fr. 24. This fragment seems, however vaguely, to allude to the common trope of wealth and luxury as corruptive influences. Although it refers explicitly to wealth (τοῦ πλούτου), on no cautious reading can it bear the weight of "the whole line of Fabius' successors" in articulating the later narrative of luxury's corrosive power on Roman morality. The weakness of this interpretation lies in the passage's highly ambiguous content and context. It is preserved in Strabo's *Geographia*, completed probably in the 20s C.E., where the geographer–ethnographer surveys the Sabine people and territory (5.228). He comments first on the size and disposition of the Sabine land, then upon some of its principal settlements, then upon its produce. Before his final remarks, about which Roman roads transect the territory, he comments upon the people, saying that they are a race both "ancient" and "indigenous" (Ἔστι δὲ καὶ παλαιότατον γένος οἱ Σαβῖνοι καὶ αὐτόχθονες, "And the Sabines are people both most ancient and autochthonous," 5.228.5 Radt). Citing Fabius Pictor, he offers our fr. 24:

> φησὶ δ' ὁ συγγραφεὺς Φάβιος Ῥωμαίους αἰσθέσθαι τοῦ πλούτου τότε πρῶτον ὅτε τοῦ ἔθνους τούτου κατέστησαν κύριοι. (5.228.28–30 Radt)
>
> The historian Fabius says that the Romans first perceived wealth when they became established as masters of this [sc., the Sabine] people.

The interpretation of this passage stumbles on two points. The first is contextual: to which incident in Roman–Sabine relations is Fabius referring? The second is interpretative: did the Romans become wealthy themselves? Were they merely observing the Sabines' notorious poverty? Or did the Sabines in subjugation give the Romans their first taste of power and, by extension, of wealth and luxury? Each question has its own implications for the issue of how—or whether—Fabius may have been moralizing in this passage. As Bispham and Cornell correctly indicate (while also again displaying the proclivity to seek for examples of early moralism in Roman historiography), "It may be that Fabius was making a moral point, and lamenting the growth of luxury that followed Rome's major conquests. This is an attractive possibility but does not seem to us to be conclusively proved by the text of the fragment as it stands."[139] How attractive should this possibility be?

On the first point, of the fragment's context, there are two realistic possibilities. Of the multiple reported conflicts between the Sabines and Romans throughout the eighth and third centuries B.C.E., only in two cases could the Romans be reasonably thought to have dominated the Sabines in some way: either Fabius is referring to the rape of the Sabine women in Romulus's time or to the Romans' final conquest of the Sabines, in 290 B.C.E. Two arguments, ultimately unconvincing, support the earlier time. First, Fabius is widely quoted (sc., eighteen times) for material from the earliest mythic period,[140] and relatively little (three or four times) for the early third century for an event within sixty years of 290.[141] If he is referring to the traditionally peaceful, albeit fraught, integration of Titus Tatius' Sabines into Romulus's community as equal partners, it is only with a shockingly negative tone that Fabius could have said that the Romans κατέστησαν κύριοι ("they became established as masters"), with its strong implication of subjugation in the word κύριοι

[139] Cornell (2013) 3.41.
[140] Frr. 1, 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
[141] Frr. 17, 18, 19, and 20—though fr. 20 may be as late as the 220s.

("master," a term whose Latin equivalent *dominus* in the Latin version of Fabius would naturally evoke the relationship of master and slave).[142] The change of status, moreover, entailed by κατέστησαν would be more relevant not to the beginning of the narrative of the Roman people but to a time when centuries of conflict between the Romans and the Sabines had at last changed fundamentally. The other grounds for advocating the earlier date do not withstand scrutiny.[143] The decisive questions remain *whose* wealth, their own or the Sabines', the Romans perceived in 290, and what Fabius meant by the remark.

How we translate the phrase into English can give the fragment more or less of a moralistic coloring. At issue first is αἰσθέσθαι, which I have rendered in its most basic and neutral sense, of 'perceive.'[144] The phrase Ῥωμαίους αἰσθέσθαι τοῦ πλούτου τότε πρῶτον may be translated as (a) "that the Romans then first perceived their [i.e., their own] wealth," (b) "that the Romans' then first perceived their [i.e., the Sabines'] wealth," or (c) "that the Romans then first perceived wealth" *tout court*. Stylistically, (a) is the weakest reading, because the sense of "their own" would normally requires the reflexive pronouns σφῶν αὐτῶν or αὑτῶν (with or without a preceding αὐτοί).[145] Even if this reading were correct, the likeliest implication would be that the Sabines were so poor that the Romans felt themselves, also poor at that time, to be rich by comparison and carried this newfound self-assurance forward. It would remain unclear how the Romans could have

[142] The Latin equivalent is particularly relevant when one considers that Strabo's phrase sounds like a quotation of Fabius.

[143] In Frier (1999) 258. Part of his evidence for placing the fragment in Romulus' time is the 'standard' presentation of the early Sabines as wealthy. This argument does not withstand scrutiny: the main evidence is Livy 1.9.2–4, which describes only *Roman* poverty. The Sabines' wealth is only implied and is merely relative to the Romans' poverty, while Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2. 30. 2, which Frier offers for comparison, also assigns poverty to the Romans and wealth to unspecified neighbors. The citation of Ovid *Fasti* 5. 178f. may be in error, perhaps for 3. 175–180, which tells us, again, only that Rome was poor.

[144] As does Cornell (2013). Others prejudice the matter by translating as "understand" *vel sim.*, which implies an attitude toward wealth, rather than the mere perception of its existence.

[145] Smyth (1920) §1121: "The article often takes the place of an unemphatic possessive pronoun when there is no doubt as to the possessor." Cf. §1237, on αὐτός used to differentiate when there is doubt. Since the present context is ambiguous without a differentiating αὐτός, one would expect to find it here.

failed to remark the Sabines' poverty in all their intercourse until then. Contextually, (b), that the Romans perceived the *Sabines'* wealth, is improbable because the Sabines had by Strabo's time become so associated with penury that reference to their former wealth required qualification. Thus Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the final decades of the first century B.C.E., feels it necessary in his version of the Tarpeian myth to append an explanation when he mentions the Sabine soldiers' golden armlets: χρυσοφόροι **γὰρ ἦσαν** οἱ Σαβῖνοι **τότε** καὶ Τυρρηνῶν οὐχ ἧττον ἁβροδίαιτοι ("**for** the Sabines **of that time would wear** golden ornaments and were no less luxrious than the Etruscans," *Ant. Rom.* 2.38.3). In other words, so casual and unqualified a reference to the Sabines as Strabo's must assume the more common perception of the Sabines as indigent. Strabo's topic in the preceding sentence, moreover, is the Sabines' bravery, with a strong implication of martial prowess, as he says τὴν δ' ἀρχαιότητα τεκμήριον ἄν τις ποιήσαιτο ἀνδρείας καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς ἀφ' ἧς ἀντέσχον μέχρι πρὸς τὸν παρόντα χρόνον ("One may take their antiquity as evidence of their bravery and excellence in general, on account of which they survive to the present time"). Antiquity, bravery, and general excellence, qualities which in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon are associated with rugged simplicity, do not connote wealth.[146] The most parsimonious reading, therefore, is (c), that the Romans perceived wealth for the first time when they subjugated the Sabines in 290. Given the Sabines' reputation in Strabo's time, Fabius's point must be about Sabine poverty.

There are two directions this interpretation may be taken. The most recent interpretation is that Fabius believes the conquest of the Sabines in 290 to mark the beginning of Rome's imperial wealth. In favor of this interpretation, Cornell mentions as "an attractive possibility" the idea that Fabius was decrying a moral decline after 290. The commentators' desire to find a moral decline

[146] See *FRH ad loc*. for sources on these *topoi*, including Cato the Elder, roughly two generations younger than Fabius.

in Fabius illustrates the declensionist prejudice in Roman historiographic scholarship noted earlier in this chapter, visible also in Badian, and reveals circular reasoning, namely, 'Roman historiography lamented moral decline from its beginning, because we see it in Fabius; therefore a doubtful fragment of Fabius must be lamenting decline.' Even with this prejudice, Bispham and Cornell acknowledge that, in fr. 24, the narrative of decline "does not seem to us to be conclusively proved by the text of the fragment as it stands."[147] Indeed, for this to be Fabius's purport, Strabo would be taking the quotation far out of context. There is also no subsequent tradition of the Sabines' fall as a turning point in Rome's empire. Moreover, if Fabius was writing in the 210s to early 200s, Rome's imperial growth would be tenuous and would indeed seem to be in jeopardy. He would have no cause, would would the later tradition, to pinpoint when Romans were corrupted by luxury. If he is referring to 290 as the beginning of wealth, it was not necessarily in a negative connection—it is πλοῦτος, a word likelier glossed in Latin as *divitiae* or *pecunia*, whereas *luxuria* normally corresponds with Greek ἀσωτία and even ἀσέλγεια[148]—as it would likelier be by the mid-second century and certainly be by the first-century B.C.E.

There is, however, another possible reading. Strabo apparently found Fabius's remark memorable and pithy enough to cite as a brief and summative remark about the Sabines. In the context of his citation, as we have seen, he must have been referring to Sabine indigence. Yet, as we have also seen, the language strongly indicates that the "wealth" meant is neither the Romans' nor the Sabines' wealth, but wealth in general. All these points cohere thus: simply, it could be an antiphrasis, entailing a certain irony playing on the reader's assumption that the Sabines are poor, akin to the irony in, "I was sent to solitary confinement. That's where I learned what fun is." More circuitously, it could be an hyperbole, that when the Romans conquered the Sabines in 290, the

[147] *FRH ad* fr. 24.
[148] See *ThLL* s.v. *luxuria* 1920.32.

Sabines' poverty so impressed them that they formed a notion of wealth in horrified reaction. Either of these rhetorical devices would make the line memorable to Strabo and worthy of summative quotation. The latter, hyperbolic interpretation would even be flattering to the Romans, ironizing the later Republican trope of foreign luxury by suggesting the the Romans' first notion of wealth was formed, not by its acquisition, but by its absence.

Up to this point, I have argued on the assumption that the date in question must be 290 B.C.E. If fr. 24 does after all belong to the Tarpeia episode at the beginning of Roman history, and thus if it is the Sabines of Titus Tatius whom the impoverished Romans thought wealthy, the interpretation is even further removed from any connotation of corruption. In this case, the wealth perceived must be the Sabines', and the implication must be that Fabius was remarking upon Rome's primaeval poverty. This reading does not necessitate an implicit censure of present luxury. Such a concern with luxury seems in Fabius's time not to have been an issue, and indeed it would not become an issue until after the Second Punic War.[149] Hence even though the most parsimonious reading of the evidence is (c)—sc., that the Romans perceived wealth *tout court* for the first time when they subjugated the Sabines in 290—, even the more speculative (b) reading—that the Romans then for the first time perceived the *Sabines'* wealth—does not imply a narrative of decadence.

In sum, Fabius likely saw the Sabines as wealthy in Romulus' time; he will have seen them as impoverished by 290; he may have viewed the Roman conquest over them as beginning a period of relative prosperity for the Romans. There is nothing in the extant portions of Fabius to suggest

[149] The argument that Fabius earlier depicted the Sabines as luxurious in his story of Tarpeia (fr. 7 C) depends upon Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.38.3.4–5, χρυσοφόροι γὰρ ἦσαν οἱ Σαβῖνοι τότε καὶ Τυρρηνῶν οὐχ ἧττον ἁβροδίαιτοι ("for the Sabines of that time would wear golden ornaments and were no less luxrious than the Etruscans"). This observation may well be Dionysius' parenthesis, explaining Tarpeia's desire for the Sabines' ψέλλια and δακτύλια ("armlets" and "rings"). So Cornell interprets it. Even if it paraphrases Fabius, however, the γάρ implies that Fabius himself felt it necessary to explain that the Sabines of old were wealthy; hence they were in his time, too, known for poverty, as they were also in Cato the Elder.

that the Romans' perception of wealth was their undoing. Fr. 24 therefore cannot support Badian's and others' assumed link between morality and the progress of time, while Fabius' supposedly originating the morality–time link and the idea of the golden age is merely a projection from later sources and an example of circular reasoning.[150]

Fr. 24 is grouped with frr. 25 and 26 C in both Badian and Frier, who remarks that this group "points up Pictor's interest in the history and condition of Roman morality."[151] Fr. 24 appears in Pliny (*Nat.* 14. 89), who describes how a Roman *matrona* of old was forbidden to drink wine: when she opens the box containing keys to the wine cellar, her family starves her to death. Likewise fr. 26 C, an entry from the *Suda* (*s.v.* Φάβιος Πίκτωρ Φ2) says that a Roman magistrate (ἄρχων) may not appropriate for personal use (σφετερίσασθαι) anything from the public treasury. But it is needlessly speculative to assume that descriptions of past custom are veiled vituperations against vices of the present. Fr. 25, even if it pertains to the case of Carvilius Ruga (as Frier believes) need not be viewed as a moral expostulation; rather, as a topical item in the public consciousness, one may just as well argue that Fabius mentioned it for reasons of context, not as part of a broader thematic project. It suffices to say that while it is *possible* to construe each of these fragments as morally relevant, none announces decline, nor does any single fragment in the Fabian corpus warrant the assumption of a moralizing tone. The same may be said of frr. 14, 15, and 20. When compared with the later fragmentary historians, in which one can discern some evidence of pessimism, the absence of such evidence in the relatively copious Fabius is strongly suggestive, even if not conclusive. For any support that Fabius' fragments imply a broader moral

[150] Beyond these many uncertainties is the possibility that the Fabius mentioned in fr. 24 is not C. Fabius Pictor at all, but N. Fabius Pictor, the antiquarian.
[151] Frier (1999) 240.

disapprobation, one must look beyond Fabius's fragments to Fabius's place in the tradition of Greek and Roman historiography.

Our point in the first chapter, further illustrated in the third, was that implicit criteria of selection and arrangement can construct nuanced and complex narratives of decline in historiography. Can Fabius's narrative have depicted a decline by deliberate implication? While it is possible that he did so, there is no positive argument to be made beyond the observation that, about a century and a half after Fabius, Sallust produces the historiographic narrative *par excellence*. The question then is, how much can we liken Fabius to the historians who came after him?

It is in answering this question that it becomes more apparent why Badian and others make the incautious assumption that Fabius resembled his successors. The issue, in short, is a result of two interwoven debates about the nature of early Roman historiography. These are, first, the characterization of early Roman writers of history as either "annalists" or "historians," and second and more narrowly, the degree to which Fabius Pictor (and Cincius Alimentus, who was writing at the same time in Greek and is for us largely indistinguishable from Fabius) should be regarded as Hellenic or as Roman in their methodology. The first question is by its own terms more exclusionary, as the qualities of "annalists" are thought to be basically incompatible with those of "historians." This question has also been largely laid to rest and is worth rehearsing mainly as the *explanans* of the vestigial habit of reading later Roman historians into their predecessors that we have seen illustrated even in recent commentary on Fabius. In short, the annalist–historian debate can be traced back to Jacoby's evolutionary schema of Greek historiography, which held that very specific genres of historiography had consistent and largely exclusive qualities that the ancient writers themselves maintained. Thus, for example, a writer of horography was an horographer and not an ethnographer. Jacoby's schema was also both evolutionary and teleological, with

Zeitgeschichte (notably, many of Jacoby's categories did not have correspondent terms in the ancient literature) as the highest form of historiography towards which lower forms such as genealogy were developing.[152] Jacoby's schema influenced views of early Roman historiography, whose earliest works, including those of Fabius Pictor and L. Cincius Alimentus, A. Postumius Albinus, and C. Acilius, were written in Greek. As Marincola observes:

> The residue of Jacoby's 'fixed' categories can also be seen in Roman historiography. Here too there is an assumption that a particular choice, especially that of writing annalistically, left little room for flexibility and innovation, and *essentially obligated the author to follow a pattern established centuries before*.[153]

The distinction between *annales* and *historia*, as Marincola continues, was largely disproven by Verbrugghe, and in fact earlier by Frier.[154] In short, the apparent distinction between the two terms originated much later than the works they describe, was limited largely to rhetorical discourse, and in any case was used very inconsistently. In other words, the annalists-v.-historians debate was over terms that were both anachronistic and inconsistent.

Where the debate continues, however, is on the question of the author's obligation "to follow a pattern established centuries before" (quoted above). Here, the two main schools may be termed the Hellenizing school, which sees Fabius as mainly looking backward to his Greek models and is interested in how Fabius replicates them, and the Romanizing school, which looks forward to Fabius's relation to his Roman successors and stresses their continuity. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is a general correlation between scholarly concentration as either an Hellenist or a Latinist on the question. Unlike the annalist–historian debate, however, the Hellenist–Romanist debate is not mutually exclusive, as it is possible to see Fabius in both lights. The greatest incompatibility

[152] For a compendious critique of Jacoby, see Marincola (1999) 290–301.
[153] ibid. 300, emphasis added.
[154] On the interchangeability of *annales* and *historia*, see Frier (1999) 216–24, the earlier (1979) version of whose monograph Verbrugghe (1989) 197 n.13 cites.

between the two views bears on the question of Fabius's purpose in writing his history. Hellenists, represented mainly by Gelzer and more recently by Dillery, see Fabius as thoroughly Hellenized and writing primarily for a Greek audience, whether to reassure them of Rome's expansion or to rebut Philinus.[155] While some Romanists may accept that Fabius had a Greek audience in mind, they believe that Fabius was writing primarily for a Roman audience and had little thought for how Greeks would think of Rome.[156]

The Hellenizing view has major problems. The first is that Roman traditions about the foundation were established by at least the early third century B.C.E. in ways that suggest this was part of internal Roman discourse. A didrachm from 269–66 B.C.E. (*RRC* 20), minted at Rome, shows the she-wolf suckling twins. Livy 10.23.12 refers to the brothers Ogulnii erecting a statue of the she-wolf at the Ficus Ruminalis in 296. Moreover, the points of contact with the Greek writers on early Roman history do not, as the Hellenizing school assumes, show the Romans imitating the Greeks. Plutarch, for example, tells us that Fabius "for the most part followed" (ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις ἐπηκολούθηκε) Diocles of Peparethus. Dillery, among others, sees this statement as an example of Romans reproducing the Greek tradition.[157] But the facts that we do not know Diocles's dates and that one may "follow" another's account by accidental resemblance no less than by imitation make this a weak argument for the Greeks leading the Romans. Likewise, when Dionysius of

[155] This view is ultimately from Gelzer (1933), (1934), and (1954); articulated also by Rawson (1989) 425 and Dillery (2009).
[156] The Tauromenium *dipinto* (*SEG* 26.1123, supplemented with *SEG* 47.1464) is not strong evidence for circulation in the Greek world. Sicily had been a Roman province for around a century by the time Fabius's work would have been added to the library. More representative is Dionysius's view (*AR* 1.4.2) that few Greeks read Roman historiography. See also Tac. *Ann*. 2.883, [*Arminius*] *Graecorum annalibus ignotus, qui sua tantum mirantur* ("[Arminius, who is] unknown in the annals of the Greeks, who marvel only at their own deeds"). Gruen (1993) 230–31 observes that the fact that other Roman historians wrote in Greek, including L. Cincius Alimentus and P. Scipio (Africanus's son) in Fabius's generation, and, later, C. Acilius and Postumius Albinus into the mid-second century B.C.E., "not only implies the existence of a cultured elite of Romans who could read Greek. It also shows that both authors and readers found it entirely acceptable that the records and traditions of their nation should be composed in Greek." For further bibliography, see ibid. n.36.
[157] Dillery (2009) 79–80. See Dillery (2002) 18 n.69 for bibliography on Diocles of Peparethus.

Halicarnassus remarks (1.6.2) that Fabius's and Cincius's accounts are "similar to these [Greek histories] and in no way different,"[158] we should first consider Dionysius's strong inclination to Hellenize all things Roman, then recognize that he attributes mere similarity rather than active imitation to the Roman writers. He thereby implies that the Roman sources were not merely reproducing the Greeks. He is also referring only to early events (παλαιὰ ἔργα), leaving most of the Romans' histories free of any implication with Greek historiography. It is only on this precarious ledge of dependency that the Hellenists argue that Fabius was writing in an Hellenizing fashion for an Hellenic audience.

Where the Romanizing view, which ties Fabius more to his Latin-writing successors, creates difficulties is in its overemphasis upon the continuities of the early historians with the later known historians. The willingness of Badian, Frier, Cornell and others to seek out Sallustian-style narratives in Fabius is part of the more general project of tying Fabius into the Roman tradition. The most cautious attitude is that of Rich, who views early Roman historiography as defined not as annalist–historian or Greek–Roman, but by the resemblance to the identifiable features of the starkly contrasted histories of Fabius and the elder Cato, in other words, a Fabian–Catonian dichotomy. This loose typology is between a Fabian tradition of an history that starts from the beginning and applies an annalistic organization not from an imitation of the *Annales Maximi*, as is sometimes supposed (contra Frier), or from any generic imitation, but by the fact of annals' being the most convenient way to narrate the political history of a polity where offices changed annually. It may be contrasted with a Catonian model that, even if it offers some material on the foundation of the city, otherwise focuses on history within living memory. These characterizations comport

[158] Ὁμοίας δὲ τούτοις καὶ οὐδὲν διαφόρους ἐξέδωκαν ἱστορίας καὶ Ῥωμαίων ὅσοι τὰ παλαιὰ ἔργα τῆς πόλεως Ἑλληνικῇ διαλέκτῳ συνέγραψαν… ("Whoso, too, of the Romans wrote the ancient deeds of the city in the Greek language passed down histories that are similar and in no way different…").

both with our knowledge of these two early and influential historians and with our knowledge of the pre-Sallustian historians of the later second and first centuries B.C.E.[159]

In style and conception, Fabius was, as we have seen, likely a highly original historian. He must nonetheless have derived the substance of his histories from somewhere, and those sources may themselves have contained some trace of other narrative structures or other thematic concerns. Principal among his sources are probably the *tabulae dealbatae*, a religious and political record apparently published in some form by the Pontifex Maximus.[160] If Cato's complaint in the *Origines* (the only extant remark contemporaneous to the *tabulae* as they were being being recorded) is even half true, that the *Annales* merely record eclipses and grain shortages (ap. Gel. 2.28.6),[161] it is a clue as to their contents. It may also be that Cato's criticism of the *tabulae* is meant as a criticism of his predecessors, who will have used it as a source. Fabius, then, will have had as one of his principal sources the *tabulae*, whose entries must have been heterogenous and focused upon matters of import at the time of their recording.[162] In such a farrago of events, there can have been no coherent narrative, much less any implication of moral decadence.

[159] It is in general perhaps wisest not to underestimate each historian's capacity for uniqueness and the extreme distortions that fragments can create. Thus even so depreciated an historian as Velleius Paterculus wrote, on fairer analysis, an unique "miniature universal history" with no obvious predecessor. See Starr (1981) 174. See also Marincola (1999) 298: "And one can easily imagine a 'fragmentary' Herodotus by which we should judge him to have had little historical interest."

[160] For compendious discussion and extensive bibliography, see *FRH* 1.141–59. Frier (1999) passim is more extensive and continues to be the best authority. In the preface to the second edition (1999) v–xix, he reviews recent advances. It is his view that *tabulae dealbatae* were probably published in final form, perhaps as the *Annales Maximi*, as eighty books between 130 and ca. 115 B.C.E., in the consulship of P. Mucius Scaevola or immediately afterward. This version, as Momigliano (1990) 95–97 suggested, may incorporate some details and narratives from earlier historians, who had in turn based their narratives upon the *tabulae*. The form in which they were available in the late third century B.C.E. may have been more heterogenous even than the *Annales* referred to by Cicero at *de Orat.* 2. 52. Cf. Rich (2018) 30.

[161] *Non lubet scribere, quod in tabula apud pontificem maximum est, quotiens annona cara, quotiens lunae aut solis lumine caligo aut quid obstiterit* ("I do not wish to write, as in the tablet at the house of the Pontifex Maximus, how often grain was dear, how often darkness or something else obscure the light of the moon or the sun").

[162] Frier (1999) 92–100.

That Fabius consulted familial histories, both oral and written, at least of his own *gens* is a reasonable supposition.[163] It is therefore remarkable that Fabius seems to have used them both sparingly and conscientiously: the *gens Fabia* was evidently not prominent in his account of Rome's foundation, despite evidence, in the form of the Luperci Fabiani, that the *gens Fabia* might claim such antiquity. Besides this is Fabius' unflattering account of the deeds of the *magister equitum* Fabius Rullianus (fr. 17), whom he describes as burning the dictator's spoils *ne suae gloriae fructum dictator caperet nomenque ibi scriberet aut spolia in triumpho ferret* ("lest the dictator should enjoy his glory and write his name on [the confiscated weapons] or carry them in triumph as spoils," Liv. 8.30.9), and as reporting to the Senate rather than to his dictator. Such deeds, as Momigliano recognized, are hardly to Rullianus' credit.[164]

Thus if Fabius was consulting familial records on this point, he appears to have been conscious of the potential appearance of bias. It is in this respect that he may more confidently be associated with his predecessors, and especially with his Latin successors, whose extant prefaces show a persistent concern with credibility.[165] Three points may be made on this basis: first, Fabius' probably limited use of family records did not seek universally to embellish Fabian family history or to ennoble his ancestors— in contradiction of Badian's assumption of an implicit golden age or decadent present—; furthermore, such stories as that of Rullianus are likely to have been handed down independently from the family archive and not to have covered a wide-ranging narrative, whether of decline or ascendancy, in contradiction of Badian's assumed early link between morality and

[163] So ibid. 269 and *FRH* 1.176. But the evidence for this supposition is slight, for Fabius' fr. 17 is his only direct reference to his kin. The Tauromenium inscription (*SEG* 26. 1123 fr. III, col. A) indicates Fabius' account of Rome's foundation as including Hercules ([οὗτο]ς [*sc.*, Φάβιος] ἱστόρηκεν τὴν [τοῦ Ἡ]ρακλέους ἄφιξιν...), to whom the Fabii traced their origin, at least by the early Principate (Plu. *Fab*. 1. 2, Ov. *Fasti*. 2. 237, Fest. 77 Lindsay [s.v., '*Fovi*']). Beyond these two sources, much of the prosopographical evidence of the Fabii appears to depend, per Pauly *s.v.* 'Fabius,' upon epigraphic evidence.
[164] Momigliano (1990) 103.
[165] Marincola (1997b) 165–74. See also Chapter 1.

history. Finally, it should be kept in mind that even the traditional stories that Fabius reports were not in his time standardized as they were by the late Republic. Momigliano notes the discrepancy between Fabius' Coriolanus (fr. 16) and the canonical version in Livy (2.40.10–11).[166] One may add to this Fabius' account of Tarpeia (fr. 7 = Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.38.2–40. 2), which, because of Piso's alternative version (Piso fr. 7 , cannot yet have become the traditional account. Legends in Fabius' time were not yet the standardized parables that they became in the later traditions, as of Livy and Valerius Maximus. Thus they can hardly, contrary to Badian, have originated a tradition with which they are at variance, and they give no hint of a golden age. The same may be said of the documentary evidence to which Fabius had access in the senate's archives.

Besides the *tabulae dealbatae*, familial legends and familial and senatorial records, one final source of theme in Fabius is his Greek precursors. Here, too, nothing suggests a theme of decadence. When one considers Fabius' probable method, audience, and intentions, there are in fact grounds for expecting a relatively favorable, even optimistic narrative. It is certain, at all events, that Fabius consulted Greek sources: Plutarch (*Rom*. 3.1) implies that Fabius' story of Romulus and Remus closely followed that of the otherwise unknown Diocles of Peparethus. He also likely consulted Timaeus, whose thirty-eight-book history, published in the first half of the third century B.C.E., focused on the history of western Europe (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.6.1) and was still the main source on the western Mediterranean when Polybius responded to him in his own histories. Fabius's dependence upon Greek sources bespeaks a receptiveness to Greek influence that was less antagonistic than the national historians Berossus of Babylon and Manetho of Egypt, both of whom sought to varying degrees to offer a native, as against a Greek, history.[167] Although Fabius

[166] Momigliano (1990) 94: "The legends of early Rome were still evolving in the age of Fabius and became stereotyped only in the second, perhaps in the first, century B.C."
[167] Dillery (2002) 9–10.

makes no direct reference to Timaeus, Momigliano remarks their shared ethnographic interests.[168] This interest, as noted above, suggests that frr. 24–26, and perhaps his concern with proper religious rite, are borne not of moral outrage, but of a desire to capture ethnographic details of the Roman people.

What Fabius wished to communicate to this audience depends upon the date of composition only so far as he began writing either before or after Rome's victory against Hannibal seemed assured. The two prevailing dates of composition are Frier's, outlined above, and Kierdorf, who follows Frier in advancing the date of composition to before 213 B.C.E. but suggests that the work was begun after the First Punic War, in part as a response to Philinus.[169] In either case, Fabius would be writing for a Greek audience concerned by Rome's unexpected victories against Pyrrhus to foster confidence in the Senate as a wise ruling body that would seek moderation—namely, by following Fabius Verrucosus' advice to consult the Carthaginian senate's views on the Saguntum incident before declaring war.[170] This argument would explain, fr. 22, where Fabius emphatically describes Hannibal's aggression as contrary to the will of the Carthaginian senate. His object, plausibly, was that the Greeks should regard the Roman Senate as a cautious and deliberative body and the Romans as a restrained and dependable people. Fabius has, then, no reason to present a negative image of Rome and ample reason to portray Rome favorably, both in the present and as a future actor in the western Mediterranean. Frier himself observes this well in his conclusion about Fabius:

> He chose, without trace of pessimism, to demonstrate the sweep of Rome's history from its origins, from the dreams of Aeneas, down thence into his own age. It was a history that

[168] Momigliano (1990) 99–100.
[169] Kierdorf (2002) 401–2.
[170] Walbank (1945) 1 traces this argument back to Gelzer (1933). It is accepted also by Rawson (1989) 425. *FRH* 3.39 collects the references for Verrucosus' views.

could give a nation confidence amidst adversity; Rome had produced many great general; Rome had lost battles but had never lost a war.[171]

In sum, frr. 24, 25, and 26 have been held since Badian to suggest both a moralistic and a pessimistic attitude at the origin of Roman historiography. As we have seen, the only specific evidence for this view is fr. 24. On closer examination, the stronger reading of this fragment is that it is not a moralistic fragment at all. At bottom, those who see declensionism as a characteristic of early Roman historiography use circular reasoning, as they assume that Fabius *should* be speaking of decline, even as no evidence warrants this claim. And, if one is to assume that later historians echoed the spirit of their predecessors in any degree, we would certainly be no more amiss in suggesting that the patriotic historians such as Sempronius Asellio are the more apt parallel than the dour Sallust.

Cato and Calpurnius Piso

The nearest comparandum to Fabius, and the alternative model for subsequent Roman historians, is the elder Cato, who was perhaps a generation and a half younger than Fabius, and a young military tribune under M. Claudius Marcellus in Sicily during the Second Punic War.[172] He attained considerably greater prominence than Fabius by becoming consul, proconsul, and ultimately censor.[173] A prolific writer, he published his many speeches and in later life composed the first Latin history of Italy, the *Origines*. Although this work is by far the best attested of the fragmentary histories other than Sallust's annalistic *Historiae* (Cato occupies about five of seventeen *OCT* pages' worth of the pre-Sallustian historians),[174] there is still much uncertainty about the structure

[171] Frier (1999) 283, citing Liv. 9.17–18.
[172] Fabius must have been praetor before 218 to have been sent on the legation to Delphi in 216. See ibid. 230–35.
[173] In 195, 194, and 184 B.C.E., respectively.
[174] Lebek (1970) 207.

of its contents.[175] As it is extensively supplemented by some of his excerpted speeches, biographies, and his other fragmentary works, it is possible to make a moderately confident characterization of his attitude toward history and his probable relationship to anything akin to the eventual Sallustian narrative. In short, it is this: while there is little reason to doubt Cato's legendary conservatism and wariness of foreign, especially Greek, ways, there is also little evidence for a sense of decline to be found until, possibly, the end of his career, when he appended to the *Origines* a seventh book containing his speech against Ser. Sulpicius Galba (pr. 151, cos. 144). Even here, however, the evidence for a pronounced declensionist narrative is tenuous. As we shall presently see, the improbability of such a narrative rests first upon a survey of his literary predecessors, chiefly Ennius, who offers no grounds to suppose an incipient narrative of decline; then upon the fragments themselves, which exude a conservative preference for the past but no obviously pessimistic toward the future, until, possibly, the appended speeches.

It is likely that Ennius' *Annales* did not present a narrative of decline, at least not for Rome. It is unnecessary in supporting this assertion to rehearse the sparse details of Ennius' life or the arguments about the probable structure of the epic's eighteen books, other than to note that, like Fabius' history, they appear to have narrated recent events in more detail than ancient events.[176] Elliott herself summarizes the broader purport of the work, regardless of its structure, when she summarizes its literary and cultural import. At bottom she sees the work as uniting the Homeric epic tradition with the Roman annalistic tradition to demonstrate the centrality of Rome, for "what was new about the *Annales* in terms of the vision it laid before its primary audience was the idea of Rome as the hub of space and time, the primary focus of the cosmos in all its aspects."[177] Thus

[175] *FRH* 1.198–205.
[176] Rich (2018) 33–34.
[177] Elliott (2013) 234.

the audience of contemporary Romans, victorious after the Second Punic War and their subsequent conquests in the East and the West, and the universalizing genre of epic require an optimistic depiction of Roman history.[178] This depiction likely emphasized divine favor towards Rome and the ancient virtue of the Romans themselves, as in the apothegm: *Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque* ("The Roman state stands on its men and their manners," Enn. *Ann*. 156 Skutsch). It is quite likely, moreover, that the original end of the work, in the fifteenth book, concluded with the construction of the Temple of Hercules Musarum by one of Ennius' patrons, Fulvius Nobilior,[179] highlighting Fulvius' achievement in the Aetolian War. As with Fabius, then, Ennius' *Annales* neither suggest a narrative of decline nor offer any reason to believe that their historical narrative would posit any form of decline, renewal, or golden age. Ennius is thus a *terminus post quem* for the narrative of decline and provides context for the next major and original work of historiography.

The narrative of Roman history that Fabius and Ennius likely provided was one of a relatively brief account of the early years of Roman history followed by an ever-expanding narrative of generally positive character, with Fabius writing favorably and Ennius magnifying his patron. The identity of this patron, M. Fulvius Nobilior, also suggests how a more declensionist narrative may have evolved in Cato. It is clear that Cato was highly critical of luxury from an early date. He opposed, unsuccessfully, the repeal in 195 of the 215 *lex Oppia*, a sumptuary law passed amid the Second Punic War restricting women's clothing and jewelry.[180] Earlier, during Cato's quaestorship in Africa and Sicily, in 204, Plutarch records that Cato reproached Scipio Africanus for the luxury of his expenditures and corrupting the soldiery.[181] It is around this time that Cato is

[178] In contrast to the notoriously ambiguous interpretation of the *Aeneid*.
[179] Rich (2018) 38.
[180] Liv. 34. 4–7, which purport—impossibly—to cite the *Origines*. Despite the problems with Livy's account, *FRH* 1.197 (S. J. Northwood) still sees Livy as being generally right about the sorts of exemplary stories contained in the *Origines*.
[181] Plut. *Cat. mai.* 3. 6–8. Cf. Liv. 29. 19. 10–13, which does not mention Cato but emphasizes the corruption of the soldiers by Scipio's largess and decadent manner of dress. See Lintott (1972) 629.

supposed to have met Ennius in Sardinia and brought him back to Italy. Ennius would subsequently fall in with the prodigal circle inimical to Cato's friend and ally, Q. Fabius Verrucosus. It is not difficult in this context to imagine Cato's conservatism turning to alarm at the political ascendency of his opponents and the cultural change that their victories abroad were effecting at Rome.

There are, then, biographical and historical grounds to suspect the beginning of a pessimistic narrative in the *Origines*. The fragments themselves, however, especially of the first book, do not indicate that Cato wrote in the deeply pessimistic manner of Sallust, for whom historiography was a distant second to serving the Republic in office.[182] Cato rather asserted a proptreptic principle, as indicated in fr. 2, which appears to impress upon the reader the importance of employing one's time on worthwhile pursuits.[183] The worthwhile pursuit, as seen in the first line of the work (fr. 1), is to describe the deeds of significance to the Roman people.[184] As it is also possible that Cato wrote the *Origines* for either of his sons, and as he almost surely had begun the *Origines* proper or a precursor thereof by the time of Ennius' death, in 169 B.C.E. (and hence long after his antagonism with Scipio), a moralizing tone is to be expected. It is possible, then, that while their character was moralistic from the beginning, a sense of decline may have crept in at a later time in the course of their composition.

If Cato was writing protreptically, it must be explained why he appears to have avoided a key feature of the exemplary mode, namely that an exemplary deed is associated by name with its performer,[185] for Cato appears systematically to have omitted the names of commanders, both

[182] Sal. *Cat*. 3.2.
[183] Cic. *Planc.* 66, *Etenim M. Catonis illud quod in principio scripsit Originum suarum semper magnificum et praeclarum putavi, 'clarorumvirorum atque magnorum non minus oti quam negoti rationem exstare oportere'* ("And indeed I have thought that remark of Marcus Cato to be magnificent and admirable, that 'it is fitting for an account be given of the leisure time of eminent and great men no less than of their business'").
[184] Pompeius, *Commentum artis Donati*, ed. H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini*: 5.208 *...si ques homines sunt quos delectat populi Romani gesta discribere…* ("If there are any whom it delights to write the deeds of the Roman people…")
[185] Roller (2018) 5.

Roman and foreign. The omission is known from two sources, of which the more detailed is Cornelius Nepos, who at *Cato* 3.3–4 says:

> The First Punic War is in the fourth book, the Second in the fifth. And [Cato] narrates all these events in summary fashion. Similarly he narrates the remaining wars until the praetorship of Servius Galba, who despoiled the Lusitanians. And he did not name the commanders of these wars but marked the deeds without names.[186]

The other, less detailed source is Pliny the Elder, who says merely that Cato "removed the generals' names from his annals."[187] This fact has been interpreted in two ways, each of which depends upon the extent to which one understands Nepos and Pliny to be imputing the omissions. One interpretation is that of *FRH* 1.215–16. (S. J. Northwood), which proposes that magistrates were named among the notices heading a new year. This practice would suggest an annalistic arrangement that Frier dispels with his observation that Cato was seldom cited among later historians because his lack of consular dating made it difficult to fit him within an annalistic framework.[188] The other interpretation accepts that Cato omitted names and attempts to explain this practice in terms of a political design. Gotter, referring to the heroic deeds of Q. Caedicius (or Laberius), who in Cato's account is merely the *tribunus militum* (fr. 76), argues that the omission was meant to emphasize a new type of Roman exemplarity as distinct from Greek individualism: "[Cato] systematically plays down the commemorative potential of this heroic deed, as if one could expect such behavior at Rome more easily than in Greece and therefore would not call so much attention to it."[189] That is to say, Cato is indeed writing in an exemplary mode—but one at odds with the type characteristic of Roman historiography as it is generally known, for example in Livy's preface. The implication

[186] Nepos, Cato 3.3–4, *In quarto* [sc., *libro Originum*] *autem bellum Poenicum est primum, in quinto secundum. atque haec omnia capitulatim sunt dicta. Reliquaque bella pari modo persecutus est usque ad praeturam Servii Galbae, qui diripuit Lusitanos: atque horum bellorum duces non nominavit, sed sine nominibus res notavit.*
[187] Plin. *Nat.* 8. 11, *Certe Cato, cum imperatorum nomina annalibus detraxerit, eum* [sc., *elephantum*], *qui fortissime proeliatus esset in Punica acie, Surum tradidit vocatum, altero dente mutilato.*
[188] Frier (1999) 260.
[189] Gotter (2009) 112.

is that there is no reason to take the omission of names as necessarily censorious or antagonistic. It does, however, appear to suggest a categorical difference in the *Origines*' treatment between early history in the first through third books, where names are indicated, and later history from at least the First Punic War onward.

Cato is perhaps the clearest example of early Roman historiography that allows us to differentiate moralism from a narrative configuration of history as a loss of virtue. Cato was clearly a moralist, and he clearly used moralistic arguments in political persuasion. *ORF* 8 fr. 164, from Cato's speech on the Rhodians, also suggests a potential development for the declensionist argument of the loss of *metus hostilis*, perhaps adopted (necessarily with some irony) from Nasica's arguments against Cato's wish to destroy Carthage:[190]

> *Atque ego quidem arbitror Rodienses noluisse nos ita depugnare, uti depugnatum est, neque regem Persen vinci. Sed non Rodienses modo id noluere, sed multos populos atque multas nationes idem noluisse arbitror atque haut scio an partim eorum fuerint qui non nostrae contumeliae causa id noluerint evenire: sed enim id metuere, si nemo esset homo quem vereremur, quidquid luberet faceremus, ne sub solo imperio nostro in servitute nostra essent.*
>
> For my part I believe that the Rhodians did not wish for us to fight it out as we did, nor for King Perseus to be defeated. But I believe that it was not only the Rhodians who were so unfavorable, but many peoples and nations were likewise unfavorable. And I daresay there were some of them who did not wish this to happen, not to insult us, for they rather feared lest, if there was no one whom we dreaded, we would do whatever we wished, so that they should be under our sole rule and be enslaved to us. (*ORF* 8.164 = M. Porcius Cato fr. 88 C, = Gel. 6. 3. 16)

Notably, Cato's moralism is not couched in historical terms, neither on exemplary precedents nor on a historical narrative that urges a certain course of action. Rather, he makes his argument in moral generalities. Failing to act as he recommends would be just that—a failure. In Sallust, by contrast, the political failures of Catiline's conspiracy and the disasters against Jugurtha were examples of a *trend*, or an historical narrative, of such failures.

[190] On the irony of Cato's appropriating Scipio Nasica's argument against him, see Earl (1961) 48.

In sum, Cato was undoubtedly a conservative moralist who wrote in a protreptic and potentially censorious vein. There are multiple reasons for supposing that he may, especially in his later narrative, have deviated from the more positive conservative narratives for early history of Fabius and Ennius, including the effects of growing luxury and Hellenizing following Rome's imperial expansion after the Second Punic War, personal and factional animosity for Ennius' patron, and growing discord within the Senate that prompted Cato's later orations.

A narrative of decline, perhaps incipient by the time of Cato's death in 149, had taken shape by the time of its first clear expression, in Calpurnius Piso Frugi, like Cato a consul and censor.[191] The imputation of a narrative of decline in Piso rests upon two bases. First, as will be shown, several of the fragments themselves are relatively unambiguous in pointing to a narrative of luxury and moral corruption. Second, the political turmoil intervening Cato's death, in 149, and Calpurnius' consulship, in 133, would, as Lintott observes, be a logical place for some of the narratives of decline visible in Sallust to have emerged.

In the context of Piso's annals, the tendency toward declensionism is not surprising. Like his predecessors Piso appears to begin with Aeneas and the foundation of Rome (fr. 3). Gotter suggests for Cato, and it may also hold true for Piso, that this tradition of starting at the beginning is not so much obedience to literary tradition as a "polemical revision in the service of particular strategic aims and a dogged battle for supremacy over the realm of the past."[192] Fr. 6, along with frr. 1 to 5, suggests by its reference to the obscure god Lycoris that Calpurnius' interests were antiquarian. Elizabeth Rawson observes across Calpurnius' fragments not only an antiquarian interest, but a marked Romanocentrism, with minimal reference to things Greek.[193] An antiquarian interest with

[191] In 133 and 120 B.C.E., respectively.
[192] Gotter (2009) 110.
[193] Rawson (1976) 702–3.

a pronounced preference for Roman antiquities may be suggestive of a sense that Roman culture was changing rapidly, and that the *mos maiorum* praised by Ennius was in jeopardy.

In this nostalgic, antiquarian disposition, Klingner saw Calpurnius as the moralizing complement to his ethnographer contemporary, Cassius Hemina, selecting the material for history to exemplify moral behavior.[194] Multiple fragments place more virtuous behavior in the distant past: fr. 10 appears to present Romulus as an exemplar of sobriety and restraint. Fr. 27, though of uncertain context, appears to refer to a past time when, even with foreigners and unbound slaves in Rome for the *lectisternium*, it was safe 'to leave one's doors unlocked.' Fr. 35's reference to the exemplary freedman small-holder Cresimus appears to indict by implication the indolence of far wealthier adjacent estate-owners. Fr. 42 laments that young men, though of unknown period, are devoted to their procreative organs. Such point toward conservatism at least. The strongest indication, however, of a broad narrative of decline is Calpurnius' apparent attempt to date the lapse of public morals precisely, in fr. 40, which marks a prodigy in 154 at the construction of the first permanent theater at Rome (later demolished on Scipio Nasica's orders), *a quo tempore pudicitiam subversam* ("from which time chastity was subverted").[195] Also warranting further investigation is fr. 38, which heralds the 601st year of Rome as beginning a new saeculum. This may be significant to the references to saecula in later histories.

Besides these fragments, the importation of Greek wealth (dated by Livy 39.6.7 to Cn. Manlius Vulso's return from Asia, in 186) and the subsequent political volatility at Rome would have given Calpurnius ample material for several of the narratives of decline that appear to have been woven together subsequently in Sallust. While it is difficult to guess Calpurnius' political loyalties, he is

[194] Cited at ibid. 705.
[195] Plin. *Nat.* 17. 244.

widely held to have been opposed to Ti. Gracchus and to have supported senatorial authority.[196] He will therefore have sought an explanation for the unrest that would not jeopardize senatorial policies. As Syme observed of Roman attributions of fault for the civil wars of the first century B.C.E., a narrative of moral decadence conveniently exculpates the senate as a body and social stratum, placing the blame on the inherent corruptibility of especially the lower classes and the vile ambitious deeds of a few bad individuals.[197] In Lintott's view, the narrative of moral decline through luxury and the loss of *metus hostilis* took shape decisively in the tribunate of Ti. Gracchus, in 133.[198] The dating Calpurnius' *Annales* is therefore of crucial importance to this interpretation, but it must unfortunately remain tentative.[199]

Conclusion

The chapter has argued for the absence of the narrative of decline in the two of the earliest and most paradigmatic of the early Roman historians, Fabius Pictor and the elder Cato. Modern views of both authors have depended upon highly tenuous readings of the fragments, especially of Fabius, and more generally on a misconception of Fabius's and Cato's relation to the later Roman historiographical tradition that insists upon their thematic continuity with the better-known tradition beginning with Sallust and Livy. Closer examination has shown that neither historian's fragments offer any reliable grounds for imputing a pessimistic narrative. In Fabius, the evidence of even a generally moralistic concern is also lacking. In Cato, we lack any convincing evidence of a narrative that presented Roman history as a decline, but we have good reason to suspect that, at least by the end of his *Origines*, his moralism may have increasingly an admonition against excess. It is in

[196] His supposed senatorial allegiance, as Rawson (1976) 712 notes, did not prevent his praise in fr. 35 of the diligent freedman against his presumably senatorial estate-holding neighbors.
[197] Syme (1950) 607–8.
[198] Lintott (1972) 638.
[199] *FRH* 1.234 (Mark P. Pobjoy).

this light that we read Piso Frugi as perhaps articulating a true narrative of decline in his annals. The ways that such a year-by-year account might articulate a narrative are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The *Zuozhuan* and the Emergence of Annalistic Traditions[200]

We saw in Chapter 2 that the moralistic theme in Roman historiography likely first appeared in the elder Cato's *Origines*, and perhaps, at least in an admonitory tone, only late in that work, which was written amid growing political and social unrest at Rome from ca. 200 B.C.E. onward.[201] The earliest evidence for a narrative of decline as defined in Chapter 1[202] is conventionally found in Piso Frugi's annals, most explicitly in fr. 40, where the censor remarks that, in the lustrum of Marcus Messala's and Gaius Cassius's censorship (154–53),[203] a fig tree grew in place of a fallen palm on the altar of Capitoline Jupiter, "from which time chastity was undermined [*pudicitia subversa*]" The implications of this passage are discussed below. At the least, however, Piso's remark strongly implies that, by the time of his writing, historians were participating in a broader discourse about the dating of an assumed decline, which discourse, on the evidence of Polybius, Sallust, and Livy, will have entailed inquiry into the principal events and causes of decay.[204] The origins and substance of this narrative are obscured by the loss of most second century historiography,

[200] The title of this chapter was suggested by Professor David Potter.
[201] This is, roughly, the period selected by Polybius, 18.35.1–2. The year 200 is sometimes cited in modern scholarship referring to Rome's intervention in the Second Macedonian War, following Polybius 1.3.6. Thus Walbank (1963). Contra, see Derow (1979) 4–8, esp. 8, for whom the specific sequence of events attributed to Polybius is actually Livian.
[202] Viz., narratives of decline are properly historiographic rather than mythic and propound, in the terms of Mink (1987), either a theoretical or configurational representation of decline.
[203] All dates hereafter are B.C.E. unless otherwise noted.
[204] Earl (1961) and Lintott (1972).

including all but some fifty brief fragments of Piso's annals. This dearth has not precluded intelligent and fruitful speculation. Earl believed that "Livy's *semina futurae luxuriae* ['seeds of future luxury'], Polybius' moral corruption, and Piso's *pudicitia subversa* can be formed into a coherent series of increasing moral decline, as Pliny saw."[205] More cautiously, Pobjoy remarks that Piso's apparent concern in fr. 40 with dating the decline "does not preclude quite complex patterns of decline in his work."[206] Yet his comparanda, like Earl's, are from the later historians Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus.[207] Rather than following Earl and Pobjoy in extrapolating Piso's narrative retrospectively from his successors, this chapter offers an approximately synchronic study by referring to an history that in origin, purpose, scope, audience, form, and character is comparable at least to Piso, if not to the Republican "annalistic" tradition more generally.[208] That history is the fourth-century, pre-imperial Chinese annals *Zuozhuan* 左傳, introduced in Chapter 1, [209] which provides a model for how an annalistic history at a comparable point in the development of historiography can articulate a narrative of decline in a form distinct from that of the later historiographic tradition. This chapter first justifies the comparison with the *Zuozhuan* based on the nature of the text itself and the place that it occupies in the Chinese literary canon. It then models how the *Zuozhuan* builds "complex patterns of decline"[210] that are distinct from the later tradition by looking at the narrative of the rise and decline of Jin 晉 in the battles of Chengpu and Bi and in the casting of the bronze

[205] Earl (1961) 44.
[206] *Ad* Piso fr. 40, Cornell (2013) 3.218.
[207] Pobjoy at ibid. 1.239: "There is no simple chronology of decline that one can deduce from Piso's fragments, but the overall picture which they convey is clearly that Roman morals were better in the past than in his own lifetime. To that extent at least, he may be considered a significant forerunner of Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus."
[208] On the problems with the term "annalistic" to describe the early Roman historians generally, see Rich (2018) 19, 58–59.
[209] See pp. 4–8.
[210] After Pobjoy, a*d* Piso fr. 40, Cornell (2013) 3.218, quoted above.

penal code. Finally, it proposes how this model illuminates our speculations about a period of Roman historiography that must otherwise remain obscure.

The *Zuozhuan* as Comparandum

The *Zuozhuan* is a commentary on the annalistic chronicle *Chunqiu* 春秋, which is now generally agreed[211] to be the approximately contemporaneous court record of the state of Lǔ 魯 in the Spring and Autumn period (771 to ca. 453),[212] an era predating the crucial unification under the Qin (221–206) and Han (202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) dynasties that is defined by the gradual devolution of the notional supremacy of the effectually diminished Zhou king and his court (*Zhōu cháo* 周朝) to the vassal domains (or 'states,' *guó* 國),[213] some of which the Zhou had established in moving westward from their heartland in the Wei River basin along the Yellow River and southward to the Yangtze basin.[214] With these vassals the Zhou court maintained ties of kinship even as its potency waned. Lu was a relatively minor domain located at the eastern periphery of the middle realms, or

[211] This is both the traditional position, as will be described, and the current position. Doubt arose mainly from Kang Youwei and the Doubting Antiquity school. These views have been so disproven as to be omitted. For an English-language *précis* of Kang's argument, see Karlgren (1926) 9.

[212] The most detailed argument for this position is Pines (2002). The Spring and Autumn period is named after the chronicle, which (problematically with the *Zuozhuan*) is the main source for the political events of this period. See the *Cambridge History of Ancient China*'s essentially traditional retailing of the events of this period depending mainly upon the authority of the *Zuozhuan*, in Hsu (2006). The period's termini are two events that stand just beyond the *Chunqiu*'s span: earlier, after the killing of the Zhou king Yōu and the sacking of the capital at Haojing, King Ping moves his capital eastward, to Wangcheng (near Luoyi, modern Luoyang—not to be confused with another Wangcheng, of the Qin domain) in 771, coinciding with a general diminution in Zhou power. Various dates have been offered for the end of this period: symbolic and traditional candidates are the death of Confucius and end of the *Zuozhuan*'s *Chunqiu* (479), the inauguration of the Zhou King Yuan (475), the *de facto* partition of Jin by the Han, Zhao, and Wei lineages into their respective states (453), the rapid succession of the Zhou kings at Ai's death (441–40), and the Zhou King Weilie's *de jure* recognition of the former Jin states (403). In dynastic terms, the period coincides with the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (771–256).

[213] An important distinction is maintained from an early period of Chinese between 'dynasties' (*cháo* 朝) and 'states' or 'vassals' (*guó* 國). I here use 'vassal' to refer to the *guó* as a subordinate of the *cháo*; 'state' refers more generally to any polity, even a foreign one. Notionally, the dynasty is supreme and comprises the vassals. There is thus significant debate in later historiography over whether certain self-styled "dynasties," such as the Liao, were in fact merely 'states.'

[214] Some domains, such as Song, claimed descent from the dynasty preceding Zhou (sc., the Shang) but evidently recognized Zhou sovereignty—it is not clear by precisely what legal or ritual mechanism. On the establishment of the domains by the Duke of Zhou, see *Zuozhuan* 5 (Lord Xi) 24.2a.

zhōngguó 中國. Other, larger realms had their own chronicles, whose existence is both attested in the *Zuozhuan* itself and, it seems, at least partially preserved in other histories, eminently the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhúshū Jìnián* 竹書紀年) and the recently published *Xìnián* 繫年.[215] The *Chunqiu* has two peculiarities: first, it alone seems, having been published in some form in the fifth century, to have been earlier and more widely available than other historical records. Second, it was thought by the third century (probably earlier) to have been edited by the itinerant rhetor Confucius, who was a native of Lu and there began his career as a low-level bureaucrat before a self-imposed exile that saw him proselytizing his thoroughly conservative interpretation of history in other realms until his death in ca. 479, the year of the last entry of the version of the *Chunqiu* that has accompanied the *Zuozhuan* since the edition of the Jin dynasty scholar and statesman Du Yu 杜預 (222–284 C.E.).

The terse, dry record of the *Chunqiu* was within a century of its publication explicated by at least five exegetical traditions,[216] two of them purely oral and now known only by name, and two other primarily oral traditions, the *Gongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries, which were written down. These two closely related works, which seek through a sort of catechism to explicate the chronicle's meaning in philological terms, had widespread authority earlier than the *Zuozhuan* and were the preferred *Chunqiu* exegesis in the early Han dynasty.[217] The *Zuozhuan* is far longer than these and is of an heterogenous but distinctly historical constitution. Beyond those passages where it simply repeats or paraphrases the *Chunqiu*, its contents comprise narrative, oratory, and

[215] For references on other annals roughly contemporaneous with the *Chunqiu* of Lǔ, see Li (2011) 415–16. Pines (2020).
[216] The *Hanshu* 30.75–75, from some four centuries after the publication of the *Chunqiu*, lists the *Zōu shì* 鄒氏 and the *Jiā shì* 夾氏; neither was available by the early Han. See Cheng (1993) 67–68.
[217] Li (2011) 420; Li (2007) 44.

commentary.[218] Its origins are obscure. Internal evidence such as linguistic style and consistency and the fulfillment or not of prognostications suggests ca. 350 as the *terminus ante quem* for the formation of its constituent narratives. The earliest surviving external evidence, in the *Shiji* 史記 (where it is referred to as the *Zuǒ Shì chūn qiū* 左氏春秋, the "*Annals of Master Zuo*," 14.509–10), dates from about three and a half centuries after the work's traditional composition and about two and a half centuries after its probable actual composition.[219] In other words, it existed in some form from early in the Warring States (*Zhànguó* 戰國) period (ca. 453–221), a time defined politically by the total marginalization and eventual disappearance of Zhou and the collapse and final dissolution of the large northern Zhou vassal, Jin, into three kingdoms. Of the text's precise form in this period, little can be said beyond that it was probably not circulated alongside the *Chunqiu*, because the collated recension of these works by Du Yu, mentioned earlier, was received as an innovation, though this evidence is rather weak given its lateness.[220] It was perhaps for the very reason of the *Zuozhuan*'s not being initially attached to the chronicle that it was liable to accumulate so much extraneous material that was only later distributed within a rigorously annalistic framework.

As with early Roman historiography, much is unknown about the origins of the *Zuozhuan*. What is known, however, makes it a comparable work, as can be seen in four main respects that are elaborated below. Its audience was principally men of affairs, and its purpose was to instruct and persuade them in matters of policy. Its composition, as an elaboration of an annalistic

[218] Henry (1999) 125.
[219] A brief overview of the work and scholarly estimations of its biases maybe found in Pines (2005).
[220] In fact, although many modern scholars cite Du Yu's edition as the first to collate the *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan*, Li (2011) 426 points out that Qing scholar Liu Fenglu 劉逢錄 (1776–1829) cited the Jia commentary (mentioned in Chapter 1) as the first to "present year-by-year 'splicing.'" Unfortunately, ibid. 426 n.37, she does not cite the page number. For more on Liu Fenglu, cf. Pines (2002) 26: "Liu pointed to numerous discrepancies between the texts of the [*Zuozhuan*] and the [*Chunqiu*], and claimed that they prove that the Zuo was originally merely a historical treatise, which had been manipulatively turned into a commentary by Liu Xin."

framework using diverse oral and written sources, resembles the second-century Roman histories. Also like the second-century histories, it predates, likewise by about a century and a half,[221] the crystallization of the national narrative endorsed by a centralized imperial state (the Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝 in China and Augustus at Rome), which in turn derived key themes and narratives from this work. Most important to our discovering anything new in the far more fragmentary Roman sources is the fact that, in relation to its subsequent tradition, the *Zuozhuan* is *sui generis*, differing in composition and form from all subsequent histories. It thus cautions against assuming that literary lacunae, especially early in a tradition, may be filled by an homogenizing tendency of extrapolation from later sources.

Audience

To speak first of the *Chunqiu*: from internal evidence, later practice, and lack of alternative explanations, it is all but certain that the *Chunqiu* was written by scribes (*shǐ* 史)[222] maintained by the court of the *guó* ('domain'). Their nominal and actual audiences and the exact purpose of the record are not known for certain.[223] Traditionally, the chronicle has been assumed to be a court gazette; more recently, it has been minutely argued, though not universally accepted, that the chronicle's primary audience was the departed ancestors, to whom it was delivered, perhaps by ritual recitation,

[221] I.e., if the Roman narrative is figured as originating ca. 140 and crystallizing ca. 30 B.C.E., and the Chinese narrative, ca. 350 and ca. 140, i.e., the early reign of Emperor Wu of Han.

[222] On the evolution of the term *shǐ*, which by the third century C.E. has come to mean, as in Modern Chinese, "history," see Durrant (2020). Significantly, the term *shǐ* does not appear in the *Chunqiu*, but frequently in the *Zuozhuan*. Selbitschka (2018) 425 loosely defines the *shǐ* of the late Warring States and early imperial periods as "a person in official employ who was not only trained in writing but also required to be familiar with divinatory and occult practices, basic arithmetic procedures, and some medicine." It may thus be anachronistic to call the *Chunqiu* authors *shǐ*. Cf. Durrant (2020) 114–15.

[223] While the term *shǐ* now refers to history either in the abstract or as a written record, the oldest known meaning, current throughout the Spring and Autumn period through the Han Dynasty, was 'scribe' or 'historian.' The office was officially conferred and held, it appears, within families across generations. More than one was employed at a time, as may be inferred from the designations of, e.g., the 'left scribe' (*zuǒshǐ* 左史) and 'right scribe' (*yòushǐ* 右史), whose task it was either to record words or deeds (it is unclear who recorded which). *Shǐ* were also learnèd in astronomy and created calendars. The relative rank or status of the *shǐ* is not known. On the *shǐ*, see Ng and Wang (2005) and Durrant (2020).

as a status report from the mortal world.[224] At all events, the *shǐ*'s obligation was, as for Greek and Roman historians, to record events and deeds with strict fidelity to fact, notwithstanding the vagaries of *which* facts were selected for preservation.[225] It is not known who edited or published the *Chunqiu*, nor why they did so. It seems in any case to have been published before other court chronicles, than which it had far greater circulation and influence. It is thus tempting to suppose an actual connection with Confucius's disciples. Such editing as it underwent seems to have been mainly subtractive, if indeed any intentional modifications were made at all: the characters we read are, as Karlgren demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt on linguistic evidence, the very characters that the *shǐ* wrote.[226]

In contrast, we do not know who wrote the text of the *Zuozhuan*. The work's early history, however, was shaped, if not largely created, by a class of itinerant scholars descended from the lower-ranking, non-noble officials of the Spring and Autumn period, called *shì* 士 (not to be confused with the *shǐ* 史 'scribe' above). This term has no single equivalent in English: it can be anything from 'knight' to 'officer' or 'scholar.'[227] The nature of this class is known only imprecisely.[228] It is not mentioned as a class in the *Zuozhuan* itself, but its apparently unopposed

[224] This is the argument of Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982) in *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 (1989), cited in Durrant (2020) 87. See also Pines (2002) 14–26; Pines (2009a) 321–33.
[225] Exempla illustrating the ideal of historian's fidelity to fact are legion in Chinese historiography. The most famous exemplum is recorded in the *Zuozhuan* itself, at 9 (Lord Xiang) 25.2d, where the Qi minister Cui Zhu executes three *shǐ* brothers in succession who each persist in recording (*shū* 書) that Cui Zhu had "assassinated" (*shì* 弑) his ruler, using a term that specifically denotes the unlawful killing of a superior. Ultimately, Cui Zhu relents and allows the record to stand as written. On the selection of facts, the *Chunqiu*'s omissions were long thought to be pregnant with great significance. See below. See also Schaberg (2011) 398: "Historicity mattered to the users of anecdotes, but as a complement to rhetorical aims rather than as a goal in its own right. The details of events often drifted and changed as an anecdote was retold over the centuries, and there is little to suggest that discrepancies of this kind troubled Warring States and early Han writers. Facts were not entirely open to manipulation, but it is significant that, in all the debates of the era, writers so rarely saw fit to question the details of each other's accounts."
[226] Karlgren (1926) and Karlgren (1931) 2, 8–59. Karlgren demonstrates that passages of the *Zuozhuan* were being cited long before the Liu Xin edition that Kang Youwei supposed to be a forgery.
[227] Pines (2009b) 117.
[228] See ibid. 115–84.

ascendancy, well attested in other literature of the period, is one of the characteristics—and mysteries—of the Warring States period. This ascendancy is associated first with Confucius, who in the literature of his philosophical tradition, and thus not in his own hand, is himself a *shì* and an early representative of the species of *shì* known as the 'itinerant scholar' (*yóu shuì zhī shì* 遊說之士, mentioned in Chapter 1). These were rhetoricians or philosophers of the "Hundred Schools" (*zhū zǐ bǎi jiā* 諸子百家, known misleadingly as 'philosophers') contending for prominence in the Warring States period who made their livelihood as interpreters of classical works and purveyors of wisdom, and whose paramount intended audience was leaders, their ministers, and, likely other *shì* who might propagate their ideas. They aimed to influence policy in part by the persuasive interpretation of select exempla from a common stock of anecdotes.[229] Their discourse, as can be gleaned from the surviving profusion of texts from the Warring States period, lighted upon diverse political and moral topics, prominent among them the example offered by the earliest kings (i.e., the 'sage-kings,' or *shèngwáng* 聖王, and the 'first kings,' or *xiānwáng* 先王).[230] Their objective was to influence policy and restore political and social harmony. In the *Zuozhuan*, a clear sign that the audience was of a class advising policy is their unabashed self-promotion in the pronounced theme of leaders following the good advice of their ministers, which reliably leads to success, while examples also abound of leaders ignoring good ministerial advice and failing.[231] The anecdotes of the *Zuozhuan* cannot but have been shaped, and perhaps created, by this discourse, possibly to a considerable degree.[232] Thus, despite its heterogenous nature, the *Zuozhuan*, like its

[229] This is the thesis, widely accepted, of Schaberg (2001).
[230] Brown (2013) 148 and passim on the Mohists' role in this development.
[231] E.g., *Zuozhuan* 5 (Lord Xi) 28.12, where Jin Lord Wen follows the good advice of even a bad man. More generally, see the results of *fú tīng* 弗聽 ('not listening,' often in the narrative formula after advice, meaning 'he did not listen').
[232] Pines (2009b) 164–65.

slightly later Roman counterparts, contains material written by those either making policy or aspiring to influence it.[233]

Some objections may be raised here to the comparability of this class with the early Roman historians. First, these *shì* appear to be less politically and economically potent than the consulars and other senators writing history at Rome in the second and first centuries B.C.E. But there is no reason to think this difference poses a problem when their intent, to persuade those with power, is the same. The *shì* sought both to persuade superiors to adopt a certain course of action and to attract peers as disciples; the Republican Roman historian was addressing peers as potential allies. It may also appear, in light of the *Chunqiu*'s and *Zuozhuan*'s particular association with Confucianism and of pre-Han historiography's general association with the Hundred Schools, that early Chinese historians are more 'philosophical' than Roman and Greek historiography by virtue of their strong and often explicit tendency to moralize and seek ethical principles, as in, for example, the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋 and the *Yànzǐ Chūnqiū* 宴子春秋. There may be some truth in this, in so far as Chinese historical works tend to be more miscellaneous than their Western counterparts. For example, the *Shiji*, otherwise Livy-like in scope and canonicity, comprises, besides its dynastic narrative commencing from the Yellow Emperor (Huáng Dì 黃帝), distinctly horological (*dìlǐ* 地理) material and biographical sections sundered from the continuous, annalistic narrative. The aforementioned *Lǚshì Chūnqiū*, written before the ascendancy of Qin in the mid-third century, embodies the holistic thinking that presented historical events in terms of cosmic principles *yin* and *yang*, and history as comprising many distinct episodes from which morals are to be drawn.[234]

[233] In older scholarship, on the authority of the genealogy provided in the now lost *Bielu* of Liu Xiang, but preserved in part by Lu Deming (ca. 550–630 C.E.), it is sometimes suggested that the *Zuozhuan* was composed in Wei, one of the emerging successor states of fracturing Jin. Cf. the similar genealogy in *Shiji* 14.510. Except in some speeches in *Zuozhuan*, however, this thesis cannot be maintained. See Pines (2002) 241 and ibid. 306 n.17.

[234] Such holistic thinking is truly ubiquitous even in the annalistic *Lǚshì Chūnqiū*, e.g., 20/3.3:

In this respect these works may seem often to present history in, to use Mink's typology, theoretical terms, that is, as seeing in history case studies of general principles.[235]

This objection misses the mark. The inclusion of philosophical material does not make the historical material any less historical, all the more so when many of the philosophical schools of thought of in this period situated their philosophical discourses in terms of commentary on historical episodes, roughly analogous to Valerius Maximus—and still more so when the most strongly represented philosophical tradition in the *Zuozhuan*, Confucianism, is itself a philosophy that is extraordinarily concerned, not with issues of ontology or epistemology, but with ethics as defined by the exemplary golden age of the early Western Zhou. All schools were seeking to define the way (*dào* 道) as a deliverance from the chaos of the Warring States period, and all grew up in an intellectual milieu where historical analogy was the norm to a far greater extent than in, for example, Plato or Aristotle. At this time, anecdote was the currency of discourse, as Schaberg observes: "This body of [*sc.*, anecdotal] lore existed for the sake of substantiating arguments about the workings of the world, particularly the political world."[236] Confucians, in short, sought to restore the

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凡人物者，陰陽之化也。陰陽者，造乎天而成者也。天固有衰歉廢伏，有盛盈蕃息人亦有困窮屈匱，有充實達遂此皆天之容、物〔之〕理也，而不得不然之數也。古聖人不以感私傷神，俞然而以待耳。
As a general principle, humans and things are produced by the transformations of the Yin and Yang. The Yin and Yang are created by Nature. In Nature there definitely is decline [*shuāi* 衰], deficiency, decrease, and demise, as well as flourishing, surplus, increase, and reproduction. Similarly, humans experience trouble, failure, exhaustion, and insufficiency, as well as fullness, fruition, mastery, and success. All of these are principles of Nature embracing all things, enumerations of what must be so. The ancient sages did not allow their personal feelings to harm their spirits but instead quietly awaited what was to be (*tr*. Knoblock & Riegel).
For textual emendations, see Knoblock and Riegel (2000) 519.

[235] See Chapter 1. See also Schwartz (1996) 30–31 on the presence of "metahistorical" frameworks: The anecdotes of the *Zuozhuan* are "'unhistorical'" in that they can be detached from their historical context; "On another level, however, they are involved in a 'master narrative' which is much more coherent and 'structured' than anything we can find in Herodotus's reading of the Asian and Hellenic world or even anything we can find in Thucydides concerning the general history of the Greek world. The historical arena in which the Chinese actors are believed to operate is one in which a universal normative order gradually undergoes a process of disintegration, and yet it is a world in which there is a hope of the possibility of the restoration of the basic principle underlying that normative order."

[236] On philosophy and historiography, see Schaberg (2011) 298, whose main point is that pre-Han (thus pre-*Shiji*) Chinese historiography and philosophy were essentially anecdotal. Rather than length disquisitions or continuous narratives, both broader philosophical points and longer historical narratives are presented as the cumulation of anecdotes.

order of what they believed to be an historical golden age, of the Zhou, that was the embodiment of proper ritual. There is no mystical, no transcendental or otherworldly, rationale for this proposition. It depends merely upon a profound veneration of the past and the general equation of antiquity with superiority, much as the *mos maiorum* in the Roman context.

The itinerant scholars were ascendant and looking to influence the nobility. Sima Qian's 司馬遷 later (first century B.C.E.) remarks on the *Chunqiu* are strongly suggestive of the audience and its attitude and purpose in reading the chronicle and, by extension, the historical commentary: "For this reason [i.e., because present events can have their origins in the distant past], the ruler must not be ignorant of the *Chunqiu*, lest he overlook the slanders about him, or lest he wonder at the rebellions behind his back. A minister must not be ignorant of the *Chunqiu*, lest he wonder at the proprieties of his office, or lest he wonder at the measures against a catastrophe" (故有國者不可以不知春秋，前有讒而弗見，後有賊而不知。為人臣者不可以不知春秋，守經事而不知其宜，遭變事而不知其權).[237] An understanding of the *Chunqiu* was primarily a matter of proper governance, and rulers could (as is the premise of the *Zuozhuan*'s very existence) only understand the chronicle with proper explication. There is no sign that the upper classes, the old elite, advanced a contending ideology either by offering alternative texts or alternative interpretations of the emerging classics. The prevailing view in the literature of this time was that of ministers, actual or aspiring, urging a course of action.

Sources

The *Zuozhuan*, in short, is an heterogenous corpus of anecdotes, many of them shaped by the *shì* (many of whom were Confucian), that accumulated around the *Chunqiu*. The *Chunqiu* that is

[237] *Shiji* 130 "Biography of Sima Qian" 16 = Watson (1958) 52, *tr. sec.* Watson.

internal to the *Zuozhuan*—that is, the portions of the *Chunqiu* that the *Zuozhuan* repeats or paraphrases—demonstrates a base stratum of explanatory historical material. The sources of these materials were other courts' archives, family traditions, and the anecdotes of the *youú shuì zhī shì*, many but not all of whom were likely associated with the Confucians. [238] Likewise in the Roman historians, records of speeches, decrees, treaties, familial traditions, biographical anecdotes, and political propaganda furnished material for early historians to build their histories.

The language of the commentary points in two directions: the many different names of personages, often within a short space, points to the information's various sources. The general consistency of style otherwise across the work points to its having been edited by a small number of persons within a fairly short period of time, in the early to mid-fourth century. The existence of other works that reproduce some of the narratives of the *Zuozhuan* but in a later style is further evidence that the general contours of the narratives, not necessarily their arrangement in annalistic form, were traditional. The often abbreviated form of these versions, as in the *Guóyǔ* 國語 (a collection of supposedly—and perhaps some actually—historical speeches often paired since antiquity with the *Zuozhuan*), suggests that the *Zuozhuan* versions, whatever their situation in the broader narrative at an early stage in its compositional history, were canonical. In short, although we have neither references to the *Zuozhuan* as such until later nor attestations of its annalistic forms until much later, one may be reasonably confident of the form and content of its constituent narratives and the editorial attention that they received. The work was not, in other words, an hodge-podge that was refined over the centuries, but the product of intensive fourth-century scholarship.

[238] On amalgamated sources, cf. Li (2011) 426.

The source material of the *Zuozhuan*, as Durrant argues, should be traced to five broad cultural practices whose coincidence produced the constituent anecdotes and ultimately the work as a whole: record keeping (in state archives, family archives, letters, speeches), teaching (as Confucius to his disciples, though this practice is not described until much later), political persuasion (giving princes models for speeches, taught by the *yóu shuì zhī shì*), and the practices of compilation and transmission. In short, the *Zuo* material was particularly copious and useful in teaching and persuasion and gained further authority by its association with the *Chunqiu*, which in turn pushed the *Zuo* material into a chronological arrangement.[239] In these respects, the *Zuozhuan* may offer a clearer model of how Roman historians were weaving together annalistic records and speeches to create historical narratives that would inform the ruling class. At this stage, as in early Roman historiography, these anecdotes and annals were in the process of being knitted together.

The effect of the sources on our interpretation of the *Zuozhuan*'s entries can only be judged on a case-by-case basis. There is no single formula for dating the layers or determining their origin. In general, it is fair to suppose that we are working with far more information than with the early Roman historians and can see more clearly the types of information that are preserved and the systems for arranging that information.

Pre-Crystallization

Some time before the Qin dynasty first unified the various states, the contours of the historical narratives sharpened. In the Qin and early Western Han dynasties, the main dynastic narratives connecting the Zhou, Shang, Xia, and earlier with the present were set and would change little thereafter. In this respect, the Qin and Western Han resemble the Augustan age at Rome. The Han, in particular from the reign of the Han Emperor Wu, is, like the Augustan peace, a period of relative

[239] Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2020) 8–12.

stability after a long trauma of internecine strife. Whereas Wu's predecessor, the first Han emperor Liu Bang 劉邦, and his immediate successors were chary of alienating the confederated nobles who had overthrown the totalitarian Qin, Wu (or Liú Chè 劉徹) resumed many of the policies of centralization and standardization earlier begun by Qin. Both in his own time and forever after, his reign (which, like that of Augustus for the Romans, was the longest of any Han emperor, at fifty-four years),[240] was denoted as an early acme of culture. Among his most enduring policies was the official adoption of Confucianism as the state's orthodoxy. As mentioned, Confucianism at this time was a belief system eschewing spirituality and mysticism that posited certain facts about the past, specifically the moral and ritual perfection of the early Zhou dynasty, and the ethical belief that this past should be restored through the resurrection of Zhou practices. This early form of Confucianism is, in effect, a conservatism *par excellence*, which seeks to revive and golden age and forbid any deviation therefrom. Wu's reign institutionalized and standardized many of the narratives that had hitherto circulated as the anecdotes of the *yóu shuì zhī shì*, principally those of the Confucian school.

It is thus no accident that the *Zuozhuan* textual tradition begins to come into focus only in this era. The *Shiji*, begun by Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. ca. 110) and completed by his son Sima Qian, is a project analogous to that of Livy, a totalizing history of the polity from its very beginnings. Like Livy, too, this history was so vast as to be accessible usually only in extract—though, unlike Livy's history, it survives entire. Much of the organization of the imperial archive can be traced to this period. Liu Xin's edition of the *Zuozhuan* would likely be based on much of the work done at this

[240] The Qing emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722 C.E.) was not 'Han,' in so far as he did not identify as such and was not considered as such by those who did call themselves 'Han.' The question of longest-reigning *Chinese* emperor quickly encounters the sensitive topic of what constitutes "Chinese." In short, the idea of "China" and "the Chinese" is a late-Qing label created in response to European notions of nationhood. The Qing government, Manchurian in origin, identified itself mainly as 'Qing,' not 'Chinese.' The issue is, of course, more complex than can be explained briefly and is not germane to this study. See Hayton (2020).

time.[241] It was formerly thought that Liu Xin, writing in the regency of Wáng Mǎng 王莽 (r. 9–23 C.E.), may have doctored the *Zuozhuan* to serve Wang's legitimation through connecting him to the Zhou dynasty. To support this view, there is nothing but the circumstance of Wang Mang's desiring legitimation, Liu Xin's support of his rule, and Liu Xin's producing his edition at this time, which gave rise to Kang Youwei's view mentioned earlier.[242] The internal evidence for the dating of the *Zuozhuan*'s components remains superior evidence and proves the work's fourth-century origins.

Thus the *Zuozhuan* is a text that predates the crystallization of many of the narratives it contains. Alongside the *Guoyu*, it demonstrates that history at this decentralized time in Chinese history was contestable and contested, much as Roman historiography of the Middle and Late Republic had yet to settle upon the narratives that would become fixtures of history under Augustus.

Sui generis

We have seen how the *Zuozhuan* is comparable to early Republican Roman historians in its audience and intent, its sources, and its relation to the later tradition. More speculatively, the work's uniqueness within its tradition may offer a model for the relation of the early Roman historians to their tradition. The uniqueness of the *Zuozhuan* even in its own time is evident in several respects. Using a somewhat later classification system, the work is one of few works placed in the 'annalistic form' (*biānnián tǐ* 編年體).[243] The other major annalistic work with which it may be compared, the *Bamboo Annals*, further highlights the *Zuozhuan*'s uniqueness. This work was recovered from the tomb of the Wèi 魏 (the Jin successor state) King Xiāng's 襄 tomb in 279 C.E. and appears to

[241] On the form of the *Zuozhuan* before Liu Xin, see *Hanshu* 漢書 (1962) 36.1967, Schaberg (2011) 398.
[242] Henry (1999) 126.
[243] On *biānnián tǐ*, cf. Durrant (2017) 191 and Wilkinson (2013) chh. 46.6 and esp. 48 for lists of all known annals, extant and lost.

be from the annals of Jin. It extends further back that the *Zuozhuan*, apparently to mythical times.[244] Thus *Zuozhuan*'s relative silence on mythical, pre-Zhou history appears distinctive, all the more so as the later tradition (as we shall also see in the next section) likewise tended to look further back than the *Zuozhuan* does. The uniqueness of the *Zuozhuan* in relation to the Chinese tradition is a caution to our hypothesizing about the early Roman tradition. If the *Zuozhuan* survived only in fragments, or even in anecdotes, the work would seem little more than an annalistic arrangement of variant forms of anecdotes found elsewhere. Only in our possession of the whole can we see where it differs.

Thus the very fact of its uniqueness, especially at an early and more experimental stage of historiography, alerts us to similar possibilities in the Roman tradition. It is also a warning that, in the annalistic tradition, arrangement often is the meaning. Individual anecdotes may be selected and shaped in one context for one purpose that may differ from the purpose, theory, or configuration of other anecdotes or of the annalistic compiler *cum* editor. Therefore, individual anecdotes, and *a fortiori* a smaller number of fragments, are not representative of the spirit of the larger text. The well attested uniqueness of the *Zuozhuan* in its own tradition recommends that models for the Roman tradition be sought not later in the same tradition, but at the same point in a comparable tradition.

The *Zuozhuan*'s Implied Narrative of Decline

The *Zuozhuan* constructs its narratives of decline from such heterogenous sources by implying an endpoint toward which prominent anecdotes are internally oriented by emphasis of detail and collectively oriented by thematic development. As we shall see in the rise and fall of Jin, key events

[244] The *Bamboo Annals* have been subject of considerable debate because of their two versions (a 'new text' and 'old text' version, on which see Chapter 1) and their doubtful authenticity. A good summation of the debate may be found in Nivison (2018), with further bibliography, and Pines (2014).

are written to foreground a narrative in which Jin possessed certain virtues in early times which diminished in later episodes and are implied to vanish by the unnarrated present time.

An ideal proof of this argument would exhaust the work's every entry to identify each narrative of decline, place it in its historical context while correlating every relevant contemporary or roughly contemporary work, extrapolate its presence in lost works, and consider its reception in the literature of the early empire to produce on a larger scale an interpretation akin to Earl's and Lintott's for early Roman historiography.[245] Thus might one trace the evolution of the individual narrative strands that would gradually be woven into the coherent, focused narratives of decline in the late Warring States period. The only recent thematic rearrangement of the *Zuozhuan* neither exhaustively analyzes its themes nor identifies narratives of decline as a thematic category.[246] Of earlier modern rearrangements, Wu Kaisheng's 吳闓生 (1877–1949 C.E.) *Zuǒzhuàn Wéi* 左傳微 is representative of a tradition of extracting the *Zuozhuan* extending back to at least the Song dynasty, which reproduces on one or several continuous pages the narrative or narratives that in the *Zuozhuan* are interspersed among other narratives across the years and seasons.[247] These anecdotes, however, are classified not by theme, but by event, almost always in the format of NAME's–NOUN, for example, *Jìn Chǔ zhī zhēng* 晉楚之爭, lit. "Jin's and Chu's strife," i.e., the strife between Jin and Chu. Under this heading are gathered, in chronological order, all relevant anecdotes that in the *Zuozhuan* are interspersed by year and season. The range of possibilities for the noun is

[245] Earl (1961) and Lintott (1972).
[246] Cf. Schaberg (2011) 398 on thematic and geographic rubrics for organizing the *Zuozhuan*, which may have predated the familiar chronological ordering of Liu Xin. For a modern thematic ordering of selections, see Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2020).
[247] Wu Kaisheng 吳闓生 (1995). Cf. Gao (1979). For bibliography on other, much later re-arrangement (dating from the Song dynasty onwards) of the information contained in the *Zuozhuan*, see Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) LXXII, esp. LXXVI n.73, and XCIII n.230.

narrow, mainly *luàn* 亂 (‘unrest’/‘revolt’) or *nán* 難 (‘troubles’).[248] The utility such works afford the reader is of assembling anecdotes into larger narratives for convenient review. The reader’s understanding of a given narrative’s broader significance depends upon his or her knowledge of its place in the *Zuozhuan*.

Although both the *luàn* and *nán* rubrics gather notable examples of failure, the examples themselves do not describe the historians’ conception of a broader degeneration of order over time. Yet Chinese historiography, more than the Latin tradition, offers other keywords for degeneration, decline, and other broader, abstract processes, foremost among which are the terms *shuāi* 衰, *bēi* 卑, *wéi* 微, *luò* 落, and sundry combinations thereof (e.g., *bēiwéi* 卑微, etc.), which may denote, with varying directness, decay, degeneration, decline, and failure. In Han historiography, these terms refer, for example, to a dynasty’s declining fortunes (*yì shuāi* 益衰) or to its losing the way of the former kings (*wáng dào shuāi* 王道衰). In the *Zuozhuan*, *shuāi* (and, to less a degree, *bēi*, which is a more general term) are specifically associated with “Zhou virtue” (*Zhōu dé* 周德) and not, as in the imperial tradition, more generally with the universal, cyclic decline which ultimately overthrows the earlier Xia and Shang dynasties. In other words, the compilers of the *Zuozhuan*, writing in the Eastern Zhou, were explaining the deterioration of the *present* order and not—or at least not as extensively as in the later tradition—placing the present deterioration in a *longue durée*, cyclic narrative of dynastic decay (on which, see Chapter 4). This tendency is well illustrated by the use of *shuāi* in the *Zuozhuan*, which will allow us further to conclude (1) that the *Zuozhuan* is particularly concerned with a causal, historical explanation of Zhou’s decline, as opposed to the imperial

[248] Prior to the widespread use of *niánhào* 年號 in historical mnemonics, in the sixth century C.E., the conventional designators of major historical events were marked in exactly this XY 之難 form, with *luàn* and *huò* 禍 (‘disaster’) being the most common. See Wilkinson (2013) 522–23.

histories that were formalizing the largely speculative trajectories of Xia and Shang dynastic decline, and (2) that it does not articulate its view of decline in any programmatic formulation (again, as we see in imperial historiography), but by strong implication.

The character 衰 appears as '*shuāi*' twelve times; its variant reading '*cuī*' also appears but has an entirely different meaning ('hempen mourning garment,' sometimes denoted by the variant 縗) and may be categorically excluded from consideration. Of these twelve '*shuāi*' instances, the first and penultimate are in the concrete sense, referring to the 'diminution' of drums, which sense by the time of the *Zuozhuan* is less common than the abstract. Of the remaining ten instances, three refer to the decline of a clan, six to dynastic decline, and one to the decline of one man's affection for his wife in favor of a concubine. [249] Of the six that refer to dynastic decline, four refer either to "Zhou virtue" (three) or to Zhou itself (one), one refers to Jin's decline relative to Zhou, and one refers ambiguously either to Xia's territorial contraction or its decline more generally.[250] The particular association of *shuāi* and "Zhou virtue" highlights the further observation that "Zhou virtue," in its five instances in the *Zuozhuan*, is always mentioned in association with some form of decline: besides the three examples in which "Zhou virtue" appears with *shuāi* are two different formulations of the same idea, namely, *búlèi* 不類 ('unsuitable' or simply 'not good') and, more obliquely, *tiān yàn* 天厭 ('heaven has had enough of,' or 'heaven is tired of').[251] In short, the *Zuozhuan* is concerned with the one-way change of Zhou's status: decline. Zhou virtue is mentioned not to illustrate it as it once was, but to lament the fact of its absence.

[249] Drums: Zhuang 3.10.1, Ai 12.2.3c. Clan: Xi 5.23.6e, Zhao 10.29.4c, Ai 12.1.2. Affection: Ai 2.25.1d. For dynasties, see next note.
[250] Zhou virtue: Xi 5.24.2b, Xuan 7.3.3, Xiang 9.23.13c. Zhou: Xiang 9.13.3b. Jin virtue: Zhao 10.9.3b. Xia 9.4.7a, 夏之方衰也 is rather ambiguous, as it could refer to the "territory of Xia," the "way of Xia," or simply "Xia (as opposed to another dynasty)."
[251] *Búlèi*: Xi 5.24.2a; *tiānyàn*: Yin 1.11.3b.

This one-way depiction of Zhou may be contrasted with two imperial views. Qin's (221–206) self-conception, scarce as are its surviving primary testimonies,[252] may in some measure be gleaned from the Mount Yi inscription (*Yì shān kè shí* 嶧山刻石), likely dating from 219, in which the first emperor, Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, asserts his sovereignty.[253] In this formulation, Zhou was flawed from its very conception and was thus not so much a starving giant or a dimming golden age as a false start altogether in the project of uniting the world (*tiānxià* 天下, more literally and grandiloquently translated as 'all under heaven'). The latter part of the inscription reads:

追念亂世
分土建邦 [20]
以開爭理
功戰日作[254]
劉血於野
自泰古始
世無萬數 [25]
陀及五帝
莫能禁止
迺今皇帝
壹家天下
兵不復起… [30]

They [i.e., the Qin Emperor and his officials] recall and contemplate the times of chaos:
When they [i.e., the first leaders of Zhou] apportioned the land, established discrete states, 20
And thus unfolded the impetus for struggle.
Attacks and campaigns were daily waged;
How they shed their blood in the open countryside—
This had begun in highest antiquity.
Through untold generations 25
One (rule) followed another down to the Five Emperors,
And no one could prohibit or stop them.
Now today, the August Emperor [i.e., Qin Shihuang]

[252] On Qin sources, see Kern (2001) 156.
[253] The inscription is more conjecturally, but possibly, dated to 209, if erected on tour by Qin's son Ershi 二世. See ibid. 5 for discussion of the argument, which he rejects for want of evidence. It should also be noted that the inscription is preserved in the *Shiji*, but it has been widely adjudged as genuine by its language and structure.
[254] 功 for 攻, per ibid. 13 n.11.

Has unified all under heaven under one lineage—
Warfare will not arise again! 30
[*et sim.*; tr. Kern (2001), with modifications and notes[255]]

The view of an abortive Zhou feudalism (preceded, it may be noted, by a supposedly violent succession even among the mythical "Five Emperors" who preceded Zhou) should be contrasted with the view ascribed in the *Shiji* to Li Si 李斯, where the Legalist Qin minister and architect of centralization addresses Qin Shihuang, recommending aggressive expansion:[256]

> [史記《李斯列傳》87.3]「昔者秦穆公之霸，終不東并六國者，何也？諸侯尚眾，周德未衰，故五伯迭興，更尊周室。自秦孝公以來，周室卑微，諸侯相兼，關東為六國，秦之乘勝役諸侯，蓋六世矣。」
>
> [*Shiji* 87.3] "In the past, when Duke Mu of Qin was hegemon, he never advanced east to annex the other six states. Why was this? Because at that time the other feudal rulers were still numerous and the virtue of the Zhou dynasty had not yet waned. Therefore the Five Hegemons arose one after the other, and each in turn paid homage to the Zhou royal house. But from the time of Duke Xiao 孝 of Qin [r. 659–621] on, the Zhou royal house sank into insignificance and the feudal rulers annexed each other's land, until east of the Pass there were only six states left. Qin, taking advantage of its victories, was able to command the other feudal lords for a period of six reigns [i.e., the Qin rulers since Duke Xiao 孝, thus 361 to 247]." [*tr. sec.* Watson (1958)]

Li Si's view of Zhou as reported here in the *Shiji* is obviously at odds with the Qin view of Zhou in the Mount Yi inscription. Here, Zhou was once virtuous, and its virtue entailed—contrary to the events recorded in the *Zuozhuan*—an orderly transferal of hegemony from one house to another, with each duly honoring Zhou. There is also a chronology for the subsequent decline: in the time of Qin Duke Mu (r. 659–621), Zhou is still virtuous. The era of virtuous transmission of hegemony

[255] On l. 27, Kern (2001) misprints "prohobit" for 'prohibit.' Otherwise, for *dì* 帝 I have replaced "Thearch" with "Emperor." 'Thearch' is sometimes used to differentiate the pre-Imperial dynasts, such as the "Yellow Emperor" 皇帝 and the leaders of Xia, Shang, and Zhou (i.e., the pre-Qin dynasties) from the "emperors" of the truly centralized, imperial system of Qin and Han.

[256] The degeneration ascribed to the pre-Zhou dynasties, including the Five Emperors (or Five Thearchs) is clearly attested in the Basic Annals 1–3 of the *Shiji* (=*Shiji* 1–3). In short, the official view of the Han court from Wu onward is of cyclical transferal of the Mandate of Heaven. The Qin view, such as can be inferred despite the heavy bias of the Han sources wishing to present Qin as an aberration, does seem to have entailed a true break with Zhou and a refutation of Zhou feudalism. See ibid. ch.5.

ends with the accession of Qin Duke Xiao, in 361—that is, more than a century *after* the *Zuozhuan* narrative ends. This almost surely unhistorical view of Li Si comports with a project of the Han Emperor Wu onward to integrate Qin into an historical cycle of renewal (*zhōngxīng* 中興, or *xúnhuán* 循環, 'dynastic cycle').[257] But the same work also presents a similar idea with a different chronology, later to become the standard version of early 'Chinese' history: the *Shiji*'s "Basic Annals of Zhou" record the movement of the Zhou capital eastward in 771–770, the event that in imperial historiography marks the end of the virtuous Western Zhou and the beginning of the decadent Eastern Zhou. Here, the Zhou minister Po Yang Fu 伯陽甫, in another almost certainly unhistorical speech, laments Zhou's decline:

> [史記《周本記》36:]「昔伊、洛竭而夏亡，河竭而商亡。今周德若二代之季矣，其川原又塞，塞必竭。夫國必依山川，山崩川竭，亡國之徵也。」
>
> [*Shiji* 4.36:] "In the past, when the rivers Yi and Luo dried up, Xia perished; when the Huo dried up, Shang perished. Now Zhou's deeds are like those of these two dynasties in their final years, and the rivers and their sources again are blocked. When they are blocked, the rivers will dry up. A state needs to depend on its mountains and rivers. Landslides and dried-up rivers are the signs a state will perish." [tr. Nienhauser (1994) 145, names adapted]

This passage presents Zhou as recognizing its own decadence already in 771. Thus, in each *Shiji* passage, there is not only a different conception of Zhou's decline from that in the Mount Yi inscription, where Zhou was fundamentally flawed, but an inconsistent chronology of the decline. The significance of this difference is twofold: first, although both the Mount Yi inscription and the *Shiji* were written at times when official history was conceived in thoroughly dynastic terms, that is, as a succession of dynasties, the conception of dynastic succession is radically different. The Mount Yi inscription sees dynastic change in one movement, from Zhou (and all before it) to Qin; the *Shiji* and the later tradition, as a continuous cycle. Both these conceptions differ from the

[257] *Xúnhuán* 循環 is the term in *Shiji* 8.393–94 (= Watson [1993] 85–86). Cf. *Mencius* 3B.9. See Wilkinson (2013) 7.

Zuozhuan, which is concerned not with dynastic succession, but with dynastic failure. Second, whereas the *Shiji* narrates the time of Zhou's supposed virtuous efflorescence but provides conflicting timelines for its decline, the *Zuozhuan* presents Zhou's continuous decline, and the rise and fall of realms against this background.[258]

The conception of dynastic succession that is prominent in the later historical works was also current at the time of the *Zuozhuan*, but the sparse evidence for it urges the conclusion that it was not the predominant conception of historical change and cannot be assumed to have been the system assumed by the *Zuozhuan*'s compilers. In the *Zuozhuan* itself, the notion of multi-dynastic succession is clearly behind *Zuozhuan* "Lord Xuan" 7.3.3, which relates the myth of the cauldrons that pass from dynasty to dynasty as a token of divine favor. At this passage, the Zhou minister Wangsun Man tactfully admonishes the Chu King Zhuang for his presumption in asking after the cauldrons' weight (hence, by implication, their portability to Chu). The reference to the nine cauldrons at "Lord Huan" 2.2.2, referring to Zhou King Wu's taking them from the Shang, is likewise made as a ministerial admonition against ambition. These two passages highlight again how rare dynastic succession as a discourse is in the *Zuozhuan*, and that it is concerned mainly with the transfer of power from Shang to Zhou, not the earlier, mythic chronology.[259]

Furthermore, all these examples, minus the Mount Yi inscription, put narratives of decline in the mouths of ministers. Decline, when mentioned explicitly in the *Zuozhuan* and in other historiography, is a matter of rhetoric, not only because the work written by advisors seeking to persuade

[258] Han historiography, upon which we are almost entirely reliant for our knowledge of Qin, was faced with the situation of legitimating its overthrow of Qin, a short-lived but in many respects highly traditional dynasty: Qin legitimating its dominion in much the same terms as Zhou had legitimating its own overthrow of Shang. Qin had, moreover, a long and august Zhou linage. Han, however, was a recent upstart, born of the old state of Chu, at the periphery of the Zhou world. This prompted what Kern has termed "a remarkable—yet highly effective—historiographical shift," in which the Han historiographers, principally Sima Qian, recast Qin as "fundamentally anti-traditional, that is, devoid of historical legitimation, while the new state of Han celebrated itself as gradually restoring the very tradition that the [Qin] were accused of having almost completely destroyed," Kern (2001) 158.

[259] For a summary early Chinese historical mythology, see Lewis (2009).

readers of the proper course based on historical precedent, but even within the work, so that the trope is doubly marked as ministerial. What we do not have is an historian writing a history in which he exposits *sua voce*, in the manner of Sallust, a theory of decline; instead, the vision of decline emerges through the configuration of anecdotes into narratives, and the further arrangement of these narratives into a still larger configuration. We also see that invocations of decline often adduce no cause other than, occasionally, a vague reference to lost virtue, which as in the formulations of *Zhou dé shuāi* ("Zhou virtues declines") is both the cause of decline and the decline itself—this in contrast to, for example, Cato, Sallust, Horace, Pliny, and others decrying avarice and the importation of Eastern luxury as causing civil discord and eventually civil war. For the *Zuozhuan*'s authors it is simply a given that Zhou is waning, evening during the Zhou.

Thus Zhou's waning virtue is the background of the *Zuozhuan*; in the foreground we see the rise and fall of other states, notably Jin. As we will be looking at the Jin example more extensively below, we will first illustrate for a reader unfamiliar with the *Zuozhuan* how to read a representative passage alongside the *Chunqiu* that more succinctly illustrates its features than the Jin passages. This arrangement will more vividly exhibit the text's layering and will offer a model for a process in other similarly layered annalistic texts.[260] We will then look at three key events that describe a narrative and thematic arc of decline, noting the formation of anecdotes into narratives and the narratives into themes to demonstrate how annals can construct a complex narrative of decline even in the absence of any programmatic statement. Finally, we will consider this model in relation to early Roman historiography.

[260] Pines (2024) 23–29 distinguishes broadly between what he terms "informative" layers, which record facts and may be derived from one assortment of sources, and "interpretative" layers, which derive from another assortment of sources. The latter category, he observes, 29, has tended since antiquity to be the better preserved.

In many cases, the *Zuozhuan* (which, again, was probably not initially transmitted alongside the *Chunqiu*) repeats or paraphrases the *Chunqiu*, then adds information. A good example of this type of entry is as follows (tr. Durrant et al.):

Chunqiu "Lord Xi"[261]

> [5.27.1 (633 B.C.E.)] In the twenty-seventh year, in spring, the Master of Qǐ 杞 came to visit our [*sc.*, Lǔ's] court.
>
> [5.27.2] In summer, in the sixth month, on the *gengyin* day, Zhao, the Prince of Qí 齊, died.
>
> [5.27.3] In autumn, in the eighth month, on the *yiwei* day, Lord Xiao of Qí 齊 was buried.
>
> [5.27.4] On the *yisi* day, Gongzi Sui led out troops and entered Qǐ 杞.
>
> [5.27.5] In winter, a Chu leader, the Prince of Chen, the Prince of Cai, the Liege of Zheng, and the Head of Xǔ laid siege to Song.

Zuozhuan "Lord Xi"

> [5.27.1 (633 B.C.E.)] In the twenty-seventh year, in spring, Lord Huan of Qǐ came to visit our court. He used the ritual of the Yi and that is why he is called "Master." Our lord belittled Qǐ because Qǐ did not show respect.
>
> [5.27.2] In summer, Lord Xiao of Qí 齊 died. There was resentment against Qí, but we did not reject the mourning requirements. This was in accordance with ritual propriety.
>
> [5.27.3 (*ad Chunqiu* 5.27.4)] In the autumn, we entered Qǐ. This was to rebuke them for not behaving in accordance with ritual propriety.
>
> [5.27.4 (*ad Chunqiu* 5.27.5)] The Master of Chu was going to lay siege to Song. He sent Dou Gouwutu to drill the soldiers at Kui. Dou Gouwutu finished at the end of the morning and had not punished a single man. Cheng Dechen also drilled the soldiers at Wei. Cheng Dechen finished at the end of the day and had whipped seven men and pierced the ears of three others. The domain elders all congratulated Dou Gouwutu, and Dou Gouwutu entertained them with wine. Wei Jia, who was still young, arrived late and did not offer congratulations. When Dou Gouwutu asked about this, he responded, "I do not know why one should offer congratulations. You passed ruling authority on to Cheng Dechen, saying, 'By this I intend to calm the domain.' If you bring calm at home but defeat abroad, what have you gained? Cheng Dechen's defeat is caused by your recommendation. If you bring defeat

[261] The *Zuozhuan*'s twelve books each correspond to the twelve lords of Lǔ whose reigns define the Spring and Autumn period. Customarily the books are named after their corresponding lord. It seems far more sensible, however, to refer to them by their ordinal number, all the more so when the Lu lords tend to play a rather minor part in the narrative. I cite both book number and reigning lord. Unless otherwise noted the translations are from the edition of Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016).

> to the domain by recommending him, what is there to congratulate you about? Cheng Dechen is harsh and without ritual propriety. He cannot drill the people. If the forces allotted him exceed three hundred chariots, he surely will not manage to bring them back intact. If I offer congratulations only after he comes back, what would be too late about that?"

Zuozhuan 5.27.1 and 5.27.2 each correspond to *Chunqiu* 5.27.1 and 5.27.2. There is no comment on *Chunqiu* 5.27.3; thus *Zuozhuan* 5.27.3 corresponds with *Chunqiu* 5.27.4. In this example, the *Chunqiu* preserves the year, season, and action. The *Zuozhuan* often reproduces this information, then adds an explanation, still from the perspective of Lu. To *Chunqiu* 5.27.5, it adds an anecdote of an incident that occurs in Chu while that state prepares for battle with Jin. The reason for this anecdote's inclusion, it would seem, is to prefigure Cheng Dechen's failure and his execution at *Zuozhuan* 5.28.4 (*ad Chunqiu* 5.28.6). In terms of sheer bulk, if not by proportion of entries, the *Zuozhuan*'s narrative comprises passages like 5.27.4, which expand considerably upon the chronicle and connect to other, longer narratives distributed across the years to create the type of "master narrative" described by Schwartz.[262]

Now that we can see more generally how the *Zuozhuan* builds upon the *Chunqiu* chronicle, we will do what the extracts based upon narrative, or even grouped upon general theme, do not do: we will show how a causal explanation of progressive, historical failure—not, that is, failure on any one occasion—, is implied, not by any one keyword, but by thematic development. The best test case of the grand narrative of ascendancy and decline may be seen in the trajectory of the state of Jin, for multiple reasons. First, one should take Jin's catastrophic failure as the implicit terminus of the *Zuozhuan*, much as with the perennial threat of civil war in late-Republican and Imperial Roman historians (see Chapter 5). For Jin's ultimate failure is total, as its early successes expire in the state's total dissolution, the 'partition of Jin by the three clans' (*sān jiā fēn Jìn* 三家分晉),

[262] Schwartz (1996) 30–1.

a process variously dated, commencing in the 480s or early 470s and *de facto* complete by ca. 430, *de jure* by 403. This event, or rather process, taken since imperial times as the beginning of the chaotic Warring States period,[263] stands just outside the main narrative of the *Zuozhuan* but must be understood as a formative historical event for the history's compilers, some of whom may have been from the Jin successor state Wei, or who at least had access to Jin archives, as material relating to Jin is particularly abundant.[264] Jin is also an old house with close connections to Zhou, against which, as we saw in the *shuāi* example above, it measures itself carefully.[265] Jin is moreover among the earliest states to be recognized as attaining to a position of prominence later known as the *bà* 霸, the 'hegemon' or 'overlord' that putatively maintained order on Zhou's behalf, theories about which were a matter of intensive debate in the Warring States period, as will be discussed below.

Jin's trajectory is charted by three representative episodes, the Battle of Chengpu (*Chéngpú zhī zhàn* 城濮之戰), the Battle of Bi (*Bì zhī zhàn* 邲之戰), and the casting of the Jin penal code in a bronze cauldron (*xíng dǐng* 形鼎, lit. the "penalty cauldron"), respectively in the years 632, 597, and 513 (again, for reference, the *Chunqiu*'s final entry is for 479, noticing Confucius's death). The Battle of Chengpu marks the acme of Jin's virtue in its defeat of Chu and its subsequent ascent to hegemony. A generation later, however, Jin moves markedly away from virtuous conduct and is defeated by Chu at Bi. When it casts the bronze penal code in imitation of Zheng, the *Zuozhuan*

[263] The "Warring States" period was first defined as such first by Liu Xiang in the first century B.C.E. See Wilkinson (2013) 689.
[264] Evidence for Wei, the Jin rump state, is weak. See Pines (2002) 225 and 239–42.
[265] The *Zuozhuan* refers to Jin's relation to Zhou, e.g., "Lord Zhao" 5.1.12a and 5.15.7b on Yú 虞 (or Tang Shu), founder of the Jin line who was younger brother to Zhou King Cheng, second king of Zhou. Also, significantly, at 5.29.5, where Confucius admonishes Jin's casting of the penal code saying that Jin should abide by the example of its founders.

treats the deed to a stern admonition from Confucius and an accurate prediction of internal strife that befalls sixteen years later (as reported at "Lord Ding" 6.13.2).

Nowhere are we told programmatically, or even by obvious implication, what Jin represents. Instead, Jin's trajectory is depicted by the repetition and arrangement of certain themes that emerge by placing passages within the context of the work and the broader historical context in which it was written. The trajectory of Jin and its implied causes demonstrates that the *Zuozhuan* is neither merely a casebook of 'troubles' and 'failures,' as in the extracted versions, nor a reductive interpretation of the Zhou's dynastic decline as one in a cycle of such declines, as in imperial histories, but a cohesive interpretation of its age that charts the deterioration of order. The decline of Jin as it is narrated in the *Zuozhuan* is of particular relevance to the Roman annalists, namely Piso Frugi, for the fact that it neutralizes the issue of whether Piso's work continued to his present. As the *Zuozhuan* demonstrates, the present may be assumed as the major point of reference even when the history stops short of it. When the present is a time of political disorder, even a segment of the past is liable to be read as tending toward the present condition, as the *shì* are addressing the question of what is to be done *now*.[266]

The narrative of Jin's decline also efficiently illustrates how discourses current at the time history is written, such as that of the hegemon (*bà*) mentioned earlier, are projected onto an otherwise neutral, earlier chronicle—or, as the case may be, a commentary tradition in which there is the occasional rhetorical invocation of decline. The chaos ensuing Jin's dissolution produced a concept that interweaves an annalistic record of events with present political exigencies. The theory of the hegemon holds that one of the states must be supreme in maintaining harmony. How the

[266] As obvious as this observation may seem, there are equally obvious but contradictory ways of narrating segments of history. In simplistic terms, an historian may strive for non-teleological historiography stressing that the outcome of events was unknown to its participants or for a teleological history stressing the outcome. See Chapter 6.

hegemon is to do this was a matter of extensive debate, but its right to do so is based upon the belief that Zhou had maintained unity and harmony, especially under its founders King Wu and the Duke of Zhou, major cultural heroes from at least the Warring States onward and the central heroes of the imperial tradition. As Taeko Brooks has demonstrated, the notion of hegemony is broadly denoted by several terms, of which *bà* is likely the earliest. In places, the term is almost interchangeable with two other terms, but elsewhere in the *Zuozhuan* these other terms are applied to states in connections that imply a rather different theory of hegemony. The notion of the 'hegemon' is denoted mainly by *bà* 霸 but is generally interchangeable in the fourth century with *méngzhǔ* 盟主 and *hóubó* 侯伯. Brooks's compendious study of the minor differences in the attributes of the hegemon as denoted by each term traces a general development across the fourth century, from an idea of the hegemon's authority as based upon consensus to its potency based on force.[267] She similarly traces a roughly contemporaneous development in the use of *tiān* 天 ('heaven'), in which a single term acquires different attributes at different times.[268] Henry likewise observed that the two terms for Confucius, '*Zhòngní*' 仲尼 and '*Kǒngzi*' 孔子, and the sententious opinions that the *Zuozhuan* editors attribute to the unnamed *jūnzi* 君子 ('gentleman'), betoken a relatively long and heterogenous agglomeration.[269] Throughout the work, moreover, the multiple names used to denote a single personage, traditionally viewed as conveying subtle judgment within the context, were used with such irregularity as to imply different sources and different editors.[270]

[267] A. T. Brooks (2000).
[268] A. T. Brooks (2003).
[269] Henry (1999) 125 and 149, concluding that "the *Zuozhuan* compilers of ca. 300 B.C.E. were functioning more as editors than as creators—they were putting large chunks of preexisting material into a single text. They did their best to put a Confucian spin on the whole, and to invest it with contemporary relevance, but time was limited, and the material recalcitrant, so much remained in the text that was not particularly Confucian in spirit."
[270] On the principle of unitary composition, this variation was thought to be rigorously intentional. While there may be some deliberation in which version of a personage's name appears in a given context, the likeliest determinant is the source whence the material was drawn. Cf. Schaberg (2001) 323–24.

Since none of the terms for 'hegemon' appears in the *Chunqiu*, yet are central in *Zuozhuan* and later texts, it is clear that the theory is a later invention that was projected onto the earlier sources. Brooks believes there are at least two layers in which these theories were superimposed on the chronicle, one corresponding to an earlier period, when the *Zuozhuan* was being composed at Lu and Jin was viewed as the sole true hegemon among several contenders in the Spring and Autumn period, and another, rather flatter and less elaborated theory that was added later to make Qi the true first hegemon, even before Jin. What emerges is that, in Warring States discourse, some participants were positing the need for an hegemon; Jin, now dissolved, was retrospectively recognized as hegemon and offered as an exemplar for the present age. Qi, and perhaps others, claimed the example for itself to legitimate its expansionist policies and sought to project precedent for its hegemony even further back, creating a narrative of restored hegemony.

Politically speaking, the hegemon is clearly a practical substitute for the weakened Zhou and is meant in effect to restore the political situation to its status in the golden era of Zhou's rule. Yet, in the *Zuozhuan*, Zhou's early golden era is only adumbrated, as it stands beyond the years of the continuous narrative. When it is mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*, 'Zhou virtue' (*Zhōu dé* 周德) is invariably spoken of as declining. In other words, we never see its presence, only its departure. But, much as the hegemon is a substitute for the Zhou politically, it is also a *narrative* substitute for the unnarrated Zhou golden era in the *Zuozhuan.* Thus in Jin's ascent preceding the Battle of Chengpu, after which the *Zuozhuan* reports—unhistorically—that Zhou recognized Jin as hegemon, the *Zuozhuan* is depicting the qualities of a lost golden era, but within historical time, as we shall see in the passage below.

The passage below commences the narrative of Jin's ascent with the return of the Jin scion Chong'er 重耳, the future Jin Lord Wen (Jin Wen Gong 晉文公),[271] from his wanderings in exile. The passage is the transition from his wanderings to his ascent to the Jin throne, as it looks both forward and backward. It also well illustrates the juxtaposition of chronicle material (which I have marked with a single underline) with explanatory material probably by the *Zuozhuan* compilers (unmarked), along with traditional, oral anecdote (emboldened), and annalistic material not from the *Chunqiu* or other Lu records (double-underlined). This earlier, anecdotal narrative follows Chong'er's wanderings in exile and develops a common anecdotal theme that would be familiar to any reader of the *Odyssey*: much as *xenia* receives its rewards in the Greek world, the *lǐ* 禮 ('ritual propriety') or lack thereof of Chong'er's various hosts receives its due recompense, or *bào* 報:

> [僖公 5.24.1] 二十四年，春，王正月，秦伯納之。不書，不告入也。**及河，子犯以璧授公子，曰：「臣負羈紲從君巡於天下，臣之罪甚 多矣，臣猶知之，而況君乎？請由此亡。」公子曰：「所不與舅氏同心者，有如白水！」投其璧于河。濟河，圍令狐，入桑泉，取臼衰。**二月甲午，晉師軍于廬柳。秦伯使公子縶如晉師。師退，軍于郇。辛 丑，狐偃及秦、晉之大夫盟于郇。壬 寅，公子入于晉 師。丙午，入于曲沃。丁未，朝于武宮。戊申，使殺懷公于高梁。不書，亦不告也。
>
> ["Lord Xi" 5.24.1 (655 B.C.E.)] In the twenty-fourth year, in spring, in the royal first month, the Liege of Qin installed him [i.e., Chong'er] in power in Jin. It was not recorded because we were not notified about his entry. **When they arrived at the [Yellow] River**, **Hu Yan handed a jade disk to the noble son** [i.e., Jin Lord Wen, formerly Chong'er]**, and said, "While I have accompanied you, my lord, carrying bridle and reins in your travels about the realm, my offenses have been numerous indeed! If even I, your servant, know this, how much more must you! I request to depart for good from this place." The noble son said, "If there is an occasion when I am not of one mind with you, my elder uncle, may these bright waters bear witness against me!" And he threw the disk into the Yellow River. They crossed the Yellow River and laid siege to Linghu,**

[271] This is the posthumous name of Chong'er, who is usually referred to in the text merely as "the Prince of Jin" (*Jìn hóu* 晉侯).

> **entering Sangquan and seizing Jiushuai.** In the second month, on the *jiawu*[272] day, Jin troops were stationed at Luliu. The Liege of Qin sent Gongzi Zhi to go to the Jin troops. The troops pulled back and were stationed at Xun. On the *xinchou* day, seven days later, Hu Yan swore a covenant with the high officers of Qin and Jin at Xun. On the next day, the *renyin* day, the noble son came into the midst of the Jin troops. Four days later, on the *bingwu* day, they entered into Quwo. On the next day, the *dingwei* day, the noble son paid homage at the Wu Temple. On the following day, the *wushen* day, he sent men to kill Lord Huai at Gaoliang. This is not recorded because once again we were not notified. [*tr. sec.* Durrant et al. (2016)]

In the underlined text, the text of the *Zuozhuan* repeats character-for-character the corresponding *Chunqiu* entry, which for this year is, as not infrequently happens, merely a time stamp, as it were, indicating the year and season, but no event. The regular text must be the words of the *Zuozhuan* compilers because, first, in the phrase 秦伯納之 ("the Liege of Qin installed him"), the pronoun 之 (*zhī*, here 'him') refers to Chong'er in the preceding entry as if continuous with it (that is, it assumes that the antecedent is obvious); second, they comment directly upon the *Chunqiu* entry to explain how so momentous an event as Chong'er's becoming the Jin Lord Wen is overlooked, namely, nobody told Lu (不書，不告入也, "It was not recorded because we were not notified about his entry"). The emboldened text marks the resumption in style and narrative sequence of the wanderings of Chong'er, which cannot, especially given the *Zuozhuan* editors' explanation, have originated at Lu. The double-underlined text marks the interpolation of annalistic material that cannot be of Lu origin, as can be surmised from its abrupt time stamp (二月甲午, "In the second month, on the *jiawu* day"), and from the ensuing passages' resumption of the language and matters of interstate affairs, which is concluded by the remark 不書，亦不告也 ("It is not recorded [sc., in the *Chunqiu*], because *once again* 亦 we were not notified"), which refers emphatically to

[272] Dates, such as these, were in pre-Modern China reported using the *gānzhī* 干支 ('stem–branch') system. The specifics are not important to the present argument. In short, the system comprises the pairing of one value each from two parallel-running numerations, viz., one of ten heavenly stems, the other of the twelve earthly branches. The decimal and duodecimal numerations run in tandem until they conclude together on the sixtieth pairing. These dates 'float' independently of the month and year like the Western days of the week.

the earlier editorial remark about the accession of Jin Lord Wen (不書，不告入也). Thus, in order are four distinct materials: (1) *Chunqiu* material from Lu's archives, followed by (2) a brief comment on the material by a presumably Lu editor of the *Zuozhuan*. The (or an) editor has inserted (3) an anecdote of unknown origin, then advanced the narrative by (4) annalistic material from another state's, probably Jin's, archives. It is thus easier now to see the wider framework of the Lu chronicle with other materials hung thereon.

These materials are not hung haphazardly, nor are they simply anecdotes about Chong'er distributed across the relevant years and seasons. The annalistic beginning, that is, the beginning of the year, is of course primarily a formal division: the year starts and ends irrespective of the events that happen within its duration. But the *Zuozhuan* is so arranged that this formal division coincides with an apparently deliberate division of an otherwise continuous narrative about Chong'er to mark a change in theme.[273] Here begins a carefully structured series of anecdotes illustrating *bào* as the now ascendant Jin Lord interacts with the various lords, lieges, and retainers who had either hosted him in his exile or awaited his return to Jin. Hu Yan (who is Chong'er's/Jin Lord Wen's uncle and advisor) introduces the idea of an accounting for his actions over the past few years. The pledge disk also looks backwards to the disk that Chong'er had received from an apologetic (and farsighted) minister of the wicked lord of Cao, and forward to the minister's reward and the Cao lord's punishment ("Lord Xi" 5.28.3a–b).

The *Zuozhuan*'s thematic framing thus resembles the technique identified by Ginsburg in her seminal analysis of Tacitus's *Annales*, where she observed that Tacitus's annalistic arrangement is not merely an artifact of earlier annalistic historiography, but, in Tacitus's hands, a thematically determinative device in which important themes are highlighted at the years' beginnings and

[273] Continuous, as in the extracted-narrative edition of Wu Kaisheng 吳闓生 (1995) 195.

endings.[274] Likewise the material between Jin Lord Wen's accession and the battle at Chengpu has been disposed to match a thematic frame. In this case, and potentially in others, the *Zuozhuan* shows that Tacitus's framing technique is available more generally to the chronicle form, with year-gaps and book divisions as only one among many potential demarcations of the frame. In the *Zuozhuan*, as perhaps in other chronicle and commentary traditions, larger structures emerge from the repetition of themes in relation to a discernible minor narrative, such as that of Chong'er, and a major narrative, such as that of Jin.[275]

The next two movements in this narrative are Jin Lord Wen's education as a leader, followed by his signal success against the state of Chu at the battle of Chengpu. The education can, I believe, be divided into two parts, with one that points toward his imminent success at Chengpu, and is likely best associated with the Confucian tradition, and another that looks even further ahead, to the collapse of the Spring and Autumn order as it was imagined by the *yóu shuì zhī shì* of the Warring States period. The more negative direction is visible in "Lord Xi" 5.25.2. Here, Hu Yan (Wen's uncle, mentioned above) offers his nephew some advice about interstate relations: Serve Zhou by suppressing the Wangzi Dai revolt and restoring Zhou's king to the capital, and the other princes will honor your good faith and virtue (諸侯信之，且大義也, "All the princes will credit your deed, and moreover it is an example of dutifulness"[276]). Reinforcing the Zhou king brings

[274] Ginsburg (1981) *passim*, e.g., 40–41: "Tacitus integrates them [i.e., the end chapters of each book of the *Annales*] with the work as a whole, using them to make connections between one year and another, to recall earlier parts of the work or anticipate | later ones. The end chapters may point backward to evoke episodes already narrated or to reinforce the historian's previous characterization of the dramatis personae. They may also prepare the groundwork for events or themes to be taken up later or provide a transition between one year and the next." The same appears at least sometimes to be true of the *Zuozhuan*.

[275] See Chapter 1 on major and minor themes following the example of Lord (1965).

[276] This translation is entirely my own, as Durrant et al. here interpret the text rather loosely: "The princes will consider this good faith, and it also will be an act of great dutifulness," 389.

honor, and honor brings power.[277] Immediately hereafter, Wen consults an oracle about, as we must infer from the answer, whether he should attack Wangzi Dai and restore the Zhou king alone. The diviner sees in an oracle bone a sign of the (to us, mythical) Yellow Emperor. Wen mistakes the sign as referring to himself. The diviner corrects him, saying that as the continuity of Zhou's rites is unbroken, the present equivalent of the Yellow Emperor is the Zhou king, not Lord Wen (「周禮未改，今之王，古之帝也」, "Zhou's rites have not changed; the [Zhou] king of the present time is the emperor of ancient times,"[278] "Lord Xi" 5.25.2). What this passage clearly implies, especially coming after Hu Yan's counsel (and all the more by the version of Hu Yan's admonition in the *Guoyu*), is that Wen's view of his role is not merely as a support to the Zhou king, but potentially a replacement. Hu Yan's concerns with virtue may thus be seen as being first with the appearance, rather than the substance, of virtue. The further implication is that apparently virtuous behavior may have ulterior motives. By extension, even in this earlier period, one may find the seeds of later discord. Notably, Wen's final decision is not only to assist the Zhou king, but to spurn Qin's help in doing so (晉侯辭秦師而下, "The Prince of Jin declined the Qin host's [support] and went down the river," translation mine).

After this admonitory glimpse of Wen's motives, the narrative's more favorable turn is to the education of Lord Wen in virtue. After a carefully narrated series of trials in interstate relations, the final entry before the entry for year 632, in which the battle of Chengpu will take place, sums up Wen's education of himself and his people:

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[277] Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (2016) 388 n.52 note that a parallel passage at *Guoyu* "*Jìn yǔ* 晉語 4" 10.373 reports Hu Yan's argument in more agonistic terms, such as that Wen's failure to act will give Qin the initiative. I do not believe the absence of this argument here is particularly significant—e.g., by suggesting a more Confucian depiction of Wen—, because, as we shall presently see, the immediately subsequent passage relates in no subtle terms a very non-Confucian reading of Wen's probable motives.

[278] ibid. 391: "'There's been no change in the rites of Zhou. It is the Zhou king of our present day who corresponds to the emperor of ancient times.'"

[僖公 5.27.4c] 晉侯始入而教其民，二年，欲用之。子犯曰：「民未知義，未安其居。」於出乎出定襄王，入務利民，民懷生矣。將用之。子犯曰：「民未知信，未宣其用。」於是乎伐原以示之信。民易資者，不求豐焉，明徵其辭。公曰：「可矣乎？」子犯 曰：「民未知禮，未生其共。」於是乎大蒐以示之禮，作執秩以正其官。民聽不惑，而後用之。出穀戍，釋宋圍，一戰而霸，文之教也。

["Lord Xi" 5.27.4c] From the moment the Prince of Jin had entered the domain [related at "Lord Xi" 5.24.1], he had instructed his people. After two years, he wanted to put them to use [*sc.*, as soldiers against Chu]. Hu Yan said, "The people do not yet understand their duty, and they are not yet peacefully settled in their abodes." So it was that he left Jin to stabilize the position of [the Zhou] King Xiang, then came back to the domain and strove to benefit the people, and the people cherished their livelihood. He was about to put them to use as soldiers. Hu Yan said, "The people do not yet understand good faith, and they have not yet demonstrated that they can be put to use." So it was that he attacked Yuan to show them an example of good faith. The people who traded goods did not seek undue profits from this and openly stood by their words. The lord said, "Can we act yet?" Hu Yan said, "The people do not yet know ritual propriety, and they have not developed respect." So it was that he organized the great spring hunt to show them an example of ritual and established the keeper of ranks to put in order his officials. The people could then heed his commands and not be deluded, and it was only then that he put them to use. That they could drive the Chu army from the garrison of Gu, relieve the siege of Song, and in a single battle become overlord was due to Wen's instructions. [*tr. sec.* Durrant et al. (2016)]

This passage is likely a late addition, summating all the preceding and looking forward to the next year, in which Jin will succeed in its campaign against Chu. It thus offers a précis of the virtues that bring success. Here, Hu Yan instructs Wen in instilling culture in his people before making war against Chu. The final ingredient he names, ritual propriety (*lǐ*), emphasizes order. This scene, of a wise minister restraining a compliant lord, is ubiquitous in the literature of the *yóu shuì zhī shì*. The result of listening to a good minister is—naturally—success. We are not given precise reasons for Jin's victory at Chengpu, but the moral, that ritual propriety brings practical success, is the story's obvious moral. The earlier narrative prepared us for it. In its aftermath, the *Zuozhuan* records an event which, on closer analysis, must have either been altogether invented, or at least greatly exaggerated, in the discourse of the Warring States. This is the supposed conferral of hegemony on Jin by the Zhou king, at *Zuozhuan* 5.23d. The *Chunqiu* does not record anything like this. Nor do the *Bamboo Annals*—the supposed annals of Jin—record it. The summation resembles

the type of summative comment, the *Jūnzi yuē* 君子曰 ("the Gentleman says") or *Kǒngzi yuē* 孔子曰 ("Confucius says") comment, characteristic of moralistic discourse.

After Jin's victory at Chengpu, Zhou recognizes Jin as hegemon. Discourse about the *bà* is particularly concentrated around the battle of Chengpu. *Hóu* and *hóubó* discourse also are particularly intermixed here. Xian Hu picks up the *bà* discourse in his rebuttal of Fan Hui. There are many other references to Chengpu: for example, Chu commanders use the previously successful Jin arguments. We know Chu has been aspiring to hegemony (5.22.9). The point is, Chengpu is heavily implicated in the *bà* discourse, which Bi picks up in an important way: inverting Chu and Jin. At "Lord Xuan" 7.12.2, we also find an inversion of the *bà* argument.

Jin's loss to Chu thirty-five years later, in 597, at Bi, is scrupulously composed with a consciousness of the victory at Chengpu. As we have just seen, the narrative culminates in a rather tacked-on summation of the victory at Chengpu, which frames the whole event in terms of Jin's becoming hegemon (*yí zhàn ér bà* 一戰而霸, "become hegemon in one battle"). Before Bi, on the other hand, a different theme emerges: Chu's attack on Zheng, which will precipitate the rematch with Jin, had justification, and Chu's conduct afterwards was ritually proper. Chu's generally upright behavior stands in stark contrast to that of Jin at this time, whose motives are vindictive and whose commanders are fractious.

Looking ahead another sixty-two years, we see a crucial moment for Jin: at Chengpu Jin won by virtue; at Bi they lost by it; now, in the year 513, they cast their laws in bronze. Confucius condemns this action:

> [昭公 10.29.5] 仲尼曰：晉其亡乎！失其度矣。夫晉國將守唐叔之所受法度，以經緯其民，卿大夫以序守之，民是以能尊其貴，貴是以能守其業。貴賤不愆，所謂度也。文公是以作執秩之官，為被廬之法，以為盟主。今棄是度也，而為刑鼎，民在鼎矣，何以尊貴？貴何業之守？貴賤無序，何以為國？且夫宣子之刑，夷之蒐也，晉國之亂制也，若之何以為法？

> ["Lord Zhao" 10.29.5] Confucius said: Jin will perish, for it has lost its standards. Jin should maintain the legal standards received by Tang Shu from the Zhou king so as to provide guidelines for the governance of its people, while ministers and high officers maintain these standards, each according to his rank. By this means the people are able to esteem the nobles, and the nobles are able to maintain their hereditary duties. When nobles and commoners do not deviate from the standards, that is what we call "standards." For this reason, when Lord Wen created the office of the keeper of ranks and made the code at Pilu, he became covenant chief (*méngzhǔ* 盟主). Now that Jin has abandoned these standards and made a penal cauldron (*xíng ding* 刑鼎), the people attend only to the cauldron! How are they to respect the exalted, and how will the exalted maintain their hereditary duties? When there is no proper order for the exalted and the lowly, how will they manage the domain? What is more, Fan Gai's penal code is derived from the muster at Yi, a period of disorder [*luàn* 亂] in Jin. How can it be used as a legal norm? [*tr.* Durrant et al. (2016)]

Confucius's remarks here convey a standard Confucian idea: do not codify laws. He relates the codification to the idea of hegemony, but using a term, *méngzhǔ*, which suggests a later, generally more negative discourse about the hegemon than the earlier *bà* discorse. Thus we see here an accretion of various discourses: *méngzhǔ* citations first appear in book 6 ("Lord Wen") and preponderate from book 9 ("Lord Xiang") onward. The model that one might therefore construct is that a generally favorable discourse about the *bà*, based on a notion of its substituting Zhou, grew up around the battle of Chengpu. In short, a golden age is subsequently recognized, and its qualities are debated in subsequent ages in the terms of the putative golden age.[279]

Lending emphasis to the passage, the scribe Mo, who is quoted immediately after Confucius's admonition, adds detail to Confucius's pronouncement by predicting in detail the destruction of several of Jin's ministerial lineages. In the fulfillment of Mo's prediction sixteen years later, at "Lord Ai" 12.5.1, Confucius's precept of Jin's loss of standards (*qì shì dù* 棄是度, "[Jin] has cast these standards aside") is confirmed by historical exegesis. The prediction, logically a later addition, is added to lend thematic significance to the event by connecting it with later events.

[279] Durrant et al. That rulers of the Warring States period were eager to follow in the footsteps of the overlords is apparent in Mencius 3B.6, 6B.26, 6B.27 and in Xunzi 11.229–60.

The *Zuozhuan* Model for the Early Roman Annalists

The *Zuozhuan*'s structure and development of themes are a potential model for the development of early Roman historiography. It must of course be acknowledged that the *Zuozhuan* was likely compiled by multiple editors, perhaps over decades, and while it is unclear precisely how far these editors went in modifying their source material, our earlier examples would suggest that they did so mainly by large interpolations rather than minor interventions (as is the case, for example, with the multiple terms for hegemon, or more generally the inclusion of both pro-Jin and pro-Qi material). The diversity of its constituent sources is likely greater than the early Roman sources, in so far as there were more annalistic documents available to the authors, which likely, if the *Chunqiu*, *Zhushu Jinian*, *Yanzi Chunqiu*, and *Xinian* are any indication, both extended further back than the Roman pontifical chronicles and had accumulated a diverse array of extraneous material. Each of these points, however, is more a difference in extent rather than in kind. Perhaps the most significant difference is that Roman historians writing in the second century B.C.E. are single authors whose identity is known in varying degrees of detail, and whose fragments betray no signs of layering. One might therefore expect a greater degree of consistency of intent, method, and treatment of sources within them—though it is important not to overestimate the degree to which a single author necessarily homogenizes a text, as the variation across Livy's books reminds us. Within a longer duration of compilation, the layers of the *Zuozhuan* are perhaps more akin to a less-digested Livy than to any of the pre-Sallustian Roman historians.

There are none the less valid grounds for comparison. Since we cannot add any new entries to the corpus of fragmentary Roman historians, comparison will offer us new ways of interpreting the Roman sources. In short, the model of the *Zuozhuan* demonstrates that, in an annalistic framework, narratives may be selected in part by thematic considerations and correlated with

thematically similar narratives that are neither causally related nor chronologically proximate. In other words, the *Zuozhuan* comprises, among other things, diverse moralistic judgments from multiple sources that have been attached to a chronicle frame. These judgments accumulate, perhaps already with some associations formed through oral discourse, and are attached to the chronicle frame and further correlated through changes in detail and emphasis. The *Zuozhuan* was composed at a time when discourse about the present and its relation to the past was largely moralistic. Earlier chronicles like the *Chunqiu* or the Roman pontifical chronicle were not shaped by this moralistic concern until they were digested into annalistic histories. It is these annalistic histories that are largely lost in the Roman tradition but preserved in the Chinese tradition.

We will take Piso Frugi as our exemplar of Roman historiography after Cato because he is the first historian for whom we have evidence of an orientation both moralistic, as for Cato, and, it would seem, pessimistic, as for Sallust. The single strongest testimony of his pessimism as a general view of history is three words from fr. 40, *a quo tempore* ("from which time"). As we shall presently see, however, the orientation implied by these three words comports with several of his other fragments and with the constellation of other events related to fr. 40, retailed both by Piso and by other historians. Piso was, moreover, among the earliest historians to write at a time of fatal political crisis. His consulship, in 133, coincided with the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus; his censorship, in 120, came one year after the death of Gaius Gracchus. Forsythe, noting that Piso is cited as *Censorius* only in the references to his *Annales*, plausibly argues that Piso published the work after his censorship.[280] Piso's life thus coincided with multiple severely destabilizing crises in Roman politics. Whether his history reached his present day or not, it can only have failed to do so because of his death or indisposition: it is inconceivable that he would willingly forbear to do so.

[280] Forsythe (1994) 35. The other evidence Forsythe cites, n. 21, is far less conclusive.

Thus, as for the compilers of the *Zuozhuan*, the gravity of the present will have irresistibly oriented the events they recorded from the past. As Puett noted,

> This general vision of history—that in antiquity sages followed cosmic patterns and thereby ruled properly, that a subsequent decline has set in, and that now we must once again return to following cosmic patterns—is a common one in numerous texts from early China. The debate would then focus on questions such as when the decline set in (after the early thearchs, after the Zhou fell, after the reforms of Shang Yang, and so on), who should be recognized as a proper sage to initiate reforms (Confucius, Mozi, Mencius, and so on), et cetera.[281]

We may see a similar development in Roman historiography, most clearly in Piso. His view of Rome's early history seems to have been patriotic, as in his depiction of Tarpeia as an heroine, in fr. 7 (cf. Pictor fr. 7, in which she is a traitoress), and his emphasizing Romulus's sobriety, in fr. 10, or recounting, in fr. 22, the erection of statues of heroes including Cocles and Cloelia at public expense.

There is no doubt that these events were recorded annalistically. Whether they were attached to pontifical material is doubtful.[282] If Piso more than his contemporaries valorized Rome's early history, and if Rome's political situation by the 110s offered an unfavorable contrast, Piso may have been particularly disposed to "focus on questions such as when the decline set in."[283] This would appear to be his concern in fr. 40, which reads, in full:

> *Nec non et Romae in Capitolio in ara Iovis bello Persei enata palma victoriam triumphosque portendit. Hac tempestatibus prostrata eodem loco ficus enata est M. Messalae C. Cassi censorum lustro, a quo tempore pudicitiam subversam Piso gravis auctor prodidit.*
>
> Furthermore, upon the altar of Jove on the Capitol at Rome in the war with Perseus, a palm grew, portending victory and triumphs. After this palm was laid low by storms, a fig grew

[281] Puett (2008) 178.
[282] *Pace* Forsythe (2005) 72, who improbably asserts: "It seems likely that histories such as that of Calpurnius Piso, written about the time of the compilation of the *Annales Maximi*, were the first works to incorporate systematically the relevant historical data gleaned from the Pontifical Chronicle, including an annalistic framework, and that subsequent historians did not need to consult the work directly but simply took the material over indirectly from other accounts." Rich (2018) 39–48, esp. 47–48, has demonstrated that an annalistic framework was present already in Pictor from at least the Samnite Wars onward. Forsythe's arguments for the *Annales Maximi*'s Scaevolan edition do not, in fact, respond to those of Frier (1999) passim, e.g., 198–99, who places its production in the reign of Augustus.
[283] After Puett, above.

> in the lustrum of the censors Marcus Messala and Gaius Cassius, from which time, the weighty authority Piso has recorded, chastity was undermined. (Piso Frugi fr. 40 C = Pliny *Nat.* 17.244).

This fragment is the earliest example of a Roman historian dating a decline of some kind. Forsythe argued that Piso is referring not to a general decline, but specifically to the poisoning of L. Postumius Albinus and Claudius Asellus by their wives Publicia[284] and Licinia. This incident is preserved in Livy *Periochae* 48, Valerius Maximus 6.3.8, and Julius Obsequens 17. In Forsythe's view, Piso is referring specifically to *pudicitia* as a feminine virtue that was undermined on that occasion. The incident may also have been, because of Postumius's involvement, more generally associated with the Bacchanalian affair of 186. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of this view, though not mentioned by Forsythe, is that, if the portent of the fig tree was felt to have world-historical significance, we would expect to find it recorded elsewhere besides Piso. As it is, Piso is our lone source, and his interpretation of the event's apparently grave significance can be extrapolated only from our broader sense of the structure and thematic development of his work.[285]

But Forsythe simply overlooks the critical phrase *a quo tempore* ("from which time"), which strongly suggests that Piso was identifying a more general trend—or, more precisely, the *a* ("from") indicates this, and it appears to be secure in the textual tradition. His assertion that *pudicitia* is primarily a feminine virtue and must therefore relate to the poisoning also lacks support. The *ThLL* indicates that, while the term is indeed associated with women, it is almost always qualified as feminine when meant to refer to women specifically; when left unqualified, however, as in Piso, it would likely not be understood as referring only to women and would be understood as the equivalent of *castitas, continentia, verecundia,* and related words. Further undermining the

[284] Or Publilia; Briscoe prints "*Publicia*."
[285] Cf. Rawson (1971) 160, who observes that the prodigy of the palm is reported at Liv. 43.13, albeit *in aede Primigeniae Fortunae* ("in the temple of Fortuna Primigenia") rather than on the alter of Jupiter on the Capitol, as in Piso.

incident's association with the poisoning is the fact that Valerius Maximus records the incident in terms of *severitas* (6.3.8), stressing the swiftness of the trial and the severity of the punishment: the grammatical core of Valerius's account emphasizes the punishment, as the main verb is that the accused women "were strangled" (*strangulatae sunt*) on the order of their own kin. Valerius is also the only source to mention the use of *venenum* ("poison"). The incident *may* here be associated with the Bacchanalian affair in 186,[286] whose suppression Valerius reports in the preceding entry, but here, too, his account stresses not the loss of any virtue—let alone feminine virtue—, but the severity and swiftness of the investigation and punishment. Livy *Periocha* 48 describes the event in terms of procedure, with no remark on its moral or broader historical significance. It is also notable that Julius Obsequens merely says that Postumius, in setting out for his province (*in provinciam proficiscens*) after receiving an ill portent of headless livers in the sacrificial victims (*in plurimis victimis caput in iocinere non invenit*), dies not of poisoning but of illness after being brought back to Rome (*profectusque post diem septimum aeger Romam relatus expiravit*). In fine, the link to the poisonings, and by extension to the Bacchanalian affair, is tenuous.

To what incident was Piso referring in this year that would mark a moral decline? It may be significant that Livy *Periocha* 48, recording events for 154 to 150, has as its third sentence *Semina Tertii Punici Belli referuntur* ("The seeds of the Third Punic War are reported," 48.3 Jal). As it appears that the debate between Cato and Scipio Nasica Corculum on the wisdom of destroying Carthage was also a significant portion of this book, Piso may be referring to this event. But *pudicitia* would only awkwardly refer to a tradition more closely associated, at least by Sallust, with the *metus hostilis* ("fear of the enemy") theme that appears to have arisen from the Cato–Nasica debates. Berti considers the matter thoroughly and settles upon the construction of the stone theater

[286] Reported by Livy a 39.8–19.

by the censors Messala and Longinus.[287] But because this theater was demolished in 151 by Publius Scipio Nasica Corculum,[288] Berti's argument improbably entails that Piso saw in the theater's narrowly circumscribed existence an irreversibly nocent force undermining public morals, and that the fig's eruption somehow prefigured the trend.

Although this argument is certainly possible, it leaves gaps. The prodigy of the fig can only come to Piso either by report or by his consultation of a prodigy list. The fact that the fig prodigy is not reported elsewhere suggests a prodigy list that Piso consulted later (or, it may be, he was told at the time and remembered the event while writing his *Annales*). The symbolism of the fig itself is unclear: Forsythe argues for a connection with lasciviousness, but it might as well be argued that the most famous fig, the *ficus Ruminalis*, was patriotic.[289] We might next consider the timing of events: Piso's specifying the *lustrum* implies that the portent was found in the annual ritual. That would place the event before March, when the consuls would be setting out for their provinces.[290] Rome's windiest months, in which the palm may have been laid low, are January, February, and March. With the final frost probably occurring in March, one might suppose that the fig had just sprouted when the censors found it on the altar. Business concerning the Carthaginians would be brought up soon thereafter—sooner, no doubt, than L. Postumius's death. That Livy *Periocha* 48 so early mentions the "seeds of the Third Punic War" implies that he is referring to the events of 154, the first year recorded in that book. We may thus plausibly infer that Piso fr. 40 is looking ahead to the destruction of Carthage.

[287] Berti (1989) 147. Cf. Forsythe (1994) 404.
[288] However, cf. Vell. Pat. 1.15.3 and Appian *B.C.E.* 1.28.125, who credit Cn. Servilius Caepio for the destruction and blame on Longinus for the construction. Liv. *Per.* 48.25 Jal, V. Max. 2.4.2, Augustine *D. Civ.* 1.31ff., and Oros. 4.21.4 credit Nasica Corculum.
[289] Forsythe (1994).
[290] Mommsen (1877) 2.1.340–42.

Moreover, *subversam* would more properly refer not to the beginning of the process of moral corruption, as would be the case for any of the earlier events, but to its culmination, in an overthrow. Piso may be indicating not a gradual decay from 154, but the loss of all hope in that year, as if to say, "From that time on, all hope was lost." If the early Roman annalistic tradition resembles that of the Warring States period, the dating of the decline may fixate not so much upon finding the *first* incident as upon the construction of a long arc of examples, potentially over many years, that may be gathered together under a common heading. For the *Zuozhuan* does not appear particularly concerned with firsts, but with the connections between events, or their comparability. Piso's concern with women's *pudicitia* is a concern with a first. The argument about public spectacle too, becomes fierce only in 55 B.C.E.—well after Piso's death—, with Pompey's construction of the stone theater, and the earlier precedent was remembered. The greatest obstacle, therefore, to connecting fr. 40 to the broader narrative of Rome's political unrest is *pudicitia*, and we must ask, what process had come to an end in 154, the results of which would be troubling Piso in the 120s or 110s? The obstacle, however, is not great, if we see in the seeds of Carthage's destruction (as Livy reports for this year) also the seeds of the loss of any restraint. Piso may be suggesting that subsequent events are not a growing tide of immodesty, but replayings of the failed advice of Nasica Corculum..

Conclusion

The model suggested by the *Zuozhuan* is that a certain past period is contrasted favorably with the chaotic present and is later construed as a golden era. Discourse grows around this era seeking a cause for why it ceased to be. The annalistic framework itself, by its orderly succession of seasons and years provides a seemingly neutral backdrop for ideological discourse. Anecdotes and other data are selected by historians, placed within the annalistic framework and interrelated through

allusion and emphasis upon certain themes. Thus the many empty time-markers of the *Chunqiu*, which report merely the year and the season but no event, convey the basically orderly succession of the "Zhou king's time" against which the jumbled anecdotes of vice and failure stand out all the more starkly. In the Roman case, one could well imagine invectives against luxury and a general discourse surrounding this vice and its dangers growing up in annalistic records in the early second century B.C.E. Initially cautionary, the discourse would, as the political situation deteriorates and violence erupts, acquire an historical orientation as the question would turn to identifying the origin of the present disorder. The discourse around certain events and actions that were contentious or criticized, such as the destruction of Carthage or Corinth, would be recalled and posited either as turning points or as points in a downward trajectory. Even earlier precursors would then be sought out and correlated with the later events. In this way, Piso may have delineated a narrative of Rome's decline quite unlike that of Sallust.

Chapter 4

Republican and Dynastic Narratives:

Sallust, Augustus, and the *Shangshu*

Roman historians were not, as we saw in Chapter 2, depicting Roman history as a trajectory of decline until, at the earliest, the mid-second century B.C.E., possibly later. The most definitive evidence we have of such a narrative is in the monographs of Sallust. Early Chinese historians, as we saw in Chapter 3, do present a narrative of decline in the *Zuozhuan*, but one that is different in key respects from the later traditions, in the Qin-dynasty Mount Yi inscription and the Han-dynasty *Shiji*. We are now able to ask two novel questions that are the subject of the present chapter: first, why does the Roman narrative not take shape until relatively late in the tradition, whereas the Chinese tradition appears to have been founded upon a narrative of decline? Second, why is the *Zuozhuan* narrative different from the later, imperial narrative of Qin and Han? These two questions are in fact related, because both are answered by (a) whether the historical narrative was being written by ministers or by those holding power, or (b) whether the narrative formed before or after a centralized, imperial consolidation of power could enforce that narrative. At the risk of being reductive, it might be observed that there emerges a schema of four general types of history for both the Roman and the Chinese traditions, divided by two time periods (pre-imperial and imperial) and two types of author (minister or ruler/official). This typology is of course not perfect, but it serves as an heuristic elucidating the questions. In short order, we will see that Sallust and his predecessors, along with the *Zuozhuan*, are pre-imperial ministerial histories, and that this

category is written with certain questions in mind that tend to elicit more complex, continuous narratives of decline, whether as a theory or as a configuration.[291] Official-imperial narratives, as of the early Zhou and Augustus, are written with a different question in mind that tends to elicit a simpler narrative of history that contrasts the present with the past. The narrative of Tacitus, the subject of Chapters 5 and 6, is reacting directly to the Augustan narratives and can be understood as ministerial-imperial history in the Roman tradition.

The Sallustian Narrative

The contours of Rome's moral and political decline in Sallust's monographs are self-evident enough to require little rehearsal.[292] Both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* give account of political catastrophes that occurred within living memory and were well known to author and audience, and they do so with programmatic statements that identify the causes and trace the origin and growth of those catastrophes. Though monographs in form, moreover, these works have grand-historical ambitions reaching far back in Roman history for the causes of recent events: in the *Bellum Caltilinae,* Sallust declares that his intention in writing the history had been to write a history of the Roman people (4.2): *sed a quo incepto studioque me ambitio mala detinuerat, eodem regressus statui res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna videbantur, perscribere* ("But I have returned to the undertaking from which my abortive ambition [*sc.*, in politics] had early distracted me and have decided to write at length the history of the Roman people, in small pieces, as each seemed worthy of memorialization"). The small piece, or case study, upon which his interest alights is to write about Catiline's conspiracy (*igitur de Catilinae coniuratione quam verissume potero paucis absolvam,* "I shall therefore briefly give account of

[291] On "theories" and "configurations," see Chapter 1.
[292] Syme (1964): "Sallust is the historian of decline and fall."

Catiline's conspiracy as truly as I am able," 4.3) because of what he terms the "novelty of the crime and danger" (*sceleris atque periculi novitate*, 4.4). Catiline's conspiracy is thus not one of many anecdotes selected either topically, as in Valerius Maximus, or temporally and geographically, as likely in Cato's *Origines*, but a case study of a comprehensive understanding of Roman history as a continuous narrative. Thus it is from his sketch Catiline's character (5.1–8) that he naturally comes to relate his view of the deeper history that explains the state of a society that would produce such a man as Catiline (5.9). And it is in this account that he traces, event by event, the devolution of *virtus*.

Bellum Iugurthinum 41.1–10, too, looks further back within relatively recent memory to identify a cause of Rome's opprobrious failures in Numidia. He identifies "factionalism and the morals of the entire polity" (*studia partium et omnis civitatis mores*) as immediate causes, which he traces to the loss of *metus hostilis* at the then-recent destruction of Carthage, in 146. The direct result was simultaneously the loss of *concordia* and the importation of *lascivia atque superbia.* More gradually, the old virtues *dignitas* and *libertas* were redefined by the aristocrats (*nobilitas*) and the people (*populus*) to mean whatever they desired (*in lubidinem vortere*, as also in *Cat.* 38.3 and *Cat.* 52.11). The main difference between the two factions is that the aristocracy possesses power joined with unlimited greed (*cum potential avaritia sine modo modestiaque*).

In both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, there is, as Biesinger notes, a striking imprecision of chronology before 146, with greater precision thereafter.[293] One might expect, if the loss of the old *concordia* since that date were so catastrophic, to see a clearer depiction of what exactly was lost and to learn the history of that exemplary golden era. Instead, much as the *Zuozhuan* shows little concern with the substance of Zhou's golden era but builds a coherent narrative

[293] Biesinger (2016) 97.

only within the time of decline Sallust, too, at *Bellum Catilinae* 9 and *Bellum Iugurthinum* 41–42 dispenses with the desiderated era in broad, moralistic strokes: then they had *concordia* and *boni mores*; now, we do not.

These are familiar and, I believe, uncontroversial readings of the texts, which evince clear concern with a linear accounting of historical events in terms of their relation to present political disorder which Sallust himself, now retired in disgust from politics, both memorializes and explains. But why, of all our historical narratives, is Sallust's the most ideally declensionist, stating unambiguous that there is decline and that it occurred for both proximate and ultimate causes that he names and generally dates in a continuous narrative of history? A pragmatic answer, that is, an answer that considers Sallust's intentions and his circumstances, is that Sallust was writing both to voice his disappointment in Caesar's failed dictatorship and to those with power both to recognize the present crisis and grasp its causes to recognize that the Republic had already been rotten well before Caesar.[294] As a man out of power, however, his rhetoric persuades by narrative reason: a concatenation of events, extending to very extremities of living memory, a century earlier, shows precisely what happened and why to produce the present crisis. To put it simply, Sallust is answering the questions "Why are things bad now?" Such questions appear also to be the operative questions behind much of the material in the *Zuozhuan*, likewise written in an advisory rhetoric, likewise at a time of political instability.

The Augustan Narrative

The rigorous narrative of decline that Sallust created may well have been unpopular in its own time, when patriotic histories may have been more standard, but in the Imperial tradition it was

[294] Syme (1964) 33:56, 127–137.

received and put to new use. The Julio-Claudian Principate (27 B.C.E. – 68 C.E.) marks the definitive end of a Republic in which historian–senators could write as advisors to each other and the beginning of an age in which history was written for those in power, of whom Velleius Paterculus is a low-quality but notable example, and Tacitus a distinctive example. The beginnings of the Roman imperial narrative, as we will see also in the case of the early Zhou dynasty, are with the ruler himself, who sets a relatively simple pattern of historical change. Tacitus was distinctively reacting *against* this narrative, while appropriating some of its features. His magnum opus, the *Annales*, alludes in several ways to the language and themes of the historical narrative promoted by Augustus roughly a century earlier. Its introductory chapters alone suffice to illustrate the extent to which Tacitus, in framing his history, was reacting to the conventions of the Augustan narrative. One such allusion is the emphasis upon the demarcation between Augustus and the Republic that Tacitus makes in his opening chapter, where he distinguishes the *veteris populi Romani prospera vel adversa* ("the good and ill fortunes of the old Roman people"), which have been amply covered by other historians already, from the *tempus Augusti* ("period of Augustus"), which marks the transition to sycophancy that characterizes the Julio-Claudian Principate and its successor (*temporibusque Augusti dicdendis non defuere decora ingenia, donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur*, 1.8–10). In subsequently asserting that *Bruto et Cassio caesis nulla iam publica arma* ("when Brutus and Cassius were slaughtered, the Republic no longer had an army," 2.1), he mocks Augustus's prominent claim, discussed below, to have acted as a private individual in restoring the Republic. Rather, implies Tacitus, the *res publica* became a *res privata*. Besides selecting Augustus's reign as the period of cardinal change and prominently refuting one of Augustus's central claims, Tacitus also refers in ironic terms to the nature of the relative peace that prevailed under Augustus, saying that Augustus sated everyone with the sweetness of leisure (*cunctos dulcedine*

otii pellexit) and raised others with money and office (*opibus et honoribus extollerentur*). The incompatibility for Tacitus of peace and prosperity on the one hand and liberty on the other is a blow against Augustus's paramount claim to have conferred both peace and prosperity upon the Roman people. Finally and most damningly, Tacitus sees in new state of affairs under the Principate no trace of the old *mores* (*verso civitatis status nihil usquam prisci et integri moris*, 1.4.1–2), which have been lost both because of the change in government (*omnes exuta aequalitate iussa principis aspectare*) and because the morals have not been passed on to the new generation (*quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset?*, 1.3.30). In sum, Tacitus depicts the Augustan government, contrary to its central claims, as marking the first time in Roman history a private individual had seized and held the republic while sweeping away the old *mores*. This Roman Revolution changed the relationship of the present to the historical past.[295] Therefore, it is necessary to note those features of the Augustan narrative that relate to historical change in general and to time in particular. In analyzing it, we will draw a clearer distinction between the dynastic and ministerial narratives of decline.

As Tacitus's central claims commencing the *Annales* at once light upon Augustus as the time of transition and allude ironically, as mentioned above, to the Augustan self-presentation,[296] it is clear that Tacitus's idea of the nature of historical change must be understood in part by comparison with the Augustan narrative that was its first point of reference. Octavian (the future Augustus), having attained primacy following his victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, in 31 B.C.E.—a victory concluding a civil war that itself followed another civil war with the assassins of Caesar and their allies, which had in turn followed the civil war between Caesar and Pompey—, urgently needed both to restore social stability and economic vitality and to legitimate his sole

[295] Syme (1939) 9 and passim; Wallace-Hadrill (1997) 128.
[296] O'Gorman (2000) 181–82.

seizure of a state apparatus traditionally predicated upon collective rule and strict adherence to precedent in the form of the *mos maiorum* (the "way of the ancestors"). Renewal was an attractive slogan because it justified the changes attending his victory as an improvement upon the recent chaos and as a restoration of the ancestral way. This was the watchword from early in the Principate, when Octavian contemplated naming himself a second Romulus, a founder anew of the Roman state.[297] This allusion might, however, have also recalled that Romulus established the state as a monarchy and that he committed fratricide in so doing; the title "Augustus," on the other hand, elicited complex religious, literary, and historical associations, and was a known, albeit archaic, word not before employed as a name. It was thus both novel and redolent of the antique.

Such marriage of the new[298] with an ostentatious veneration of the old was the quintessence of Augustus's self-presentation, [299] as succinctly encapsulated at the end of his reign in the inscription placed around the empire in 13 or 14 C.E. and cited today, by its first line, as the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (or *RGDA*). The propaganda of the Augustan period is the subject of intensive scholarship, but it is sufficient for the present purpose to emphasize this one point about it, that the Augustan narrative of renewal as espoused in the *RGDA* and developed in architecture, numismatics, epigraphy, and elsewhere logically entails an intermediate period of decay—which, however, Augustus was wont to overlook. For the *RGDA* merely alludes to the troubled years in which Augustus restored the Republic, by enumerating, not describing, his victories. In part the omission arises because, by the time of publication, the battle at Actium was no longer so urgent as forty years earlier. Augustus's adversaries are not mentioned, nor indeed are his allies but for his chief general and old friend, Agrippa. Such exclusive fixation in an inscription upon the deeds of the honorand

[297] Suet. *Aug*. 7.2[; Flor. 2.34.66; D.C. 53.16.7, Alföldi (1971) 37]. The word *augustus*, though used as early as Ennius *Ann.* 4.5 = Skutsch (1985) frr. 154–55, had never before been adopted as a name.
[298] He speaks of his era as distinct, e.g., *priusquam nascerer*, *RGDA* 13, *aetatis meae*, 16.1.
[299] Hoffmann (1969) 18.

is characteristic of epitaphs, which in certain respects the *RGDA* resembles,[300] but this resemblance alone is not a sufficient explanation. The *RGDA* differs from epitaphs not only in its extent and its context, but its focus and omissions are also replicated in other genera and media, such as in architecture and coinage.[301] Self-justification is necessarily an optimistic project, and recollection of the painful time of the civil wars was unnecessary, would recall awkward truths about Octavian's past (not least that he and Antony had once been allies), and was useful when left obscured in the shadows of logical but unelaborated necessity. The period of decay before the renewal served as a minatory whisper that one ought to appreciate the present state of affairs. There was little need for Augustus to rehearse that time in detail.

By the composition of the *RGDA* at the end of Augustus's reign, then, the times of tribulation were receding beyond living memory into obscurity, where they might seem either inert or vaguely menacing. Their hazy existence begged the questions of who might be blamed for those times and whether they might one day return. A facile solution would be to seek a scapegoat, such as a Marius, Sulla, or Catiline, who might embody the sins of an entire class. But here emerges another distinctive feature of the Augustan causality of the civil war after the fact: its chariness of laying the blame upon individuals. The *RGDA* omits to mention Octavian's citizen-adversary Antony and even his more easily culpable foreign collaborator, Cleopatra.[302] Such reluctance arose from the fact that, for one reason or another, no individual might bear sole responsibility,[303] nor was it politic that blame redound to a single social class or to the Republican constitution itself.[304] It must be sought elsewhere. But whereas individual malefactors are omitted in the *RGDA* and the

[300] Cooley (2009) 30–32; Lattimore (1962) 266–300.
[301] Zanker (1988) 5–31; Galinsky (1996) 46, 48–49; 53–55, 64–69.
[302] Cf., *RGDA* 25.2 *Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua et me bel[li] quo vici ad Actium ducem poposcit* ("All Italy voluntarily swore an oath of allegiance to me and demanded me as leader of the war in which I was victorious at Actium"); Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.
[303] Syme (1950) 209–17, rehearses the political considerations against blaming any of the obvious culprits.
[304] ibid. 206–8.

Republic is an unalloyed good, the continual reference to the restoration of morals (e.g., 6.2,[305] 8.5, 13, 19, 20.4, 22.2), with the conferral of the antiquated honor *Pater Patriae* (35.1) standing as Augustus's crowning achievement, points to a more ethereal culprit that both suited Roman cultural expectations and avoided alienating the political classes. The moral explanation's convenience may make its employment appear cynical, and in fact much of the august antiquity desired by the regime, the sources for which even then were scant, was a fiction. Yet, Augustus's willingness to suffer unpopularity for the sumptuary and conjugal legislation he promoted over a period of decades as a means of restoring the antique morality bespeaks genuine belief in its importance.[306] Such sincerity is moreover in character with his humble origins outside the cosmopolis of Rome, in the rugged towns where a strong emphasis upon antique, frugal mores is well attested in the literature of the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E.[307] By the time the Principate was secure, when Augustus had settled upon the preferred legal arrangement for his autocracy, in 23 B.C.E., no persons or classes might be blamed.[308] Augustus moreover elected not to lay the blame upon an impersonal law of nature, such as anacyclosis or another type of cyclic change.[309] Civil war was an evitable moral lapse that might be avoided with a virtuous citizenry.

In its assumption that periods of decay fall within the realm of human agency, the belief that moral legislation prevents strife is essentially optimistic. There need not be future Mariuses or Sullas, Catilines or Antonies. This belief underlies the intensification of the moral reform after Murena's conspiracy, in 22 B.C.E., Augustus's return from the East, in 19, and the scandals of 2 B.C.E.: on each occasion, Augustus's remedy for conspiracy was to intensify restrictions against

[305] See Cooley (2009) *ad loc.*
[306] Suet. *Aug.* 34, D.C. 54.13–15, 56.1.2, Tac. *Ann.* 3.53–55; Syme (1939) 454–55, 457. See Hopwood (2019) 72.
[307] Syme (1939) 453–54.
[308] Syme (1950) 215–16, who concludes, in brief, that while Caesar and Antony each served early as a scapegoat, they had largely lost this function by the early Principate.
[309] The narrative was available elsewhere, and recently. Cf. Sal. *Iug.* e.g., 1.1, 41.3, 9; 42.4; 66.2; 85.15, 41; 93.3; etc.

luxury and to promote conjugal fidelity. The optimistic belief in the efficacy of moral reform, however, is fairly distinctive at this time, being at odds with the views even of Augustus's more favorable contemporaries. Livy, for example, who is the Principate's closest approximation of a court historian, posits in the preface to his histories a trend towards an ever larger and ever worse empire.[310] Horace, despite his poems' strong affirmation of the Augustan program, asserted repeatedly that, on balance, morality degenerates over time. In this respect, Augustus's admirers appear to agree with his detractors. Cremutius Cordus, a senator and critic of the new autocracy, is reported to have eulogized Brutus and praised Cassius as the last of the Romans (Tac. *Ann*. 3.34), and while even Vergil captures a cautious optimism of the age, the *Aeneid* readily permits a darker reading.[311] Augustan optimism thus appears somewhat at odds even with its own time. Tacitus, then, while writing against the optimistic Augustan claims of restoration and continuity with the Republic, is also writing within a pessimistic tradition that appears to have flourished just under the surface of the Principate.

More surprising than Augustus's disagreement with even his contemporary sympathizers is that his nearest precursor, the elder Cato dates from 150 years earlier. Then, too, sumptuary and conjugal legislation was being passed to direct society's course away from *luxuria*, as the *lex Oppia* of 215 would on its repeal in 196 initiate a stream of sumptuary legislation, the first of which, the *lex Orchia*, limited the number of dinner guests, and was reinforced in 161 with the *lex Fannia* and the expulsion of the Greek philosophers and orators from Rome. All had as their premise that

[310] Liv. *Pr*. 4, 9, and 12. As noted by Dench (2005) 20, Livy's presentation of Rome's beginnings is ambivalent, and his promise in *Pr*. 5 of the past's offering solace to the present is "an expectation that is hardly borne out by the narrative itself."
[311] Johnson (1976) 8–22.

the vice of luxury could be corrected from above in a collective, legal effort.[312] Cato unsuccessfully championed the preservation of the *lex Oppia*, and, while likely speaking in favorable terms of Rome's conquests, he still cautioned his countrymen against decadent allurements. Like the *RG*, his *Origines*, recounting in seven books the beginnings of Rome and other Italian cities and likely narrating in events continuously from the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.E.), omitted names.[313] It was the men and the rhetoric of this time that Augustus evoked when he read a speech of Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, likely from 131, to the Senators, urging their class to fulfil its duty to the state by producing children.[314] For the Republicans at least of Cato's time, as for Augustus, decay was not a condition but an occurrence to be prevented. However much Augustus's antiquarianism might necessitate elaborations or fabrications of origin and lineage,[315] his relative optimism connects him with Republican traditions from the time of Cato and deviates from his contemporaries' and immediate predecessors' marked pessimism.

Augustus's moralism is cautiously optimistic and connects him with his earliest forebears, whom he explicitly cites. This habit of adducing historical or quasi-historical models of good or bad behavior as *exempla* was itself an old practice, and although the argument above stressed the authenticity of Augustus's resurrection of the Republican moralism, there is still to be observed a subtle but profound change in Augustus's mode of citing these exempla which is significant for describing his implied attitude toward them. To summarize a topic of extensive scholarship over

[312] Cf. Tiberius's opinion, at Tac. *Ann*. 54.5, that *Reliquis intra animum medendum est: nos pudor, pauperes necessitas, divites satias in melius mutet* ("Other matters [i.e., than those which are the true concern of the state, such as the protection of livelihoods] are to be remedied within one's mind. May shame turn us to the better, as necessity will the poor and abundance, the rich.") In other words, let social censure and self-control, not legislation, be the corrective.
[313] Nep. *Ca*. 3.4; Plin. *Nat*. 8.11 = fr. 88 Peter.
[314] D.C. 56.1–10, Suet. *Aug*. 89, Liv. *Per*. 59, and possibly Gel. 1.6, but see Hopwood (2019) 73–74 on whether Gel.'s speech refers Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus's or Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus's, likely in 102.
[315] Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 217–18. Dench (2005) 25 discusses the concerns of specific authors and periods that emphasized the elaboration of certain myths and certain aspects thereof. On the "invention of tradition" in general, see Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983).

the past twenty years, it has long been axiomatic that the habit of citing examples, conventionally termed "exemplarity," was continuous in all documented periods of Roman history.[316] To cite the *loci classici* that anchor the span over the middle and late Republic, one remarks first Polybius's (ca. 200 – ca. 118 B.C.E.) description of the Roman funeral, in which the waxen masks of the deceased's ancestors are worn and his ancestors' deeds rehearsed at the *rostra* in the Forum (6.53–54); then Sallust (ca. 86 – ca. 35 B.C.E.), who, citing a similar practice, refers to the inspiration eminent Romans might draw from their ancestors' masks displayed in their houses (*Iug*. 4). In the intervening century, the fragmentary historians largely attest to the continued practice of recording eminent deeds as models. The manner of exemplarity suggested in these Republican sources is characterized by energetic engagement with a vividly recollected past. To be emphasized here is that the energy of the Republican mode of engaging with the past is that of *aemulatio* ("emulousness"), the agonistic spirit of both modeling oneself on the past and striving to surpass that model. The ancestors, on this view,—or rather their fame—are like a living competitor to those in the present.[317] The elaborate ceremony of encountering the past with such visual immediacy is, be it noted, aristocratic,[318] but it clearly had a broader resonance, even if an humbler manifestation.[319] While the authority of the past was seldom in doubt,[320] contestation about the signification of past exempla was permitted, as in the various interpretations of the story of Tarpeia either as patriot or,

[316] Chaplin (2000), Dench (2005), Wallace-Hadrill (2008), Roller (2018).
[317] O'Gorman (2011) 272. This attitude is apparent in Polybius 6.54.3, "Greatest of all, the youth are inspired so to suffer everything for the sake of public deeds as to achieve the renown among men that accrues to the brave" (τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, οἱ νέοι παρορμῶνται πρὸς τὸ πᾶν ὑπομένειν ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων χάριν τοῦ τυχεῖν τῆς συνακολουθούσης τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τῶν ἀνδρῶν εὐκλείας).
[318] Wallace-Hadrill 225.
[319] E.g., the stern father Demea in Ter. *Ad.* 408–19, whose implicit wish is that his son be like his ancestors, and who had instructed his son to learn from good and bad example. Although this anxiety does not illustrate emulousness *per se*, but merely a desire to imitate, it stands to reason that if the minimum one could hope is to imitate good models, the maximum would be to surpass those models.
[320] A major exception is the speech of Marius, in Sal. *Cat*.

in the ultimately standard version, as arch-traitor to Rome.[321] The contestation, however, and the articulation of these exempla was largely a matter of visual and oral discourse, in the form of masks, statues, and eulogies.[322] The subtle but profound change grew in the first century B.C.E., with the advent of a literate class known now as antiquarians, whose inquiries into evidence for the past, in the form of etymologies, artifacts, and written documents, exposed, especially in the religious ritual, the actual gulf between antique and present practices that the imprecision of oral discourse had obscured (see Chapter 1). As the actual difference between the present and the exemplary early past becomes ever more apparent, there arises a separation between the present and early past. There is a concomitant decrease in faith in the nobles as bearers of the old traditions. The past becomes a matter of relatively esoteric disputation. As the earliest past is always the most authoritative, it becomes incumbent upon the present to restore the early past. This becomes Augustus's position, in his adducing of exempla, to restore the continuity with a more antique, and thus more august, past. His citation of these examples could, in the context of his monarchy, no longer admit emulousness, but merely imitation. Whereas it had once been open to any noble to surpass his ancestors in virtue and himself become an exemplum, under Augustus the sanction of official exemplarity was reserved either for the remote past or for the institution which had supplanted the nobility first in political, then in social and religious authority: the *domus Augusta*.[323]

[321] Fab. Pict. fr. 7 Cornell = Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.38.2–40.2. Dionysius cites Fabius's exculpatory account as an early alternative to the now prevailing account of her perfidy. See also Cic. *Att*. 6.1.17 for the humorous recollection of nobles mistaking their own ancestors public offices and deeds, and being ridiculed for it. Flower (1996) 73–74.
[322] Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 227 and 231–32 bases his tentative—and not very convincing—hypothesis of an originally oral exemplarity mainly on the prevalence of a generalized *maiores nostri* in the orators, especially in Cic. *Rep*. 2.2ff., where the Roman republic is characterized as a cumulative inheritance. Whether or the rhetorical trope of the undifferentiated ancestors is a product of oral culture, of the rhetorical exigencies of oratory, or something else, it is in any case true that the tendency towards the consultation of written records and the rise of "antiquarianism" were development of the middle and late Republic. See Momigliano (1966).
[323] Severy (2003) 213–14.

Simultaneously, the legal arrangement of Augustus's power, once an extraordinary grant of *imperium maius* to be exercised in person, became ever less extraordinary and exercised at a distance, until by early in Tiberius's reign, such *imperium* becomes permanent.[324] The *Senatus Consultum Pisoneanum* (*SCP*) marks the transition to this new, less legally constrained constitution. This decree, from 20 C.E., offers the official version of the events surrounding the death, in 19, of Tiberius's adoptive son Germanicus and the Senate's posthumous condemnation of the alleged perpetrator, the consular Cn. Calpurnius Piso. Significantly, this document attributes to Piso a litany of personal vices with which he is supposed to have corrupted his subordinates (e.g., ll. 45–54) and thus deflects suspicion that the army's low morale was for other, more systemic reasons. More significantly, it grants clemency to Piso's son, to whom was bestowed half of his father's estate, thereby obligating him to distance himself from his father and to change his name, which he shared with his father (ll. 95–99). The Senate offers itself as an exemplar of virtue, explicitly aligning itself with the policy of the *domus Augusta* (ll. 91–93).[325] From this can be seen that the more coöperative members of the Senate were adopting the imperial rhetoric. Indirectly, it also belies the official optimism and, by contrast with acerbic writings of Persius, Juvenal, Petronius, Pliny, and others, highlights the rapidity with which it dissipated.[326] Augustus himself surely had had cause for anxiety in the difficulty of enforcing discipline in the Spanish campaign in 19 B.C.E. and the rebellion in Illyricum in 6–9 C.E.[327] The instability following his death, in 14, will surely have occasioned talk of restoring the Republic and of the potential for renewed civil war, [328] as it would again at the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, in 68.[329] The *SCP*, both by its diction and by

[324] Hurlet (2016) 583 and 593.
[325] Cooley (1998) 209.
[326] Döpp (1989) 79–83 and 95 on the pessimism of even early Imperial writers.
[327] Syme (1939) 457–58.
[328] Tac. *Ann.* 1.10. Griffin (1997) 256 *ad SCP* ll. 45–47.
[329] Tac. *Hist.* 1.16.

its very existence as the authoritative treatment of a controversial event, betrays the latent anxiety. But an even more illustrative synthesis of the optimistic and pessimistic strains of thinking is found in the compiler of a handbook from the 30's C.E. on Roman history, Velleius Paterculus.

He, though a partisan of the regime, speaks frequently in terms of decline, even while fulsomely praising the sitting Princeps for prosperity and orderly behavior (as famously at 2.126). Whereas the *SCP* had emphasized a new constitutional order, consisting in the exemplarity of the imperial house, Velleius's emphasis lies upon the return of law and order after the tumult of civil war. His line of thinking must be disentangled before it can be traced to the Augustan traditions now in question. It is necessary with Velleius, as it will be in discussing Tacitus's *Dialogus*, to differentiate decline in the arts from decline in morals, because both Tacitus and Velleius, as had Plato in the *Republic*, allow for artistic excellence amid moral depravity and, in Plato's case, moral excellence amid artistic barbarity. Though moral and artistic evidence can exist severally, they can also arise from common motives, which for Velleius are primarily *aemulatio* and *invidia*.[330] When Velleius implies, in naming Livy as the last great historian (1.17.2), that he lives in an inferior age, he allows that there have been no great historians in at least the last and present generations; he does not thereby assert that these two generations, born under Augustus and Tiberius, are morally depraved.[331] The aesthetic assessment is not consistent with the moral. In fact, there is relatively

[330] *Aemulatio* inspires artistic excellence, 1.17.5; the destruction of Carthage, Rome's *aemula imperii*, marks the end of virtue, 2.1.1. At 1.17.6, Velleius mentions *aemulatio*, *invidia*, and *admiratio* as motives for artistic excellence, but in all cases thereafter, both political and cultural, the primary contemporary motives to excellence are *aemulatio*, viz., 1.12.6, 2.1.1, 36.2, and 109.2, and *invidia*, which appears twenty-four times altogether. *Admiratio* appears again only once, as a retrospective sentiment, 2.36.3.

[331] Cf. Williams's (1978) 10 claim that decline "is applied by Velleius to all types of literature and indeed art—in fact to culture in general," which he does not reference. R. Hunter (2008) 445 n. 31 somehow sees Vel. 1.16–17 as suggesting "cyclical epochs." Velleius's point in these chapters is that *eminentiam cuiusque operis artissimis temporum claustris circumdatam*, 1.17.4. Genius is not cyclic in any greater sense than that it begins, grows, and ends, but it has no regular duration, nor any epochal significance. Its occurrence is a cause for wonder (*mirari* introduces the digression and appears twice more). Velleius does not, as Tacitus will in the *Dialogus*, explain genius in social and historical terms. It is likewise a mistake to interpret Tacitus's *Dialogus* as presuming that modern oratory is categorically inferior to the "classical." See also Goldberg (1999).

little consistency among Velleius's various assessments of individuals and his occasional remarks on the human condition.

His second book, for example, appears to apply the maxim of artistic emulousness to politics when he observes that whereas P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus Maior opened the way for Roman power, his adoptive grandson, Scipio Aemilianus, opened the way for Roman luxury.[332] He is taking 146 B.C.E., the year in which Scipio Aemilianus destroyed Carthage, as marking the beginning of luxury, and luxury as marking the decline. As causes he cites primarily the loss both of *metus hostilis* and of Carthage as an *aemula imperii*; from these descend the various other vices.[333] The statement is strongly reminiscent of Sallust (*Cat.*10–12; *Iug*. 41; and *Hist*. frr. 11, 12 R), and it might appear by this resemblance, as by the statement's prominence at book 2's beginning and its apparent continuation of the digression on the theme of *aemulatio* from 1.1.16–18, to be programmatic. The apparent contradiction of marking 146 as the beginning of decline when in 1.17.1 he has just dismissed most Roman literature from before 146 as *aspera ac rudia* and places the *floruit* well into the period of supposed decadence, may be adduced first to the distinction made earlier between artistic and moral evidence: Rome may have lapsed morally after Carthage fell, but it was then that it produced its best historians and poets (1.17.2). It is a more definite contradiction, however, when loss of the *metus hostilis* is a calamity, yet fulsome praise is twice afforded to Scipio Aemilianus for delivering Rome from its fear of Carthage (2.4.3 and 5).

That what only three chapters before was a calamity to the Republic is ground now for praise, suggests carelessness. When, moreover, the book begins with *luxuria* undermining Roman *potentia*, it is strange that the signal calamities of the same book in no way involve *luxuria*. The

[332] *Potentiae Romanorum prior Scipio viam aperuerat, luxuriae posterior aperuit* ("The earlier Scipio had opened the way to the Roman's domination; the later Scipio opened it to luxury," 2.1.1).
[333] E.g., the abandonment of the old discipline, the adoption of new ways, preference for sleep over wakefulness, pleasure over warfare, etc.

deaths of the Gracchi, for example, and the depredations of Marius and Sulla arise from personal vices, which not only have nothing to do with *luxuria*, but also arise from the very motives that Velleius believes to inspire excellence, *aemulatio* and *invidia*.[334] Even the occasions of corruption that he includes, such as the case of C. Cato (cos. 114 B.C.E.), are not associated with *luxuria*. In fact his point in mentioning Cato is to emphasize the smallness of the sum of which he was mulcted (2.8.1). The chronology is as consistent as the motives: in 2.33.4, Lucullus, not Scipio Aemilianus, is the *luxuriae primus auctor*. When Velleius remarks upon the strict censorship of Cn. Servilius Capio and L. Cassius Longinus, he observes that a luxurious house in 125 B.C.E. cost far less than in 30 C.E., and remarks vapidly "so much does nature fall from rectitude to depravity, from depravity to vice, from vice to abject decline" (*adeo natura a rectis in prava, a pravis in vitia, a vitiis in praecipitia pervenitur, 2.10.1).* Such half-baked observations, scattered with such careless contradiction, may reveal the diverse and unblended ingredients he had at hand. With no programmatic vision, Velleius unreflectively mixes pessimistic commonplaces[335] with optimistic encomia inherited from an Augustan tradition of the return of law and order after the civil wars.

What is now obvious is that the more optimistic rhetoric of the Principate coïncided with a more pessimistic tradition. Possibly this latter tradition is Senatorial in origin, as would befit the class that suffered catastrophically from 91 B.C.E. onwards[336] and as is a logical necessity of its having predated the Principate. But its prominence in the *eques* Velleius and its appearance as a cliché in the mouth of Eumolpus (Petr. 88), where it is appears to be a stereotypic object of ridicule, bespeak its universality.[337] It is also clear that while the optimistic tradition is prominent in

[334] The case of M. Livius Drusus's failure is particularly remarkable, for unlike the Gracchi, Marius, or Sulla, Livius has no personal failings and is purely the victim of the Senate's *invidia* (13.3, *invideret*).
[335] They are reminiscent of the clichés parodied by Petronius in the hack poet Eumolpus, 88.
[336] On the "senatorial tradition," see Earl (1961) 45.
[337] In Lucan, as in Velleius, it appears unironically.

Imperial rhetoric, it also existed in the middle Republic and is more generally embodied in the cultural notion of exemplarity. The narrative of decline therefore cannot be universalized in Roman historiography or literature generally, both because it is contradicted in places by clear narratives of improvement, and because some of its pessimistic elements, such as dating or explaining the origins of decline, are contradictory.

The Zhou Narrative

Although the *Chunqiu* is the earliest work of history proper in the Chinese tradition and the *Zuozhuan* is the earliest historical work to describe, in historical terms, a trajectory decline, evidence for an earlier rhetoric of decline may be found in the *Shangshu*. It is reasonable to suppose, as we shall see, that this work may even be the earliest rhetoric in the Chinese tradition positing a recent historical decadence requiring restoration to an earlier, more ideal state. Although this narrative is in the imperial rhetoric of the early Zhou dynasty that would later be construed as the golden age of virtuous governance, it offers a model for interpreting the past that both offered the framework of the historiographic narratives and prompted invention within that framework.

The *Shangshu* is, typically of early Chinese texts, a multi-layered composite work of unknown authorship, circulating, moreover, in multiple versions after the great book burning (the *fénshū kēngrú* 焚書坑儒, lit. 'burning of books and burying of scholars) of 213 (the scholars were killed, not necessarily by inhumation, in 212), in the Qin dynasty.[338] As with the *Chunqiu*, its edition was ascribed to Confucius, with an "Old Text" (*gǔ wén* 古文) version in circulation that was supposed to have been found hidden in the wall of the sage's home, though probably it was forged in the early fourth century C.E. The chapters assigned to the Xia and before are almost certainly late-

[338] Books: *Shiji* 6.255; 87.2546; scholars: *Shiji* 6.258. There is debate whether *kēng* 坑 means 'bury' or simply 'execute.' See Kern (2001) 157 n.9 for bibliography.

Zhou or even Qin interpolations.[339] The work comprises mostly orations and dialogues by kings and ministers of various genres, including harangues (*shì* 誓), announcements (*gào* 告), eulogies (s*òng* 頌), and others, arranged in chronological order. Shang material, too, appears on linguistic evidence to date from Zhou.[340] Most significantly for the notion of decline in historiography, the chapters traditionally ascribed to the early Zhou king Cheng appear in fact to date from the early Zhou. Gentz, in particular, has shown that, besides linguistic evidence, the very structure of the speeches follows an early form paralleled in the oracle bones that are the earliest written documents in the Chinese tradition.[341]

The *Shangshu* contains some of the earliest references to the Mandate of Heaven (*tiānmìng* 天命). The Mandate does in fact seem to be a Zhou invention, not a later idea projected backward, such as that of the hegemon. Zhou supplanted Shang, under the King Zhòu 紂 in 1046 B.C.E., displacing a polity that had been established for centuries. In 1042, the remnants of the Shang order joined forces with Zhou defectors to overthrow the Zhou King Cheng 成 and the regent Duke of Zhou 周公 (the hero of much Warring States, and especially Confucian, thinking). The Mandate of Heaven may have originated at this time, as can be inferred in part from the fact that the *Shang-shu* speeches datable to this period attempt to appeal to the former Shang officers. The "*Duō fāng*" 多方 and "*Duō shì*" 多士 chapters of the *Shangshu* are presented as speeches of the Duke of Zhou, the latter being addressed to former Shang (or, in this case, Yīn 殷) officers (*shì* 士) now settled at the new Zhou capital of Luò 洛; the former, to a similar audience more broadly distributed across the regions (*fāng* 方) previously governed by Shang. In an exemplary study of Near Eastern and

[339] Shaughnessy (1993) 377–78.
[340] On these types, and other basic information about the work, see ibid. 377.
[341] Gentz (2017) 157–65.

other Chinese parallels, Gentz uses comparative evidence to point out otherwise anodyne features of these two speeches, namely, that whereas the comparanda emphasize an "ideology of slaughtering and sacrificing" the vanquished by detailed reports of the number of scalps, weapons, and the like taken, the two *Shangshu* speeches are strikingly "humane and respectful addresses" to the defeated Shang.[342]

In short, Gentz discovers in the "*Duo fang*" and "*Duo shi*" chapters two points of immediate relevance to the Chinese and Roman narratives of decline. The first is that the speeches they record were directed at convincing an audience of defeated officials to integrate within a new political structure as partners. We do well to remember that historical narratives generally take shape to serve a present need; in fact, this proposition may be supposed to be true for everyone other than those whose first office it is to study the past disinterestedly, that is, modern historians ensconced in the apolitical academy and protected by tenure. A narrative excogitated by a ruling potentate, such as the Duke of Zhou or Augustus, was based on the present need of integrating disgruntled nobles and officials.

The second point is that the rhetoric that the two chapters adopt is one of historical continuity with the Shang, in form of a transfer of a shared Mandate of Heaven, rather than the annihilation or destruction of the vanquished.[343] Now, whereas Gentz emphasizes the continuity that this new historical narrative establishes with the preceding regime, we might also see the event, in comparison with later historiographic developments in which this continuity has become the centerpiece of the national discourse (as it is to-day), as marking a discontinuity: compared with the *Zuozhuan* in particular, in which (as we saw in Chapter 3) the historical narrative follows the continuous decline of the Zhou house, this early Zhou conception of history fixates upon the recent dynastic

[342] ibid. 154
[343] ibid. 174.

change as the fulcrum of history, creating a narrative whose first contours are the immediately present reality: Shang fell, Zhou rose. The ruler's concern with explaining this gap is to answer the urgent question, "Why should you, my subjects, obey me?" All further elements, such as that Shang rose before it fell, or that the dynasty which preceded it also rose and fell, are later extrapolations and fabrications. It is perhaps Zhou's fixation on the immediate significance of this recent event as a demarcating point in history, where Zhou is justifying a new beginning, that the *Shangshu*, in contrast to the *Shijing* or the *Yijing* 易經 (the *Book of Changes*), is little cited in Warring States literature such as the *Zuozhuan*,[344] where the pressing concern is not knowing Zhou as it was at its acme, but with the recent reality of its diminution and, most immediately, what to do in the present.

This official narrative of history gives rise to great historical creativity: with evidence in the earliest datable portions of the *Shījīng* 詩經 (the *Classic of Poetry*), Pines plausibly suggests that, within about a century of 1042, the idea of the Mandate had been projected back to explain the transition from the Xia to the Shang dynasty.[345] Nivison, too, describes an expansion of the past of the sort mistakenly imagined for Roman sources by Badian (see Chapter 1): the Zhou model of history, with the single transferal of the Mandate of Heaven, became a system of history that was extrapolated backwards, subsuming previously disconnected mythical figures such as Yao, Shun, and King Millet into a broader narrative of *xúnhuán* 循環 (the 'succession of dynasties'), as it is clearly articulated in the *Mencius*, completed ca. 280 B.C.E.[346]

[344] It is cited, however. On its citation in the *Zuozhuan* and contemporaneous texts, see Schaberg (2017) 355–56. In short, it appears mainly in archaizing interstate discourse. It is not, as Gentz (2017) 182 observes, "applied to arrive at decisions (as those [*sc*., citations] of the *Shijing* were) or applied to arrive at decisions (as those of the *Yijing* and *Chunqiu* were)."
[345] Pines (2020) 14–15.
[346] See Chapter 3.

To all appearances, then, the notion of the Mandate was not a visionary narrative that motivated the overthrow of the Shang, but a *post facto* justification and a calculated act of self-preservation. It was also a reaction to the developing exigencies of government, namely that competent administrators were required, and the most eligible candidates were the ministers of the preceding government. As with Augustus, the narrative is one fabricated by those wielding power. The question which the speaker is implicitly answering is thus not how to diagnose the present disorder and alleviate it, but why the present order is for the best and, at heart, why the audience should obey.

On this simple premise, elaboration of a continuous history is unnecessary. All that need be shown is that things were once one way, and then another, and the present regime is the better of those two strokes. On this view, Qin in the Mount Yi inscription was behaving very much like Zhou, and very much like Augustus: a revolution creates an immediate past.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have proposed that early narratives of decline in the Roman and Chinese tradition may be seen as forming in one of two rhetorical modes, an official or ruler mode premised on the question of legitimation ("Why should you obey me?"), and a ministerial mode premised on a question of advising a course of action to solve a broad set of problems ("How shall we solve the present crises?"). Each rhetoric tends to place historical events in a slightly different relationship to each other and to the present (that is, the author's actual present, from which it should be assumed histories are written, not a narrative present).[347] The legitimating rhetoric of Augustus and the early Zhou kings formed after a revolution that supposed that the new government was both different in some essential way from what had preceded and, because of that difference, more

[347] This contra Grethlein. See Chapter 6.

durable than its predecessor. Each responded in a slightly different way that would shape the subsequent historiographic tradition: the Zhou narrative, as we saw in the "*Duo shi*" and "*Duo fang*" chapters of the *Shangshu* analyzed by Gentz, establish a central concern as the transferal of the Mandate of Heaven. The centrality of the first transferal, from Shang to Zhou in 1046, of this ideology to Zhou's legitimacy entailed its propagation, first to an invented prior transferal from Xia to Shang, likely fabricated in the tenth century B.C.E., and later to a system of transferal extending back to the Yellow Emperor. This rhetoric may be contrasted with that of the *Zuozhuan*, which, rather than seeking legitimation after a dynastic revolution, plumbs the preceding centuries to construct a continuous narrative explaining the reasons for the present disorder and recommending, directly and indirectly, solutions for a why out. That ministerial rhetoric continues to borrow dynastic discourse, such as the Mandate of Heaven or the notion that Zhou once enjoyed an era of impeccable virtue, but the substance and causation of the events narrated is of events leading to and explaining the degraded present.

Similarly to the *Zuozhuan*, Sallust also develops a continuous narrative of causally linked events that explain the disasters that lately convulsed the Republic. Much as in the *Zuozhuan*, and contrary to Livy, for Sallust the age of impeccable virtue from which the present has declined is of little interest: it is a time of vague, generally positive attributes, such as *concordia* and *boni mores*, but no clear chronology beyond its terminus in 146.

As we look ahead to Tacitus, we can see that he was heir to a complex configuration of optimistic and pessimistic traditions, which comprise their own narrative elements and causalities. An example of this relation has already been demonstrated in *Annales* 1.1–2, where the ironic narrative comprises not a different set of elements from the Augustan model, but rather the same elements in a different relation to one another. The same elements are at play, but in an inverted relation. It

is fitting now to trace the origin of the Roman narrative of decline in the first chapter, that Tacitus's relation to it may be more clearly apprehended.

Chapter 5

Tacitus's Narrative

By Sallust at the latest, the endpoint in the narrative of moral degeneracy in the Roman historiographic tradition is, explicitly or implicitly, civil war. The narratives of Roman decline that took shape from the mid-second century B.C.E. onward used the moral faults castigated by earlier generations, especially luxury and the loss of the *metus hostilis* ("fear of the enemy"), as means to explain ever graver political catastrophes.[348] The moral explanation must have been attractive for its simplicity and for its ready adaptation per one's sympathies as either top-down corruption by spoiled generals or a bottom-up corruption by rapacious mobs.[349] Thus when Sallust decries luxury, it is because he believed it ultimately underlay the Catilinarian sedition (*Cat.* 9–12). In Livy, the loss of the *externus timor* dissolves political concord (2.39.7). The Elder Pliny decries luxury as the ultimate cause of social decay and violence.[350]

The horror of civil war and the dread of its recurrence haunted Roman literature far into the Principate. Much Roman historiography from at least Sallust examines closely the origins of civil strife. After Actium, analysis continued for a long time, and it played heavily in the historical imagination of, for example, Pliny, Cluvius Rufus, Aufidius Bassus, Fabius Rusticus, Vipstanus

[348] Jal (1963) 360–90 on the moral explanation for the civil wars from Sulla through Galba.
[349] Civil war is, not surprisingly, a frequent worst-case scenario in other corpora than the Roman. Consider, among many others, Thucydides' depiction of *staseis*, or of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* as a study in ending civil strife. Civil war can generally be agreed to be one of the worst phenomena. The causes adduced, however, vary mainly by literary tradition, secondly by authorial preference.
[350] In just chapters 9 and 10, Sallust is contradictory in identifying *avaritia* or *ambitio* as the first to corrupt the state. It is clear, however, that each underlay, in some fashion, the *seditio*. See Lintott (1972) 627–28. For Pliny, see, e.g., *Nat*. 33.3, 6, 48, *etc*., on gold and wealth as a destroyer of harmony and life.

Messala. Tacitus had personal experience of civil war, and he devoted considerable energy to this theme. What is truly unusual is that Tacitus portrays even many relatively minor incidents as reflections, and no doubt reminders, of the possibility of civil war. In so doing, he connects the idea of civil war to the narrative of decline in a particular way. In short, decline for Tacitus is not the product of the moral or political decay decried in his predecessors, nor a seditious bolt from the blue, but an omnipresent threat in both the supposed golden age of the Republic *and* in the ostensible peace of the Principate that manifests itself differently under different political conditions.[351] For Tacitus, as for Cato (on whom, see Chapter 2), there is no grand historical narrative of decline, but instead the constant threat that things may, for a time, get worse when certain behaviors prevail. The result of the failure is some form of civil war.

This conclusion may be drawn from the following line of reasoning: investigating the theme of civil war in Tacitus's historical works reveals that, whereas the *Historiae* devote their first books to the actual civil war of 69 C.E., the *Annales* devote much of their first book to a near-miss civil war in the Pannonian and German mutinies in 14 C.E. The compositional history of the two works, so far as it can be surmised, suggests that although Tacitus composed them separately, he conceived of them as ultimately constituting a single, continuous history, not as two separate works with the distinct titles under which they have been received. When the *Historiae* and the *Annales* are read in light of their fixation upon civil war, three peculiarities of Tacitus's account fall into clearer focus. The first peculiarity is that, unlike Suetonius or Plutarch, Tacitus stresses not merely that Galba is old, but that he is also a Republican anachronism whose failure stands for the failures of the Republic. The second is Tacitus's distinctive portrayal of Tiberius, and the third is that the Pannonian and German mutinies, of minor importance in Dio, Velleius Paterculus, and Suetonius,

[351] The ostensible, official peace, e.g., in *RGDA* 34.1.

figure prominently in *Annales* 1 (1.16–51, in thirty-six of eighty-one chapters total). These three features may be explained economically by a theory of decline and civil war that tied together all thirty books of the unified *Annales* and *Historiae*.

Civil War as Organizing Principle in Tacitus's Histories

Ginsburg argued of Tacitus's selection of subject matter in the *Annales* that "Tacitus' particular approach to his material within the annalistic framework is not merely a question of the subject matter available to him, but of his attitude toward it."[352] Tacitus, in other words, while he ostensibly narrated his events year by year, was selecting events based thematic criteria. Themes structure not only the books within the *Annales* but also the *Annales* as a whole. This observation should be applied not just to the *Annales* but to all thirty books of Tacitus's histories, because the compositional history of the two works strongly suggests that they should be read thus.

The prefaces to the *Historiae* and the *Annales* leave no doubt that the works were composed separately. Allusions in the *Annales* to events in the *Historiae* but not vice versa indicate that the *Historiae* were written later. Tacitus, in short, wrote the twelve to fourteen books that would be called the *Historiae*, then he wrote the sixteen to eighteen books of what would be called the *Annales*. The titles "*Historiae*" and "*Annales*," however, are not original, nor is the tendency to regard these titles as descriptive of their contents (that is, that the *Annales* are more annalistic than the supposedly more discursive *Historiae*), nor the modern habit of regarding the works as being any more separate than, for instance, the third and fourth decades of Livy.

The manuscript tradition of Tacitus's historical works comprises only two manuscripts. They suggest that the earlier "*Historiae*," covering 69 to 96 C.E., were later published in a single

[352] Ginsburg (1981) 86. See also Damon (2006) 245 on parallelism across the four emperors in the *Historiae*.

compilation with the later "*Annales*," covering 14 C.E. to 68 C.E., possibly under a single title, or possibly with both a general and a particular title.[353] This combined work of thirty books' length will here be referred to as Tacitus's "histories," while the component works will still be designated by their now-customary titles, "*Annales*" and "*Historiae*." Despite the works' only partial survival and our ignorance of when Tacitus died in relation to his writing the *Annales*, there is no evidence whatsoever that either the *Historiae* or the *Annales* were incomplete in the fashion of Thucydides' later books.[354] They are perfect works. Thus thematic continuity between the *Historiae* and the *Annales* is almost surely deliberate. Tacitus's histories, then, can be read simultaneously as two separate works with discrete origins and as the coherent whole in which they were ultimately (even if not in Tacitus's lifetime) published.

[353] The titles *Historiae* and *Annales* are inventions of the *editio princeps*, issued by Beroaldus in the early 16th cent. The works survive in only two manuscripts, known as the First and Second Medicean (called M and M II), and, from these, about thirty-one *recentiores*. M, containing what are now known as *Annales* 1–6, appears to derive from a tradition in which the title was *Ab excessu Divi Augusti* (which, incidentally, the scribe has mistaken as the first line of every book). The manuscript has been separated from the remainder of the work. M II contains what are now known as *Annales* 11–16 and are what are numbered as books 17–21 under the simple notation *Taciti Libri*. These last five books are now termed *Historiae* 1–5. That Tacitus composed the two histories separately can be clearly inferred from the works themselves; the other witness to their being available separately is Tertullian, who refers to Tacitus's account of the Jewish war as being *in quinta historiarum suarum* (*Ap.* 16.1 and 3; *Ad nat.* 11, *quarta historiarum suarum*, for the same story). How many books each work comprised, Tacitus's intention for their publication, and the actual manner of their publication as consolidated or as separate works depends in part upon Jerome, who at *Com. ad Zach.* 3.14.1–2 = Migne, 24, 1522, quoted in Oliver (1951) 259, refers to *triginta volumina* of Tacitus's *vitae Caesarum*. The second Medicean would seem to confirm that Tacitus's histories were indeed consolidated. Since the *Historiae* begin at book 17 of the consolidated version, it may be inferred that there were fourteen books of Tacitus's earlier-written history, 16 of the later-written. One other possible title is presented in a more dubious source, in Flavius Vopiscus (4th cent. One other possible title in presented in a more dubious source, in "Flavius Vopiscus" (4th cent. C.E.), in whose biography of the emperor Tacitus he refers to the historian Tacitus's collected works as the *Historia Augusta, Tac.* 10.3: *Cornelium Tacitum, scriptorem historiae Augustae, quod parentem suum eundem diceret, in omnibus bibliothecis conlocari iussit.* In sum: M II and Jerome bear witness to the fact of a consolidated history of thirty books; Tertullian attests to the availability in the third century of the *Historiae* as a separate work, possibly bearing the title *Historiae*. An independent *Historiae* may be reconciled with M II's continuous numbering by the hypothesis of a dual-numbering system akin to that for Livy, i.e., that the *periochae* to book 109 refer to it as *Ex libro CVIIII qui est civilis belli primus*. See ibid. 260. The most compendious English-language treatment of the manuscript tradition remains Tarrant (1983). For extensive discussion of titulature, see Oliver (1951). For further bibliography, see Wellesley (1989) ix–x. On the subheadings within Livy's *Per.* 109, or of Appian *B.C.*

[354] Oliver (1951) 259; Fabia (1932) 139–40.

Their publication together brings certain larger structural elements, such as the works' openings and closings, into direct relevance to one another. Though each work's conclusion is lost, the openings abound in parallelism, and our knowledge from other sources of the events of 68 and 96 (when each work ends) allows for an educated guess on the nature of the endings. One underappreciated but pervasive parallel is their concern with civil war. The preface of the *Historiae* promises a work *discors seditionibus* ("discordant with mutinies") that includes *trina bella civilia* ("three civil wars," 1.2). When the narrative proper opens, it is with the sedition of the German legions (1.12), and the first four books of a probable twelve are devoted to the Year of the Four Emperors and to two of the three civil wars promised.[355] Less appreciated is that the *Annales*, too, open with a civil war arising—or rather, an inchoate civil war averted—in the Pannonian and German seditions of September 14 C.E. Both narratives, as are demonstrated in detail below, develop with extended and careful allusion to older narratives of sedition and civil war. Explicitly, moreover, Tacitus builds to a narrative climax that describes the blood shed upon the suppression of the German revolt as a kind of civil war: *diversa omnium, quae umquam accidere, civilium armorum facies* ("A spectacle different from all civil wars that have occurred before," *Ann.* 1.49, tr. above). The theme of a "different" or "new" type of civil war can then be found explicated later in *Annales* 1 and throughout at least the remainder of the Tiberian hexad.

The emphasis at *Annales* 1.49 can hardly be accidental. The other extant accounts of this time, in Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, refer to the seditions only in passing, and

[355] Tac. *Hist.* 1.1., *Initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules erunt* (lit. "The beginning of my work will be the consuls Servius Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinius"). On the future tense *erunt* ("will be"), indicating that Tacitus sees the *initium* ("beginning") of his work not as 1.1 but later, probably 1.12, see Kraus and Woodman (1997) 97–98. Cf. Pagán (2006) 200–201. One may differentiate here between an opening or preface, which I am using loosely to refer to the commencement of the text, and the beginning, where the narrative proper takes off. Syme (1958) 145; Murison (1993) 73.

respectively only as a *rabies*, στασιαστικά, and *seditio*.[356] Velleius acknowledges the danger they posed, but he excuses himself for not dwelling upon them by vaguely attributing their outbreak to *rabie quadam et profunda confundendi omnia cupiditate* (2.125.1). He is concerned mainly to illustrate Germanicus's and Drusus's difference of character in how they suppressed the mutiny. Suetonius dispenses with the affair in a single chapter explaining Tiberius's request that the Senate provide him with a colleague in power (*Tib.* 25). Dio's account (57.4–5), though more detailed, recounts the mutinies amid the broader tension between Tiberius and Germanicus. Tacitus alone presents the mutinies as the central, inaugural event of Tiberius's principate, occupying chapters 16 through 51 of 81 chapters total, and he alone presents them as a species of *bellum civile*.

When the *Annales* and *Historiae* are read together, the averted civil war in *Annales* 1 acquires a significance not observed elsewhere: Tiberius's success highlights Galba's catastrophic failure in *Historiae* 1, while the subsequent narrative casts doubt on the value of that "success." The Pannonian and German mutinies may also now be seen to parallel *Historiae* recounting the accession of Nerva and the averted civil war of 96 to 97. As another cross-work parallel, the *Annales*' final book likely described Vindex's revolt and suppression by Verginius Rufus, mirrored in *Historiae* 1 in Vitellius's sedition and suppression by Vespasian's generals. The effect of this structural reading is to appreciate a ring composition or chiasmus across the histories.

Galba

This chiastic structure, besides highlighting the nature both of the "different type" of civil war in the Principate and its continuity across dynasties, invites comparison of the protagonists at their

[356] Στασιαστικά, like *seditiones*, can refer to mutinies and to civil wars. The word is an adjective derived from the noun στάσις. Like *seditio*, στάσις does not have the particular force of *bellum civile*, a term whose origins linked it with the war between Pompey and Caesar. *Seditio* can refer to what in English would be differentiated as uprisings (unrest with a particular purpose), riots (wanton violence), mutinies (uprising or rioting soldiers), and civil wars (armies, nominally under the same state, in conflict).

respective junctures: Tiberius, Galba, and Nerva represent progressively a successful suppression of civil war but with noxious results, a calamitous failure to suppress civil war that all but destroyed the Republic (*Hist*. 1.11.3), and finally a successful suppression of civil war with salutary issue (*Hist.* 1.1.4). The Nervan narrative, though lost along with the later books of the *Historiae*, can hardly have omitted the characteristics that Tacitus, more than the surviving alternative accounts, emphasizes in Tiberius and Galba. These men were in Tacitus's telling emperors not only who presided over transitions that contemplated the restoration of the Republic, but whose very age and bearing also encouraged hope of the Republic's restoration. Taken together, they suggest an argument of the Republic's false promises in the time of the Principate. For the present analysis, they also draw attention to the otherwise overlooked middle figure of this argument, the emperor Galba.

Galba's narrative in *Historiae* 1 follows an allusion to the reign of Nerva at the beginning of the *Historiae*, when Tacitus refers to the present (likely the early to middle nineties C.E.) as an era marked by *rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet* ("the uncommon felicity of the age, when you may think what you like and say what you think," 1.1.4). Galba and Nerva invite comparison: both were elderly, both were unforeseen, both were ostensibly hesitant to accede, and both were short-lived as emperors who faced Praetorian revolts at the transition to a new dynasty. Both also come to power after the revelation of the *arcanum imperii* (the "secret of imperial rule," 1.4.10), that emperors might be made elsewhere than at Rome (*evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*, 1.4.10). This circumstance will, in a cohesive history with the *Annales*, have no doubt evoked the situation in *Annales* 1, with another potential restorer of the Republic, Germanicus, whose command of the German legions parallels Vitellius in *Historiae* 1, and Trajan at the presumable end of the *Historiae*.

As Galba's accession occasioned talk of restoring the Republic, so too, probably, did Nerva's, with the same conclusion as always, that the Principate was inevitable, the Republic irrevocable, and adoption a compromise.[357] In both cases, the compromise was found to be adoption—in Galba's case, after an initial usurpation against Nero, in the adoption of Piso Licinianus; in Nerva's case, in the adoption of Trajan.[358] In both cases, the successor was elsewhere than at Rome at his accession and was long in arriving.[359] Thus the *Historiae* present Galba's disastrously oblivious selection of Piso Licinianus as a foil to Nerva's aplomb, voluntary or not, in selecting Trajan.[360]

Galba and Tiberius, in contrast, each represent the failure of some feature of Republican revivalism: whereas Galba's Republican pose is in Tacitus's telling fundamentally sincere but inconsistently and incompetently wrought, Tiberius's is malicious and deceptive. Tacitus draws attention to an important commonality of each man that links him to the traditional late-Republican narratives of decline: each promises a type of Republican restoration which proves false both for reasons familiar from traditional decline narratives and for novel reasons elaborated throughout Tacitus's remaining narrative. From this it appears that Tacitus's treatment of the traditional decline narratives follows two tracks: on one track is the narrative of emperors, the first two of whom

[357] See Galba's speech, emphatic as the first speech of the work, at Tac. *Hist.* 1.16, which acknowledges the impossibility of reestablishing the Republic. Tacitus also refers dismissively to Tiberius's perennial talk of restoring the Republic, *Ann*. 4.9. From these examples, the topos appears to have been *cliché*. Likewise, adoption was a commonplace, per Sage (1990) 861.

[358] As to the specific terms in which Galba's and Nerva's adoptions were presented, see ibid. 861–62 for bibliography on the relation between Tac. *Hist*. 1.15–16 and Plin. *Pan*. 7–8. Sage agrees with Syme (1958) 207 n.1 that both Pliny and Tacitus write of adoption as a form of succession in hackneyed terms that cannot be analyzed for influence.

[359] The correspondence here between Galba and Nerva is imprecise: Galba was slow in arriving at Rome, but his would-be Trajan, Piso Licinianus, was already there. Nerva, on the other hand, was a prompt emperor who had long to await Trajan. But Tacitus implicitly equates Galba with Trajan (as well as with Vitellius and Vespasian) in this respect: *Evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri* ("the secret of imperial rule was made known: an emperor might be made elsewhere than at Rome," *Hist.* 1.4.2).

[360] The degree to which Nerva's smooth succession would place the blame for the civil war of 69 principally upon Vitellius should also not be overlooked. Galba, Otho, and Vespasian, for all the faults of each, also each had some redeeming feature. In Vitellius, Tacitus sees no redeeming quality. See Ash (1999).

embody a type of deceptive antiquity masking degeneracy.[361] On the other are civil war, mutiny, and related acts of insubordination that had gradually become part of the traditional account of moral decline and civil war in the historiographic tradition. The character of each emperor, especially how he is depicted as embodying Republican virtues, reflects on the type of social unrest he experiences.[362]

It is in the context of this pattern that it is most illuminating to consider Tacitus's brief account of Galba. Galba, in short, is by Tacitus's distinctive telling the false promise of the Republican past. The parallel accounts in Plutarch, Suetonius, and Dio do not insist as Tacitus does upon Galba as a thorough anachronism. The extent of their agreement with the Tacitean portrayal is that Galba's age was of widespread concern and that it conferred upon him an anachronistic aura. Suetonius conveys some sense of the antique in his account, which is the only to mention the practice, for Galba or anyone, of Galba's retaining an obsolete (*exoletum*) practice of having his freedman and slaves bid him good morning and good night every day (*Galb.* 4).[363] Plutarch's portrayal of Galba dwells, like the other sources, on his age, but he views it to Galba's credit. He refers in conclusion to Galba as an *archaios autokratōr*, but the *vita* as a whole makes clear that his sense of *archaios* is not specifically Republican but merely austere and averse to luxury: his preface introduces Galba in terms of a philosophical debate on the dangers of impulsiveness in an army habituated to luxury, with no reflection on any long-term trend of luxury or political decay.[364] Nor

[361] See Martin (1981) 105–106: Tiberius's gradual decline described in the obituary (as opposed to the bipartite division) written in language of Sallust, recalls the idea of loss of external restraint. Discussed further below.
[362] Ash (1999).
[363] Mooney (1930) 202, *ad* Suet. *Galb*. 4.4: *Quamquam autem nondum aetate constanti veterem civitatis exoletumque morem ac tantum in domo sua haerentem obstinatissime retinuit, ut liberti servique bis die frequentes adessent ac mane salvere, vesperi valere sibi singuli dicerent* ("Even when he was not yet of an established age, he quite insistently kept the practice, maintained only in his household and old and discarded elsewhere in the land, of his freedmen and servants crowding together twice daily to greet him mornings and bid him farewell evenings, one after the other").
[364] Plut. *Galb*. 1.3, ἄλλα τε πάθη πολλὰ καὶ τὰ Ῥωμαίοις συμπεσόντα μετὰ τὴν Νέρωνος τελευτὴν ἔχει μαρτύρια καὶ παραδείγματα τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι φοβερώτερον ἀπαιδεύτοις χρωμένης καὶ ἀλόγοις ὁρμαῖς ἐν ἡγεμονίᾳ στρατιωτικῆς

does Dio's early third-century account, surviving in John Xiphilinus's eleventh-century epitome of Dio's book 63, portray Galba as a fossil. Probably using Dio's words, Xiphilinus presents Galba as ruling moderately (μετρίως) and inoffensively (ἀνεπαχθής), but as corrupted by his freedman associates.[365] That line appears to be the received narrative.

Against these bland and largely perfunctory portraits of an elderly, severe, but ill-advised emperor, Tacitus offers a vivid depiction of a character strongly marked by the savor of antiquity.[366] The very first remark in the *Historiae* about the character of Galba sets the pattern for his subsequent portrayal. Tacitus says that the Praetorian Guard at Rome resented Galba when it learned that he would not grant the donative promised by Nymphidius Sabinus on Galba's behalf. The reason for their discontent is a tension between old and modern mores: *laudata olim et militari fama celebrata severitas eius angebat aspernantes veterem disciplinam atque ita quattuordecim annis a Nerone assuefactos ut haud minus vitia principum amarent quam olim virtutes verebantur* ("His severity, formerly the object of praise and enshrined in his military record, was stifling to those who decried the old discipline and were so habituated by Nero over fourteen years that they loved the vices of emperors no less than they formerly esteemed their virtues," 5.2). The notion of soldiers' discipline softening with luxury is a commonplace dating at the latest to Fabius Pictor, and it is ubiquitous from Sallust onwards.[367] Tacitus arranges it in schematic contrast not merely with *disciplina*, but with *disciplina* that is marked as *vetus*. Though the connection of discipline with antiquity is also ubiquitous in Roman literature, it is not always marked as such in Tacitus,

δυνάμεως ("But many misfortunes, including those which befell the Romains after Nero's death, give evidence and example that nothing is more fearful in imperial rule than a military force relying upon uncultured and unreasoning impulses").

[365] Dio 63.2.

[366] The question of whose version of Galba was the most accurate is insoluble. Even supposing Plutarch to be the closest to the lost common source, one cannot conclude therefore that Plutarch is any more reliable than Suetonius or Tacitus. On Plutarch's originality in his *Life* of Galba, see Morgan (2006) 284–86.

[367] Fabius Pictor fr. 22 Cornell.

and thus its emphasis here is significant.[368] The notion of antiquity conveyed by *vetus* is further emphasized with *olim*. The implication is that Galba's discipline is not merely the return to a standard of discipline before Nero but a return to *vetus* (all but a by-word for pre-Augustan or Republican) *disciplina*. The connection is manifest in the next sentence: *accessit Galbae vox pro re publica honesta, ipsi anceps, legi a se militem, non emi* ("In addition was Galba's dictum, to the Republic's credit though more doubtful for him: 'I choose my men; I do not buy them'").[369]

Yet the notion that Galba's Republicanism matches words and deeds is exploded with an uniquely Tacitean assessment in the very next sentence, the ambiguity of which cannot be captured in English: *nec enim ad hanc formam cetera erant*.[370] When this appraisal appears at Galba's introduction, its meaning is ambiguous. At first glance, it suggests that Galba hypocritically advocates one course of behavior—rectitude—, while following another—corruption. As the ensuing narrative excoriates only Galba's lieutenants for self-interest and venality, it transpires that Galba is not himself corrupt. His selection of the thoroughly sincere Piso as his successor confirms this. Galba is instead ruined by the corrupt Vinius and Laco: *invalidum senem Titus Vinius et Cornelius Laco...destruebant*, ("Titus Vinius and Cornelius Laco were ruining the weak old man," *Hist*. 1.6). Thus the *cetera* refers to others' deeds, not to Galba's other deeds.[371] This dawning interpretation is corroborated by subsequent narration. For January 10, when Galba seals his fate by announcing his adoption of Piso, Tacitus remarks that even a small donative would have sufficed to conciliate

[368] Poppaeus Sabinus, for example, campaigns against the Thracians with exemplary discipline, but it is not marked as antique, nor is Sabinus presented in such terms. The contrast is not old–new but Roman–barbarian. See *Ann.* 4.46–51.
[369] The dictum appears in all other sources: Plut. *Galb*. 18.2, Suet. *Gal*. 16.1, and Dio 64.3.3.
[370] Plutarch's formulation at *Galb*. 15 is that Galba promised less cruelty after Nero but disappointed everyone by executing Nymphidius Sabinus's accomplices, and especially by compelling the suicide of Petronius Terpilianus. The disappointment is in Galba's lack of lenience, not of integrity: Τουρπιλιανὸν δέ, γέροντα γυμνὸν καὶ ἄνοπλον, λόγου μεταλαβεῖν οὐδὲν ἐκώλυεν, εἴ τις ἦν ἐπαγγέλλεται μετριότητα τοῖς πράγμασιν ἔργῳ φυλάξειν ἔμελλε, 15.2.
[371] A similar ambiguity using a similar adjective may be observed in at *Hist*. 1: *inscitia rei publicae ut alienae*. As Tacitus artfully employs the ambiguity of *cetera* as "others'" or "his other," *alienae* likewise can be "another's" or "other." No comment on this in Heubner (1963) or Damon (2003) *ad loc*.

the mutinous soldiers. What stood in the way was Galba's nature: *nocuit antiquus rigor et nimia severitas, cui iam pares non sumus* ("His old-fashioned strictness was harmful, as was his excessive severity, to which we are no longer equal," *Hist*. 1.18.3). Since *rigor* and *severitas* are qualities already closely associated with the Republic, the further qualification *antiquus* both adds emphasis and recalls the phrase *vetus disciplina* that characterized him at the outset. [372] Galba, in other words, *is* consistent.

Galba's obituary at *Historiae* 1.49, however, raises another question. Here, Tacitus offers a series of *sententiae* pronouncing that Galba was a mediocrity whose seeming excellence was a mirage borne of the depravity of the age and Galba's exceptional lack of major vices. The thought seems to recall the ambiguity in the earlier *nec enim ad hanc formam cetera erant* and again revives the possibility that the sentiment refers simultaneously to Vinius's and Laco's corruption and to Galba's own deficiencies. The result is a seeming contradiction: Galba genuinely recalled the old *rigor*, *severitas*, and *disciplina*, but these qualities are undermined in three ways: first, they were excessive (*nimia*) and strayed into the realm of the vices *avaritia* (5.2), the *trux* of slaughtering the marines at the Milvian Bridge (6.2), and *saevitia* (87.1); second, they were out of joint with the times (1.18); and finally, they were inconsistently applied (e.g., 4.6, with the toleration of Eprius Marcellus).

This contradictory portrait raises the question of why Tacitus would dress Galba up as a Republican only to dress him down as falling short of that depiction. Why, moreover, would he present Galba as both genuinely Republican in some respects (such as his intention to restore the Republic or his choice of the old-fashioned Piso as successor) but as deficient in others (such as that, through Piso, he ends up promising the donative already, albeit too late; also, he disappoints

[372] See Taylor and Hellegouarc'h (1965) 281–85.

a thorough Republican exemplar like Helvidius Priscus by not prosecuting Eprius Marcellus)? His choice to emphasize Galba's Republican credentials is also at odds with his own configuration of the Principate. In the *Annales* he observes that, by Tiberius's accession, in 14 C.E., everyone who had known the Republic was no more (1.3). Galba, born in 3 B.C.E., never saw the Republic. The period of his maturity was moreover one which Tacitus identifies at *Annales* 3.53 as one of prodigious extravagance. Nor can the mere antiquity of his lineage explain his Republican connection, as the same is mentioned of others who are certainly *not* Republican exemplars (e.g., Lucius Cassius in 6.15).

These questions reflect the fact that Galba stands as a distinctive character among the cast of anachronisms and men at odds with the corrupt *mores* of the age. At first glance, his Republican severity should seem to place him in a league with clearly exemplary figures, such as Tacitus's father-in-law Agricola, or Helvidius Priscus, Thrasea Paetus, Vipstanus Messala, Cremutius Cordus, or the consul Marcus Lepidus. Yet the comparison elicits a signal distinction between those men and Galba. Indeed, the only place in which any of these men is associated with an explicitly Republican sympathies is in the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, where Aper reproaches Messala for "admiring only the old while deriding and belittling the pursuits of our own age" (*non desinis, Messala, vetra tantum et antiqua mirari, nostrorum autem temporum studia inridere atque contemnere,* 15). A Republican bearing is *not* a feature of these exemplary characters. The assumption of greater virtue in the Republic, or of severity and antique bearing as virtues, is a formulation that exists not in descriptions of the character of historical personages, but in thematic digressions.[373] In the histories, these exemplary figures are described primarily in terms of their actions. Tacitus's comments do not contain the adjectives *antiquus* or *vetus.*

[373] E.g., Tac. *Hist.* 2.38, *Ann*. 3.53.

Tacitus's description of Helvidius Priscus illustrates this point especially well, in part because Helvidius occupies a place at the end of the narrative of the Year of the Four Emperors much as Galba did at the beginning, and in part because the praise of Helvidius includes an unfavorable and explicit retrospection of Galba. Emboldened in the followed passage are sentences of particular relevance to Galba's obituary:

> *Res poscere videtur, quoniam iterum in mentionem incidimus viri saepius memorandi, ut vitam studiaque eius, et quali fortuna sit usus, paucis repetam. Helvidius Priscus* [*regione Italiae Carecina*] *e municipio Cluviis, patre, qui ordinem primi pili duxisset,* ***ingenium inlustre altioribus studiis iuvenis admodum dedit, non, ut plerique, ut nomine magnifico segne otium velaret, sed quo firmior adversus fortuita rem publicam capesseret****. doctores sapientiae secutus est, qui sola bona quae honesta, mala tantum quae turpia, potentiam nobilitatem ceteraque extra animum neque bonis neque malis adnumerant. quaestorius adhuc a Paeto Thrasea gener delectus e moribus soceri nihil aeque ac libertatem hausit, civis, senator, maritus, gener, amicus, cunctis vitae officiis aequabilis,* ***opum contemptor****, recti pervicax,* ***constans adversus metus****.*
>
> ***Erant quibus adpetentior famae videretur, quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur****. ruina soceri in exilium pulsus, ut Galbae principatu rediit, Marcellum Eprium, delatorem Thraseae, accusare adgreditur. ea ultio, incertum maior an iustior, senatum in studia diduxerat: nam si caderet Marcellus, agmen reorum sternebatur. primo minax certamen et egregiis utriusque orationibus testatum; mox dubia voluntate Galbae, multis senatorum deprecantibus, omisit Priscus, variis, ut sunt hominum ingenia, sermonibus moderationem laudantium aut constantiam requirentium.* (*Hist.* 4.5–6)

> Since we have again happened to refer to a man who will often be mentioned, it appears our subject demands that I briefly recall his life and pursuits, and of what fate he partook. Helvidius Priscus was of the town of Cluviae [in the Caracina district]. His father was a senior centurion. **While still quite young directed his remarkable talent to rather rarefied pursuits—not, as for most people, that he might conceal his slacking with an impressive name, but rather that he might take office the more fortified against vicissitudes.** He followed those teachers of wisdom who consider only those things good which are upright, and bad, which are shameful, and power, station, and other things that are dissociated from the mind they consider neither good nor bad things. Having been only a quaestor, he was chosen to be son-in-law by Thrasea Paetus. From his father-in-law's character he imbibed nothing so much as *liberty*. As a citizen, senator, husband, son-in-law, and friend, he was alike in all life's duties, **scorning wealth,** obstinate of righteousness, **unmoving in the face of fear.**
>
> **There were those to whom he might have seemed too covetous of reputation, since even the wise divest themselves of the desire for glory last.** He was driven into exile by his father-in-law's destruction. When he returned in Galba's principate, he charged Eprius Marcellus, who had informed against Thrasea. This vengeance—it was uncertain whether it was greater or more just—, divided the Senate in contrary loyalties. For, the felt, if Marcellus fell, the host of the guilty were being laid low. The trial was threatening at

first, proven even by the excellent speeches of either party. Soon, because of Galba's doubtful intentions, with many Senators discouraging him, Priscus abandoned the action, to comment varying in accord with each man's nature, with some praising his moderation and others desiderating his constancy.

From Galba's obituary:

> *Caput per lixas calonesque suffixum laceratumque ante Patrobii tumulum (libertus is Neronis punitus a Galba fuerat) postera demum die repertum et cremato iam corpori admixtum est. hunc exitum habuit Servius Galba, tribus et septuaginta annis quinque principes prospera fortuna emensus et alieno imperio felicior quam suo. vetus in familia nobilitas, magnae opes: ipsi medium ingenium, magis extra vitia quam cum virtutibus. famae nec incuriosus nec venditator; pecuniae alienae non adpetens, suae parcus, publicae avarus; amicorum libertorumque, ubi in bonos incidisset, sine reprehensione patiens, si mali forent, usque ad culpam ignarus. sed claritas natalium et metus temporum obtentui, ut, quod segnitia erat, sapientia vocaretur. dum vigebat aetas militari laude apud Germanias floruit. pro consule Africam moderate, iam senior citeriorem Hispaniam pari iustitia continuit, maior privato visus dum privatus fuit, et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset.* (*Hist.* 1.49)

> [Galba's] head, which had been stuck on a spear by the camp-followers and servants was at last discovered before the grave of Patrobius (one of Nero's freedman, who had been punished by Galba) and was added to his already cremated body. This was the death of Servius Galba, who in his seventy-three years had happily spanned five emperors and was more fortunate under other's rule than his own. Old was the nobility in his line, and great was its wealth. He was himself of mediocre talent—more devoid of vice than endowed with virtue. When it came to reputation, he was neither indifferent nor one to jactitate. He was not covetous of others' possessions: he was sparing of his own, parsimonious with the state's. When he happened upon the decent sort of friend or freedman, he was blamelessly patient; if they were vile, he was heedless to a fault. But the eminence of his birth and the terror of the times were a veil, so that actual sloth was deemed wisdom. While he was hale, he flourished with martial reputation in the Germanies. As a proconsul, he managed Africa with restraint; as an old man already, he managed Hither Spain with no less fairness. While he was a private citizen, he seemed greater than that, and by the consensus of all he was worthy of rule—had only he never ruled. (*Hist.* 1.49)

In Galba's obituary, the account of the fate of his head is significant because of its pointed omission of the story, reported in Plutarch (*Galb*. 28.4), that Helvidius Priscus recovered Galba's body.[374] That story fits Plutarch's purpose, of representing Galba as akin to a philosopher king, by associating him with the clearly philosophical Helvidius Priscus. It does not at all suit Tacitus's aim.

[374] Neither Suetonius nor Cassius Dio reports this story. Suetonius offers only that the *dispensator* Argivus found the head and body and buried them in private gardens on the Aurelian way, *Gal*. 20.2.

Tacitus's assessments of each man's *ingenium* appear to respond to the other: Galba was merely a *medium ingenium* more notable for the lack of vices than possession of virtues and reinforces the idea with the comment that *quod segnitia erat, sapientia voceretur*.[375] This both rebuts the pro-Galban opinion embodied in Plutarch and elicits the response in Helvidius, that, quite unlike Galba, he possessed an *inlustre ingenium* which he devoted to higher pursuits in earnest, not as a guise for a slothful nature (*segne*).

If Tacitus's point were simply that Galba was incompetent, it is clear from Plutarch, Suetonius, and Dio that he might have merely followed the tradition of Galba's being at the mercy of his general ignorance and his corrupt advisors. Yet Tacitus chose to elevate the tradition of Galba's old age and anachronistic manners into a more meaningful comment on the lesson his brief rule held for posterity. It is possible that the reason for this portrayal can be discovered in the immediate thematic concerns of *Historiae* 1, to contrast Galba's dull-witted severity with Otho's mercurial extravagance. Galba the plodding soldier enhances Otho the revenant Nero (*Hist*. 1.22–23).[376] Otho's decadence in turn pales against Vitellius's, whose main virtue is his lineage (*Hist*. 1.9, 50), but whose extravagance exceeds all bounds (*Hist.* 2.62). Vitellius's risible attempt at high-handedly dealing with the Senate also marks a decay from Galba's amicable relations and Otho's strained but largely positive treatment. Galba must have some notably positive attributes against which to fathom the luxurious depravity of his successors. By evoking Galba's excessive and

[375] *Ingenium* is by no means a rare word in Tacitus, but its use in the description of persons is generally limited to key personages. In describing an individual's character, usually with a qualifying adjective, it is used in greatest concentration in the *Agricola*. In the histories, it is used oftenest of the more important personages, although its frequency increases throughout the *Annales*, where it is applied to ever more minor figures. In the *Historiae*, it appears in the assessments of Galba (*Hist.* 1.49), Vitellius (1.52), and Civilis (4.13); in the *Annales*, of Drusus (1.29, 4.60), Germanicus (1.33), Sempronius Gracchus (1.53), Tiberius (1.76, 80), Fulcinius Trio (2.28), Cn. Piso (2.43), Votienus Montanus (4.42), Domitius After (4.52), Pomponius Secundus (5.8), Nero (13.3), Poppaea (13.45), Cornelius Sulla (13.47), Vestinus (15.52). In the *Historiae*, then, this offers small evidence of a connection between Galba and Helvidius.
[376] Koestermann (1956) 198 notes the accusations that Otho makes against Galba's enhance his own poor performance as successor.

anachronistic Republican severity, Tacitus enhances the negative portrait of Otho and Vitellius while offering Galba minimal positive credit. The antique and dignified characterization of Galba may thus derive its cause from Otho and Vitellius.

There are also two likely reasons beyond immediate thematic concern. One that will be further discussed below is the parallel it establishes between Galba and Tiberius. The other makes an allusion as yet unremarked in scholarship but obvious to the Roman reader. For Tacitus and his audience, another Servius Galba arriving in Rome from the Iberian Peninsula amid slaughter cannot but have evoked his famous forebear, Servius Galba the consul of 144 B.C.E. This association is recommended not merely by the identity of name and circumstance, but by the ironic similarity of their limelight moment. By Tacitus's time, the Galba of two-hundred fifty years earlier would have been best known for his prominent rôle in the end of the elder Cato's *Origines*. Cato's work began with Rome's and other Italian towns' mythic origins and carried the narrative down almost to the day of his death, in 149 B.C.E. Its final book was dominated by the retired statesman's prosecution of Servius Galba for slaughtering Lusitanians during his command in Hispania. This Galba snatched himself from public condemnation by a shameful appeal to the jury's sympathy for his and a colleague's children.

The emperor Galba makes a similar move in Tacitus. He too seeks to remedy the situation through an appeal to his offspring. Whereas the earlier Galba had correctly gauged the jury's sentiment, the emperor offers a contrast by his ill considered embrace of a son pleasing to himself but disastrously at odds with general sentiment: "This aspect of his character was as pleasing to his adoptive father as it was a cause of suspicion to the anxious" (*ea pars morum eius quo suspectior sollicitis adoptanti placebat,* 1.14.2). Tacitus places the suspicion not only among the Praetorians

who will assassinate the emperor and his son, but among the interested and anxious public (*sollicitis*). The emphasis, then, falls upon Galba's blindness in contrast with his forebear's savvy.

Galba's association with the Republic in the *Historiae* is pervasive and, as demonstrated above, distinctively Tacitean. The evocation extends also to Piso, whom Tacitus describes as being "of the old type" (*vultu habituque moris antiqui et aestimatione recta severus*, 1.14). Plutarch attributes to him virtue and gravity but goes no further (*Galb.* 23.2). Tacitus also names Piso's father, Crassus, and mother, Scribonia. Their mention is not purely a matter of form: Galba's pedigree, of extensive comment in Suetonius (all of chapter 3), is mentioned but not elaborated in the *Historiae* (*vetus in familia nobilitas*, 1.49.2). Thus Tacitus has a point to make in elaborating Piso's ancestry. In his own voice, he refers to Crassus and Scribonia (1.14.1); Galba, in the next chapter, delivers a speech upon adopting Piso in which he praises his adopted son as a descendant of Crassus and Pompey (*egregium...Cn. Pompei et M. Crassi subolem*, 1.15.1). Through his mother, Piso was indeed related to Pompey, but there is an added significance in Tacitus's contriving to mention both Scribonia and Pompey.[377] Scribonia's father, M. Scribonius Libo Drusus, was executed by Tiberius in 16 C.E.[378] Tacitus would go on to offer a self-consciously minute (*curatius disseram*) account of this episode in *Annales* 2.27–32. Galba's preference for Pompey suits the moment: he is presenting a dynasty as an alternative to the Julians and Claudians (1.16), which a victorious Pompey would have provided.[379] Also, the context calls for reference to ancestors of political prominence: mention of a woman here could well draw attention to Galba's debt to Livia Augusta (Suet. *Gal.* 5.2). At the same time, however, by mentioning both Scribonia and Pompey, Tacitus associates Piso with a tradition of revolutionary, anti-Julian activity. Thus when Galba refers to

[377] Stemma on Klebs, Dessau, and Rohden (1897) *PIR*^{2} 7.2, 54–55.
[378] See Pettinger (2012).
[379] On alternative history, bibliography in Woodman (2006b) 177 n.12.

the "power for which our ancestors used to contend" (*principatum, de quo maiores nostri armis certabant*), he can be understood to refer both to the Romans generally and, more specifically, to Piso's and his own ancestors' activities.[380] This allusion is not complimentary coming from Tacitus: Pompey was *occultior, non melior* (2.38) and Scribonius Libo was a fool (*improvidum et facilem inanibus*, 2.27). Galba's ancestors, too, had a distinctive part to play in history of the Republic that has direct bearing upon Tacitus's allusion to that era.

This returns the discussion to consideration of Tacitus's allusion to the earlier Servius Galba and his relation to the emperor Galba and the theme of civil war. That Tacitus makes no explicit reference to the earlier Galba is of little account. Suetonius's *vita* implies the fame of Galba's lineage: "It would be tiresome to narrate the stemma and inscriptions of that whole family" (*imagines et elogia universi generis exequi longum est*, 3.1). The consul of 144 was he who "gave his family name luster" (*familiam illustravit*, 3.2). It cannot have hurt Tacitus's subtle point that Galba's great grandfather had initially served Caesar before turning against him and joining the assassins.[381] The Sulpician line may well have commended itself to senatorial memory also by the historical writings that the emperor's grandfather wrote, which apparently at least touched upon the Caesarian civil war. These are likely to have been common knowledge for any reader of Tacitus.

Only slightly more speculatively, Galba the consul of 144 B.C.E. has a special association with the elder Cato, who in turn sheds light upon Tacitus in two small but significant ways. The first is that Cato offers some thematic continuity with Tacitus—more, it can be said despite his scant remains, than the unremittingly pessimistic Sallust. He is among the earliest Roman historians to record contemporary history, and he holds the place of a historical, that is to say post-mythical,

[380] See *PIR*^{2} C 300. See also O'Gorman (2006) and Syme (1956).
[381] For bibliography, see *FRH* 1.57, 446.

Republican figure *par excellence*, particularly through his oratory.[382] That his career was closely linked in memory with Galba's is well attested.[383] Where Cato figures is that modern scholarship has identified him, not altogether accurately, as one of the likely originators of the Roman fixation with the dangers of luxury. He was not so much wary of wealth or even luxury *per se* (he was himself hardly averse to making money)[384] as concerned about the neglect of the commonweal that they might engender and their empowerment of the active subversion of constitutional forms. His invectives against depredation of the provinces by *publicani* and emphasis upon proper constitutional form permit educated speculation about the nature of the unsuccessful speeches against Galba that concluded his magnum opus.[385] Since Cato's anti-Galban speech does not survive, what can be said with greatest certainty must be based upon the apparently independent allusions in Cicero and Fronto, who both emphasize that Galba was acquitted by appealing in bad faith to the *misericordia populi* (Cic. *Brut*. 89). Livy (*Per*. 49) confirms the trial's issue while adding a significant detail, that a speech in Galba's defense was delivered by M. Fulvius Nobilior (*cos.* 189, censor 179), Cato's frequent adversary and the epitome, in Livy and elsewhere, of hellenophilic extravagance. Cato's invective against Galba, then, likely focused on the defiling of Roman *fides*, and placed it within a wider context of individual statesmen pursuing their several interests over the Republic's, and of their ability to manipulate public opinion through oratory.[386]

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[382] Cic. *Brut*. 89–90, *de Orat*. 1.228; Livy 39.40, *Per*. 49; Fronto 52; Quint., *Inst.* 2.5, 18, 15.8. Tacitus's allusion to the trial, at *Ann* 3.66 in the mouth of Mamercus Scaurus along with the trials of L. Cotta (in 138 B.C.E.) and P. Rutilius (in 116) again suggests that the most salient feature of Cato's life-concluding attempt in public memory was that it was a failure.

[383] Nep. *Cat*. 3; V. Max. 8.1.2; 7.2.; Plut. *Cat. Mai*. 15.

[384] See the *De Agri Cultura*.

[385] Against *publicani*, e.g., ORF (1955) LXXI.

[386] The "trial" of Ser. Galba (*cos*. 144) was not, in fact, a trial, i.e., an *iudicium populi*; instead it was a debate over the *rogatio* of the tribune L. Scribonius Libo to establish a court specifically to try Galba, in which debate Cato spoke in affirmation. See Briscoe (2008) 3.354, on Livy 39.40.12, who appears to have initiated a misconception about there was actually a trial by reporting that Cato *adduxerit iudicium*, picked up in Tac. *Ann*. 3.66.1. The intended charge is unknown: Gruen (1968) is certain the charge was *repetundae* trial, in part for its occurrence in the same year as the *lex Calpurnia*, which established a permanent *quaestio de rebus repetundis*, 12–13. *Saevitia* is also possible, but unlikely: see Woodman *ad* Tac. *Ann*. 3.66.

Galba the consul of 144 B.C.E. was thus associated with the narrative of decadent luxury as early as Cato and probably in large part because of Cato. Tacitus may be reasonably thought to have formed his image of the earlier Galba from Cato's accounts. Though the sources in this behalf become quite tenuous, one may still reasonably propose another historiographic strand further implicating Galba in the narrative of decadent luxury: probably Cato was trying Galba in 149 on the basis of the *lex Calpurnia*. This law was carried by the tribune L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, the future consul of 133 B.C.E., who in turn is our earliest probable source to have written in clear terms of political decadence associated with luxury (Calp. *Hist*. F36 Cornell). He is also, of course, an ancestor of Piso Licinianus. As to his life and views, however, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.[387]

The other small but significant way in which Cato informs our reading of Tacitus's emperor Galba can be gleaned from the explicit reference to the elder Cato in *Annales* 3.66, where Mamercus Scaurus cites Cato as an example for his own prosecution of C. Silanus. The citation is ironic.[388] From this appears that Tacitus's most probable understanding of this event is of the futility of Cato's prosecution and of the bad faith in which Galba rescued himself by appeal to *misericordia* for his children. Types like Galba, Tacitus implies, are ever present.

These two small points are Tacitus's distinctive coloring in a portrait of the emperor Galba that sophisticatedly evokes the Republic while also sophisticatedly so undermining the portrait as not to allow Galba's being confused with the class of Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus, Vipstanus Messala, and others. By a subtle reference to Galba's Republican forebear, reinforced with the allusions to Piso's ancestry, Tacitus undermines the notion that a Republican restoration would even be desirable. In but a few choice descriptors, he has evoked a narrative of corruption

[387] *FRH* 1 232.
[388] See Woodman and Martin (1996) 460.

extending back over two centuries, and a history of civil war. Galba and Piso are ultimately beheaded and their heads displayed in the *Forum Romanum,* in a reminiscence of the proscriptions. Galba and Piso can thus be seen as an echo of civil strife from the Republic to the Principate.

It stands now to draw a few conclusions about what these subtle evocations through the emperor Galba indicate about Tacitus's relation to the traditions of writing of a continuous decline from the Republic to the Principate. On the one hand, the sequence of the severe and Republican (however incompetently so) Galba, the effete but incisive Otho, and the effete and utterly dissipate Vitellius, seems to mark a decline in miniature along very traditional lines, with *luxuria* and *segnitia* in ever greater proportion until the climax. That climax is raised all the higher by its vivid foreshadowing in Galba's death. The scene anticipates what Tacitus goes to some lengths to emphasize as the nadir of Roman history. In *Historiae* 3, the destruction of the Capitol by Vespasian's men. Thus *Historiae* 1–3 seem to be a miniature history of decline much like Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae.* What stands out as patterning Tacitus's distinctive relation to the Sallustian figures of decline is that, just when they might be understood as a decisive pattern of history, they are undermined. At the uttermost point of opprobrium, the Capitol was destroyed—and then was promptly rebuilt by a *princeps* who was the only one so far to be changed for the better by his power. The implication could almost be called optimistic.

Tiberius

As demonstrated above, Tacitus manages even in Galba's brief reign to evoke a deeper narrative of decline stretching back to the era of the elder Cato that anticipates the sharp falling-off under the effete Otho and irredeemable Vitellius. The *Annales*' Tiberian books narrate at greater length a similar downward trajectory that is neatly summarized in the obituary for Tiberius:

> *Egregium vita famaque quoad privatus vel in imperiis sub Augusto fuit; occultum ac subdolum fingendis virtutibus donec Germanicus ac Drusus superfuere.* (*Ann.* 6.51)
>
> While he was a private citizen or held offices under Augustus, he was outstanding in his life and reputation. So long as Germanicus and Drusus remained alive, he was secretive and devious in simulating virtues. (*Ann.* 6.51)

Much as in his portrait of Galba, Tacitus draws a sharp distinction between Tiberius's seeming virtue early in life and the emergence of his vices later in life (of Galba, cf., e.g., *quod segnitia erat, sapientia vocaretur*, *Hist*. 1.48). The strongest parallel between the two men's reigns, and one likely to have been on Tacitus's mind when he composed them, lies between their responses to the mutinies they faced upon accession. Before turning to that central topic, however, it stands to point out the other commonalities in Tacitus's portraits. These commonalities include Tacitus's train of thought in recounting their accessions, general thematic similarities, and the men's relation to portents and religion.

No verbal similarity between *Historiae* 1 and *Annales* 1 is so extensive as to suggest that Tacitus was actually collating the earlier work when he commenced anew. Yet the consistency of Tacitus's train of thought when describing public reaction to the successions in 14 C.E. and 69 C.E. strongly suggests that the older work was on his mind. The *Annales* describe the situation leading up to Tiberius's accession thus:

> *Postquam* ***provecta iam senectus*** *aegro et* ***corpore fatigabatur*** *aderatque finis et spes novae,* ***pauci*** *bona libertatis in cassum disserere,* ***plures*** *bellum pavescere, alii cupere. pars multo maxima inminentis dominos* ***variis rumoribus*** *differebant.* (*Ann*. 1.4)
>
> After [Augustus's] old age had reached an advanced state and he was overcome by his ill body, and the end (and new hope) was at hand, a few people spoke vainly of the blessings of liberty, more dreaded war, others desired it. By far the greatest number speculated in various rumors on who the future masters would be. (*Ann*. 1.4)

In the *Historiae*, Galba's selection of Piso is prefaced as follows:

> *Non sane crebrior tota civitate sermo per illos mensis fuerat, primum licentia ac libidine talia loquendi, dein* ***fessa iam aetate Galbae***. ***paucis*** *iudicium aut rei publicae amor:* ***multi***

> *stulta spe, prout quis amicus vel cliens, hunc vel illum* ***ambitiosis rumoribus*** *destinabant...* (*Hist*. 1.12)
>
> Indeed in all the city there had been no more frequent topic of discussion throughout those months [*sc*., than whom Galba would adopt,], at first because of the freedom and desire to talk about such things, later because Galba's old age was now obvious. Few had a care for the republic; many out of foolish hope named this or that man in accordance as they were his ally or client... (*Hist*. 1.12)

In the *Annales* passage, Augustus's advanced age and ill health (*provecta...senectus* and *corpore fatigabatur*) excite three reactions in the public, related in ascending order of frequency: few (*pauci*) offer vain disquisitions about the Republic, more (*plures*) either dread or desire civil war out of self-interest; the largest number baselessly speculate (*variis rumoribu*s) upon who will be the new ruler. Similarly, in the *Historiae*, Galba's now obvious decrepitude (*fessa iam aetate Galbae*) prompts two public reactions, again in ascending order of frequency: few (*paucis*) took thought of the republic (*iudicium aut rei publicae amor*), while many speculated upon who would be the successor on the basis of self-interested rumor. The greatest difference between the two passages is that, in the *Annales*, the public train of thought turns far more quickly and explicitly towards civil war, where whereas in the *Historiae*, the prospect of civil war appears first in the thoughts of Otho, *cui compositis rebus nulla spes* ("Who had no chance if affairs should remain stable") (1.21.1). The difference highlights the degree of anxiety at Tiberius's accession, when contending claims to the throne seemed likely to lead to violence, and the relative surprise of Otho's assassinating his erstwhile benefactor. But the differences between the two passages draw attention to exactly those points; underlying them is a shared pattern of how Tacitus presents the public reacting to an ailing ruler.

A few minor points of similarity, insignificant in isolation, cumulatively fill out the correspondence between the two books. In the same section of the *Annales* above, Tiberius makes his first appearance in the work. The first descriptors applied to him, not emphasized in the parallel

tradition, concern his age: in the public estimation, he is *Tiberium Neronem maturum annis, spectatum bello, sed vetere atque insita Claudiae familiae superbia* ("Tiberius was mature in years, respected for his service in war, but had the old and innate arrogance of the Claudian family," *Ann.* 1.4.3). While the immediate concern of this passage is Tiberius's contrast with the young, unproven, and impetuous Agrippa Postumus as potential competitor for the succession, the portrayal of a "mature" Tiberius also creates a parallel with the elderly, severe veteran Galba as he is depicted at his first significant appearance, at *Historiae* 1.5, where he is characterized by *senium atque avaritiam Galbae*, and *laudata olim et militari fama celbrata severitas* ("Galba's old age and avarice" and "his severity formerly praised and celebrated in the army's lore"). Each description, in an approximately corresponding place in the train of thought, refers first to age, then to established military fame. Furthermore, Tacitus emphasizes that each man faces a crisis in Germany: for Galba, the crisis begins on January 1st, 69, already eight months into his rule, when Vitellius's men refuse their new-year oath to the emperor. Though this event occurs well into Galba's reign, Tacitus's narration in effect makes this the first event, and certainly the first crisis, of Galba's reign, by beginning the narrative proper on that very day. Tiberius, too, faces an immediate crisis in Germany: it is mutiny again, but while Germanicus is dispatched to settle the matter, there is the attendant anxiety that, like Vitellius against Galba, he will turn on Tiberius (*Ann*. 1.33). Again, Tacitus relates the event as very nearly the first of Tiberius's reign. And as Galba attempts to diffuse the mutiny through his adoptive son, Tiberius succeeds in saving himself through his adoptive sons Drusus and Germanicus. The mutually illuminating significance of the mutinies will be examined at length in the next section, but this list, in addition to compositional considerations

that bring the two books of dynastic succession together, suggests that Galba and Tiberius ought to be considered in closer relation than has yet been the case.[389]

Tiberius and Galba come nearest, of course, when their paths cross in *Annales* 6.20.2, under the year 33, where Tacitus describes an encounter of the agèd Tiberius and the future emperor. The incident is the *praesagium Tiberii*—Tiberius's prophecy that Galba would one day be emperor for a short duration. On the high probability that the story is a fabrication, it can hardly predate Galba's accession, in 68.[390] It is, as Woodman describes, a *Wandermotive*, *i.e.*, a typical story that can be transposed to various times and circumstances.[391] For it also appears in Josephus, Suetonius, and Dio. It reports, in essence, that a sitting emperor foretells to Galba his future emperorship. Josephus (*Ant*. 18.211) merely says that it was Tiberius's prediction and associates the story with Tiberius's love for horoscopy; Suetonius (*Gal*. 4.1) says that Augustus made the prediction to Galba *puero adhuc* ("when [Galba] was still a boy"); Dio (57.19.4 and 64.1.1) attributes the prophecy to Tiberius and places it on the occasion of Galba's betrothal, in 20 C.E. Tacitus's version is brief:

> *Non omiserim praesagium Tiberii de Servio Galba tum consule; quem accitum et diversis sermonibus pertemptatum postremo Graecis verbis in hanc sententiam adlocutus <est>, 'et tu, Galba, quandoque degustabis imperium,' seram ac brevem potentiam significans, scientia Chaldaeorum artis, cuius apiscendae otium apud Rhodum, magistrum Thrasullum habuit, peritiam eius hoc modo expertus.* (*Ann*. 6.20.2)

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[389] Another potential point of similarity between Tiberius and Galba warrants consideration, but qualified dismissal: both men may appear to be characterized by hesitancy to rule. It is *possible* that Tiberius was indifferent to the prospect of rule when Augustus's preference was clearly for Gaius during Tiberius's sojourn on Rhodes from 6 B.C.E. to 2 C.E., but Bowersock's (1984) 184 reconstruction of this period strongly suggests that "Tiberius was waiting" when Gaius perished, and Tiberius's attachment to Thrasyllus dating from this time further suggests that Tiberius harbored imperial aspirations even in his retirement. There is even less evidence for Woodman's (1998) quixotic attempt to present Tiberius as genuinely reluctant to accept the Senate's *relatio* in September 14 C.E. Matthews (2010) decisively rebuts this point. There is, in sum, exceedingly tenuous support, based mainly upon strained close reading, to suggest any hesitancy on Tiberius's part to rule. Likewise Galba. What both men share, it should be specified, was a low probability of accession, not a low willingness to do so. Appearing to refuse rule was part of the game of ruling: see Wallace-Hadrill (1982a) 37 and passim.

[390] Townend (1960) 114. It is unlikely, if the story were true, that Galba could have enjoyed such quiet under Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.

[391] Woodman (2006b) 183 n.33, citing J. B. Rives, *Tacitus: Germania* (Oxford, 1999) 56–66.

> I should not omit Tiberius's prophecy about Servius Galba, who was then consul. After he summoned Galba and sounded him out on various topics, he addressed him in Greek to this effect: "You, too, Galba, will one day have a taste of rule." He was indicating that Galba's power would be late and brief, drawing on his knowledge of the Chaldean art, leisure for acquiring which he had had at Rhodes, with Thrasyllus for a teacher. He tested Thrasyllus's expertise in the following way... (*Ann.* 6.20.2)

The anecdote is unusual in two main respects bearing on its significance for Galba: first, it is abrupt. The preceding section refers to Caligula's arrival on Capri, and the connection with the *praesagium* is not immediately clear. Second, it introduces one of Tacitus's rare digressions, in this case a four-part digression that covers (1) Tiberius's prophecy about Galba, (2) Tiberius's first encounter with the astrologer Thrasyllus, (3) a digression about astrology and fate, and (4) a concluding reference to a future anecdote, now lost, about how Thrasyllus's son foretold Nero's accession. This complex digression, and its parallels in Josephus, Suetonius, and Dio, has spawned frequent and perceptive comments, all of which, however, have underestimated the passages' significance in light of three passages of the *Historiae*.

Koestermann reads the digression in terms both of immediate and slightly broader context: the preceding section (*Ann.* 6.20.1) has just referred to Caligula's joining Tiberius on Capri. That section ends with the orator Passienus's remark *neque meliorem umquam servum neque deteriorem dominum fuisse* ("that there was never a better save or a worse master"). Koestermann believes the word *dominum,* in connection with the topic of Tiberius's successor Caligula, suggests the anecdote about another successor, Galba.[392] An additional inspiration would be that the present year of narration, 33, is the year of Galba's consulship. Ginsburg, expanding upon Koestermann's observation, notes the passage's structural significance when she perceived that it divides the year 33 roughly in half and separates two lengthy lists of Tiberius's victims in that year, the first being

[392] Koestermann (1965) 2:288–89.

those in Sejanus's party (6.18–19), the second in Agrippina's (6.23–26).[393] Syme, too, detected the symmetry and dilated upon the great artistry in general in Tacitus's account of the year 33.[394] What can be said so far from the scholarly consensus is that the passage is of central importance to the structuring of themes for the year 33 particularly and *Annales* 6 generally. To this may be added Woodman's useful summation that the *praesagium Tiberii* is a floating story, with the implication that its placement in its present connection is likely to have depended upon far more than its merely coinciding with the year of Galba's consulship.

A particular feature of Tacitus's account is suggestive: Tacitus is unique in the narrow scope to which he confines Tiberius's mania for astrology.[395] In Suetonius and Dio, it appears early in the account of Tiberius's rule and makes repeated appearance thereafter. In Tacitus, however, Tiberius's astrological proclivities manifest themselves explicitly only in the final period of his life.[396] Tacitus is also unique in associating the episode of the *praesagium* with multiple other narrative intimations of the future emperors: within only a few chapters are allusions to the succession of Caligula (*Ann.* 6.20.1), of Galba (6.20.2), of Nero (6.22.3), and after these comes an anecdote about the grandfather of the future emperor Nerva (6.26.1). On one hand, Tacitus is emphatically connecting the ideas of governance and astrology. His digression on fate in this connection implies that he considers it not a trifling issue. On the other hand, the narrow presentation of Tiberius's astrological interest (as opposed to making it, as elsewhere, a defining feature of his personality), associated Tiberius with another astrologically enthusiastic emperor, Otho, who like

[393] ibid. 2:273–74.
[394] Syme (1988) 224–25. Cf. Woodman (2006b) 175.
[395] Shannon-Henderson (2019) 226 is mistaken to suggest that "Tacitus also emphasizes desire to practice astrology personally, as Dio and Suetonius do not." Dio 55.11.1 and 57.15.7 are quite clear that Tiberius was personally well versed in astrology and did not even primarily depend upon expert opinion. Dio 57.19.4 and 64.1.1 make quite clear that Tiberius uttered his prophecy based on his own expertise.
[396] Perhaps there is some implication of Tiberius's astrological interests in the trial of Libo Drusus, *Ann.* 2.27. It should also be noted that Syme (1958) 696 believed the Rhodian exile at 1.5.5; 4.57.3 to be later insertions, and thus not consciously foundational in Tacitus's portrait of Tiberius.

Tiberius takes a keen interest in interpreting oracles for his own sake (*Hist*. 1.22, 1.27). Tiberius's relation to astrology here may also not be as abrupt as it first appears: Shannon-Henderson argues at length that *Annales* 1 introduces a theme of Tiberius as a emperor who twists traditional religious rite through a combination of pure neglect and careless self-interest.[397] Here she argues that Tiberius's astrology is another example of is neglecting traditional religion in favor of exotic religious practice.[398]

Where this argument falls short is in its accounting for two features in Tacitus's version. First, if Tiberius's religious practice is largely a failure, as in his refusal to consult the Sibylline oracles in *Annales* 1.76.1, it is unclear how his successful prediction of Galba's future reign reflects ill upon him other than, as mentioned above, by associating him with a vaguely disreputable art. Shannon-Henderson suggests that irony is intended:

> Perhaps, the implication is, Tiberius should have spent less time on astrology and more time on ensuring the longevity of Rome's cultic traditions. His skill at casting horoscopes sits ironically next to his incompetence (or not-quite-competence) when it comes to the Sibylline books, a traditional, state-sanctioned means of prophecy.[399]

The contrast, in her view, is between Tiberius's failures in everything that matters, and his success in a prediction that has little to do with him on the basis of a non-traditional art.[400] It also does not adequately take account of the fact that it, among the four future emperors within a four-chapter span in *Annales* 6, is only in Galba's case that Tiberius is directly involved in the actual succession. Caligula merely joins his grandfather on Capri, Nero's future reign is predicted by Thrasyllus's son, and Nerva's death is one among a series of suicides by starvation.[401]

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[397] Shannon-Henderson (2019) 65–68.
[398] ibid. 227–28.
[399] ibid. 228.
[400] Cf. Suetonius's version in *Galb*. 4.1, in which Tiberius, on hearing Augustus's prophecy of Galba's future reign, remarks *'Vivat sane,' inquit,'quando id ad nos nihil pertinet* ("Let him live, in any case," said he, "since it does not matter at all to me").
[401] On which, see Woodman (2006b) 186–88.

This reading, like those before it, misses that, for Tacitus, the prospective reference to Galba's eventual reign is meaningful in relation to his account of Galba's reign in *Historiae* 1. Its presence at *Annales* 6.20 calls to mind another set of portent traditions that figure as a thematic frame for Suetonius's life of Galba at 4 and 18–19.[402] It is improbable that Tacitus would have been ignorant of these stories. *Annales* 6.20.2, as an allusion to the body of Galban oracles, calls attention to their complete absence in *Historiae* 1. That absence is the more glaring in light of the mention of portents in other connections, as at *Historiae* 1.10, 1.22, 2.78, and 4.58.

More precisely, the absence of the traditional succession oracles in *Historiae* 1 is highlighted both by the allusion to the one succession oracle in *Annales* 6 and by the fact that there *are* oracles in the Galban narrative, but of a different tradition than in Suetonius and with different significance for the narrative. The first is at *Historiae* 1.18, which recounts the omens on the day of Piso's adoption:

> *Quartum idus Ianuarias, foedum imbribus diem, tonitrua et fulgura et caelestes minae ultra solitum turbaverunt. observatum id antiquitus comitiis dirimendis non terruit Galbam quo minus in castra pergeret, contemptorem talium ut fortuitorum; seu quae fato manent, quamvis significata, non vitantur.* (*Hist*. 1.18.1)
>
> The fourth day before the Ides of January [*i.e.*, January 10], a day foul with rainstorms, was disturbed extraordinarily by thunder, lightning, and celestial warnings. While the observation of these things was in ancient times grounds for adjourning assemblies, it did not frighten Galba from proceeding to the camp because he was contemptuous of such things as matters of chance—or perhaps what stands by fate cannot be escaped even though they are known. (*Hist*. 1.18.1)

This portent at first glance seems to point to the characteristic that both Suetonius and Tacitus present as defining Galba, namely, his mental indolence.[403] The two other references to Galba's religious activities at first seem to support this reading, and both appear in Suetonius (*Gal*. 19),

[402] On the structural import of the oracles in Suetonius's *Galba*, see Benediktson (1997) 169 and the diagram on 173. See also Dio 64.1. for effectively the same story as Suet. *Galb*. 4.3

[403] Koestermann (1956) 195 and Braun (1992) 92 each identify indolence as Galba's defining flaw in Suetonius and Tacitus.

Plutarch (*Galb*. 24.2), and Dio (64.5.2). Both refer to Galba's sacrifices on January 15, the day of his and Piso's murder. At 1.27, all sources report that a soothsayer (though only Tacitus and Plutarch name him as Umbricius) gave unfavorable omens to Galba that suggested, in Tacitus's telling, a *domesticum hostem*. The contrast with Plutarch's blander δόλου κίνδυνον (24.2) points, as Damon notes, more obviously to Otho,[404] and thus makes Galba's inability to discern Otho's hostility the more egregious. Tacitus's wry remark at *Historiae* 1.29 that *Ignarus interim Galba et sacris intentus fatigabat alieni iam imperii deos* ("Meanwhile Galba, unwitting and intent upon his sacrifices, was wearying the gods of an empire that already belonged to another"), contributes to the theme of Galba as an oblivious incompetent.

Yet *Historiae* 1.18, with no parallel in Suetonius or Dio, is remarkable in two ways. The first is that Galba neglects the portents of January 10 not out of passive indifference or neglect, but out of an active mental faculty, emphasized by the agential suffix *-or* in *contemptorem*. The following clause, *seu quae fato manent, quamvis significata, non vitantur*, stands out for its ambiguity: while it ostensibly reports Galba's thinking, its lack of any verb of thought or speech makes the sentiment almost resemble an authorial aphorism *in sua voce*.[405] The effect, at all events, is to demonstrate that Galba is taking a considered position in relation to the day's portents. Perhaps this error of commission is meant to reflect Galba's equally disastrous consideration at *Historiae* 1.14, when, realizing he must respond to the mutinous rumblings in Lower Germany, he adopts a man who

[404] Damon (2003) 157.

[405] The sentiment bears a passing resemblance to two longer meditations on fate in Tacitus's own view. The first, at *Ann*. 4.20: *Unde dubitare cogor fato et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum* ("Hence I am compelled to wonder whether it is by fate and the chance of birth, as with other things, that the affection of *principes* is in the favor of some men and contrary to others, or whether there is something in *our* deliberations that allows us to follow a path devoid of ambition and danger, between total obstinacy and foul sycophancy"); and second, *Ann.* 6.22.1, *Sed mihi haec ac talia audienti in incerto iudicium est fatone res mortalium et necessitate immutabili an forte volvantur* ("But when I hear such things and their like, my judgment is undecided whether the affairs of mortals are turned by fate and changeless necessity, or by chance").

manages to please precisely nobody. His characterization as a *contemptor* also contrasts with Otho at *Historiae* 1.22, who takes inspiration from his astrologers. Hardly incompatible with both of these significances, however, is that the calls to mind Livy both in language and in its reference to a practice used *antiquitus* ('in antiquity').[406] One effect is an incongruity: Galba, the ostensible embodiment of the *antiquus rigor* but a few lines later in the same chapter, is actually willfully negligent of the antique religion. Tacitus thus points, as elsewhere described above, to the hollowness of Galba's republicanism. Another effect is to associate Galba with Shannon-Henderson's reading of Tiberius as contemptuous of early Roman religion in a jarring and ironic contrast with his outwardly Republican bearing and concern with Republican forms of governance.[407]

The two elderly, severe emperors each represent for Tacitus a relation to antique forms that variously mixes incompetence with deception. In Galba's case, the former preponderates; in Tiberius's, the latter. Much as they are brought into dialogue in appearance and religious observance, they are also faced with a similar first task upon their accession: facing mutiny.

The Mutiny Tradition: A New Type of Civil War

With the Pannonian and German mutinies, Tacitus evokes a rich tradition of describing mutiny and civil war. He is, however, the first extant historian to narrate these events at such length within the context of the Principate, and he is certainly the first to do so with the hindsight of a century in which civil war had arisen in ways both familiar and novel.[408] A new type of civil war is exactly

[406] Heubner (1963) 1:58, notes Liv. 2.36.6 as the earliest precedent for *caelestes minae*; for the construction *comitiis dirimendis*, Liv. 7.21.1 and 40.59.5.

[407] As at, e.g., *Ann.* 1.7.3, *Nam Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat tamquam vetere re publica* ("For Tiberius began everything through the consuls, as though in the old Republic"), and 3.60.1, *Sed Tiberius, vim principatus sibi firmans, imaginem antiquitatis senatui praebebat postulata provinciarum ad disquisitionem patrum mittendo* ("But even as he solidified the force of the principate for himself, Tiberius advertised a simulacrum of antiquity to the senate by referring the requests of the provinces to the investigation of the senators").

[408] Asinius Pollio and Servilius Nonianus are the obvious other candidates to have done so, but Asinius (died 4 C.E.) cannot have predicted the course of the civil wars over the next century. Servilius, even if he furnished some of the

what Tacitus has in mind in his account of the climax of the German mutiny, which he describes as a *Diversa omnium quae umquam accidere civilium armorum facies* ("A spectacle different from all civil wars that have occurred before," 1.49). This new type of civil war is carried out by other means than the open carnage that punctuated the fifty-seven years from Sulla's march on Rome to the Battle of Actium and that re-emerged in 69 C.E. While the literature on civil wars in Tacitus is abundant, scholars have as yet written little on mutiny *per se* in Tacitus, despite its prominence in *Annales* 1 and the *Historiae*, and none have connected it to the tropes of moral decline that Tacitus evokes in other parts of his narrative.[409]

Yet the allusions to earlier accounts of mutinies are hardly tacit. Germanicus, pleading with his men, cites both Julius Caesar's suppressing the mutiny at Rome, in 47 B.C.E., and Octavian's in 31 B.C.E. (*Ann.* 1.42.3). Underlying these explicit references is the pervasive allusion, demonstrated at length by Woodman, to Livy's account of the mutiny of Scipio Africanus's legions at Sucro, in 206 B.C.E. (Liv. 28.24–29). This connection is particularly fruitful for specifying the tradition of mutiny accounts in which Tacitus is writing.

Woodman goes so far as to suggest that Tacitus is writing his *Annales* as a continuation of Livy's history. He believes that Tacitus will have seen 14 C.E. as an ironic replay of 12 B.C.E. [410] This is a helpful observation that strongly suggests that this is no chance similarity, and that Tacitus is transposing into an ironic key, so to speak, some of the themes treated more conventionally by Livy. It can be added that Tacitus writes in a similar strain in his digressions at *Historiae* 1.50, 2.38, and 3.51.[411] Woodman's arguments are, narrowly, that Tacitus borrows Livy's language of

details, is also unlikely to have portrayed mutiny very differently from Curtius Rufus, Velleius Paterculus, and Valerius Maximus, as will be seen below.

[409] The exception Woodman (2006a), on whom see below.

[410] ibid. 303–4.

[411] With each of which Ash (2010) deals in detail.

mutiny as a type of *furor*, and, broadly, that the allusion is meant to situate the *Annales* as a sort of continuation. But it is possible to take the allusion to Livy further. Tacitus is not simply transposing nor even continuing Livy, but is rather evoking a tradition of writing on mutinies, of which Livy is but the most conspicuous exemplar.

This is the tradition of mutinies as a confection of certain vicious ingredients, and Tacitus's particular adherence to this tradition is all the more obvious when read against Velleius's and Dio's accounts. Velleius's brief account attaches minimal importance to the mutinies' origin, which he ascribes dismissively to *rabie quadam* (2.125.1) before dwelling instead on the manner of their suppression, which he describes in terms of Drusus's and Germanicus's respective severity and moderation. In Dio's account, the Pannonian and German mutinies are subsidiary to the main theme, which is that Germanicus is an unwilling but potential rival to Tiberius for the throne upon Augustus's death. We first learn of Tiberius's fear of Germanicus at 57.3.1 (καὶ τὸν Γερμανικὸν ἐδεδίει τῆς Γερμανίας ἄρχοντα τότε καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις φιλούμενον, "and [Tiberius] feared Germanicus, then governor of Germania and beloved of the soldiers").[412] The true motives of Tiberius at this time, Dio emphasizes, are Tiberius's character, which is distrustful and deceitful, and the mutinies, which betoken a potential rival for power in Germanicus. The motives and origins of the mutiny are of little account: the mutineers make their fairly banal demands, for reduced period of service and that they be paid better and more punctually (57.4.2); the real significance of the mutiny for Dio is that the soldiers prefer Germanicus to Tiberius and hail him as emperor (καὶ τὸν Γερμανικὸν καὶ Καίσαρα καὶ πολὺ τοῦ Τιβερίου κρείττω ὁρῶντες ὄντα, οὐδὲν ἐμετρίαζον ἀλλὰ τὰ αὐτὰ προτεινόμενοι τόν τε Τιβέριον ἐκακηγόρησαν καὶ τὸν Γερμανικὸν αὐτοκράτορα ἐπεκάλεσαν,[413] "and [the soldiers], seeing that Germanicus was a Caesar and far better than

[412] Thus in Zonaras's epitome of Dio, ed. Dindorf.
[413] Ed. Boissevain 1901.

Tiberius, did not moderate, but, making the same proposals they slandered Tiberius and hailed Germanicus as Caesar"). Likewise, Suetonius's biography of Tiberius mentions only the German legions' demand for Germanicus as emperor and condenses their suppression to a single sentence (*Tib*. 25).

Velleius's, Dio's, and Suetonius's accounts all point to Tacitus's originality in treating the mutinies as being not an historical blip, important only for their connection to Germanicus, but as events that reveal something of the nature of the Principate. These are the first major events of the year and the bulk of its substance. They are also intimately linked with the themes set out in the first fifteen chapters, and they help to define the themes that unite the remainder of *Annales* 1. As will be seen shortly, the *seditio* of the theater is, like the *seditiones* of the soldiers, born of *licentia* (the Pannonian legions, *Ann*. 1.16; the German legions, 1.31; the theater, 1.77). More generally, by allusion to Livy's account of the mutiny at Sucro, Tacitus is writing both within and against a mature narrative tradition.

That narrative tradition is likely to have had only a tenuous relation to historical actuality and can be understood primarily as a literary construct. No doubt mutinies were an historical reality for the Roman army throughout the Republic, for it is likely that armies largely dependent upon remuneration through plunder were prompted to mutiny to some degree, as the sources tell us, by avarice. It is also probable, given the occasionally long intervals between pay-outs, the consistently abhorrent working conditions, and ever longer campaigns, that mutinies had as their motive not wanton rapacity, but frustration with what might reasonably be termed excessive hardship. Keaveney, describing military conditions in the Late Republic, refers to common complaints about officers' condescension (*superbia*), cruelty, and parsimony.[414] Likely these widespread and copious

[414] Keaveney (2007) 77–92.

reports are to some extent true. Yet what strikes the reader of ancient accounts of mutiny is the consistency with which they are ultimately attributed to two related motives, namely, to indolence borne of inactivity and to luxury. Chrissanthos has very reasonable questioned the strict veracity of many accounts of mutiny.[415] The similarity of accounts, and our sources' interest in placing the blame primarily on the men, should leave one doubtful of their strict veracity.

This consistency cannot be attributed altogether to the paucity of sources. While it is true that Livy is the most extensive, and frequently the only, source for mutinies from the fifth through the third centuries, comparison with Polybius and Appian suggests the degree to which Livy, and likely others now lost in the Roman tradition, cultivated certain conventions about the motives behind mutinies. As the earliest record of a Roman mutiny, Polybius is a useful comparandum, in his brief account of the mutiny at Sucro, in 206 B.C.E. (11.25–30). Polybius's account is succinct and its purpose clear. The mutiny is likened to a disease, which Scipio treats in the fashion of a doctor (11.25). The basic facts will have been available to Polybius through Scipionic family archives because of his friendship with Scipio Aemilianus. He would have no interest in presenting Scipio otherwise than as an exemplar. Treating the mutineers' professed motives dismissively and focusing instead on subduing the mutiny will have been useful information for Polybius's audience. It serves both as an illustration of applied theory and an embellishment for Polybius's patron.

Livy's account resembles Polybius's too closely not to have taken it as his main source, but there are considerable additions and significant new emphases.[416] Polybius refers once to the men's inactivity as a circumstance conducive to their madness (11.25), but nowhere does he fault them with rapacity or avarice. In Livy, however, these are major motivations. It is suspicious, however, that these same motives appear in his accounts of other mutinies, as at Bolae in 414

[415] Chrissanthos (2001) 63–64.
[416] Chrissanthos (1997) 176.

B.C.E. (4.50) and Capua in 342 (7.38). The novelty of these vices in their application to mutiny and their similarity to the vices blamed for other social disorders demonstrates the power of the decline narrative to subsume nuance and conjure uniformity. By Livy at the latest, the mutiny narrative may justifiably be considered primarily a literary convention. In the century intervening Polybius and Livy, there will have been ample interest in retroactively seeing in mutinies the same motives that were already, in Calpurnius Piso and others, being attached to political instability at Rome. For Livy in particular, writing early in Augustus's reign, a narrative of mutinies in terms of decline would credit the Augustan renewal for the disappearance of mutinies in the early Principate. It is also probable that Polybius's metaphor of mutiny as a kind of madness was found useful in a similar tradition that civil war was a kind of madness: it was a tradition that exculpated its agents, as victims of something external.

If Polybius' and Livy's tradition can be traced to Scipionic family archives, we may differentiate it from another strand that will be of especial interest to Tacitus. Sallust's record of the mutiny in Numidia during the Jugurthine War has in common with the mainline tradition its moralizing tone, but it inverts the fault: it is Bestia's practices and his officers' maintenance thereof that opens the door to a disease of vice that infects the camp: *tanta avaritiae in animos eorum veluti tabes invaserat* (*Iug*. 32.4). The infection is coming from above. It is important to note that, while this portryal focuses the blame upon the optimates, it does not exculpate the men. There is also a trace of this narrative in Livy, whose account at 29.19 of the trial of Pleminius offers what would be a logical anti-Scipionic version of the events at Sucro: the men were corrupted *by* Scipio. There is, again, unanimity that men are at fault; the question is to what degree are the commanders share blame.

The main other variant strand of the tradition is one that focuses on mutiny not as an harbinger of moral and political decay, but within the context of an ongoing civil war. Lucan presents this in his largely ahistorical account of the mutiny at Placentia (5.237–373). His concern is clearly to demonstrate the irony that Caesar's men are mutinying to *end* the civil war, while the restoration of military discipline will continue the destruction of the state. It is clearly written in the tradition of mutinies, with stock elements: men complaining about length of service, bearing their scars and their white hair. Now, Lucan says that the men may simply have been seeking more rewards by sacking Rome. But Lucan shows the power of stock elements, that even when used ironically, the men are still at fault.

But it is clear that within Tacitus's lifetime, the prevailing account of mutinies in any age was heavily moralistic and portrayed the men as vicious. Curtius's account of Alexander's men mutinying at Opis also draws heavily on Livy 28.[417]

In light of this brief overview of mutiny narratives, Tacitus's account at *Annales* 1.16–51 stands in clearer relief, not only for its being the longest and most detailed account of mutiny, but for its productive amalgamation of a narrative trope that had been tightly interwoven with the notions both of moral decline and of civil war.

Conclusion

Tacitus histories are a comprehensive recent history of Rome that are structured around a three-part parallelism of Nerva's and Trajan's accessions, the Year of the Four Emperors, and the accession of Tiberius. Though all three events date to the Principate, Tacitus marks certain figures, such as Galba and Tiberius, as embodying distinctly Republican characteristics. In his negative

[417] Fantham (1985) 128.

depiction of them, he conveys a basically agnostic, possibly pessimistic attitude as to whether the Republic was a "good" time (for more, that is, than oratory, as in the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*).

Both in this three-event structure and in his treatment of mutinies and seditions, he also reflects the pos-Augustan fixation with civil war as the ultimate, but evitable, result of political and moral failures. For Tacitus, civil war was an omnipresent problem even in the Republic; there was no golden age of *concordia*, as in Sallust; in the Principate, the threat of civil war is likewise omni-present but obscured by the appearance of stability in centralized rule by a Principate whose boast was of having brought peace and prosperity.

Chapter 6

Tacitean Contingency

In Chapter 5, we saw that Rome's civil unrest from Sulla onward, emblematized especially in the civil wars from 49 onward, was a trauma whose recurrence became the terminus, implied or explicit, of any historical narrative decline: for Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus, moral decadence would sooner or later result in a repeat of these events. We also saw that Tacitus was reacting to Augustan revivalism in complex ways, but largely by negating the notion that there was any historical idyl, or golden age, to be revived. Tacitus, in short, was chary of any grand narrative of history, even if he occasionally borrowed from this discourse. Given his generally mercurial attitude, we might then ask the more general question of what the motive forces in history were for Tacitus, or more broadly still, what the "shape" of history was for him, as did Wei-yee Li of the *Zuozhuan*. In answering this question, we will first consider the utility of the concept of "temporality." We will then apply this lens to Tacitus's historical narratives.

Temporality: Definition and Problems

Temporality may be defined broadly as the description an author's perception of, attitude toward, or artistic employment of time, usually in the sense of how he or she presents the relation or

disjunction among times past, present, and future.[418] Theories and configurations of decline,[419] because they encapsulate a certain attitude toward the past and a means of explaining a perceived change in morals, aesthetics, and the like, abound in temporal implications. In reviewing how this concept has been deployed, whether self-consciously under the heading of "temporality" or implicitly by looking at an historian's broader view of events as they relate to each other in time, three general conclusions about temporality as an analytical tool may reasonably be drawn: (1) "temporality" is an emergent property of an historian's "explanatory strategy" and is not an *a priori* intellectual commitment; (2) when the explanatory strategy in the historian is not explicit, temporality, as a generalization about broader temporal structures in the narrative, is an imperfect but potentially useful means of inductively identifying some of the strategy's features; and (3) this inductive identification must distinguish among different levels of a work at which temporality can operate.

Scholarship on temporality in historiography, and on Tacitus in particular, may be divided into three types. Broadly speaking, there are works addressing mainly the construction of Tacitus's narrative, whether in terms of internal or external allusion, which only occasionally and tentatively proceed to extrapolate a theory of history therefrom, much less the author's temporality. Their concern is with narrative structure.[420] There are also works directly addressing Tacitus's theory of

[418] The volume Darbo-Peschanski (2000) 11 uses the terms *temporalité* and *temporalisation* fairly interchangeably, though only the latter term is clearly defined, as how people determine continuity and discontinuity ("les hommes marquent des rythmes, découpent des séquences, créent des enchaînements et les différencient"). Rosen (2004) 4, though not explicitly defining "temporality," gives one the general sense that it is how one thinks about time, or various phenomena and their relation to time. A similar assumption, though with different terminology, underlies Gell (1992), who reads texts, rituals, language, and other cultural artifacts to arrive at underlying assumptions about time that societies make. The edited volume of de Jong and Nünlist (2007), while its chapters generally attempt to argue a philosophy of time, confines itself mainly to how time is expressed in narrative. Grethlein (2009) establishes his project, later undertaken in Grethlein (2013), to use the narratological temporality to arrive at a more philosophical variety. In none of these volumes is a clear definition of temporality made, or a clear distinction between the narratological and philosophical variety.

[419] See Chapter 1.

[420] Representative are Ginsburg (1981) and (1993), McCulloch (1991), O'Gorman (2006), Pagán (2006), Keitel (2010), Ash (2010), and Joseph (2012).

history, but which only seldom articulate this worldview in terms of time as they instead strive to extract timeless truths as specified or implied by Tacitus.[421] Finally there are those works which make occasional observations rich in temporal significance but only incidental to their thesis.[422] In reviewing other scholars' observations and inferences about of how Tacitus views time and history, we can further refine upon other scholars and upon the views adopted in Chapter 1.[423]

Jonas Grethlein's work is frequently cited in recent discussions of temporality in Classical literature. We will summarize his observations, consider their weaknesses, look at alternative views, and finally advance our own general view.

Grethlein draws upon narratology[424] and understands historical narrative to be suspended between the poles of the 'experience' of the historical actors to whom the future was unknown and the 'teleology' of an historian and audience for whom past events appear as if attracted to a known and ineluctable *telos*, with the poles measuring a spectrum of authorial distance from the agents in a relationship which he terms 'futures past.' The *telos*, however, need not be understood as the historian's present and is rather the vantage whence the historian writes his history, which may itself be in the past.[425] He terms the distinction as one between *enargeia* ("vividness") on the one end and the retrospect of teleology on the other. When the historian's concern for *enargeia* prevails, the reader is like a spectator in suspense of the event's issue; the historian is writing as though the end were in doubt, creating "the experience of the same temporal openness concerning the plot

[421] E.g., Pöhlmann (1910), Fabia (1914), Roberts (1936); for a full bibliography, see Kapust (2012) 525–28.
[422] E.g., Syme (1958) and Ash (1999).
[423] McCulloch's (1991) paper, cited below, is sadly overlooked in the recent scholarship. Grethlein (2013), discussed in the next paragraph, cites him twice, in footnotes (on p. 162 n. 435 and p. 163 n.438), and only passingly acknowledges that McCulloch preceded him in the very observation, on p. 2933, which constitutes the thesis of his chapter on Tacitus. It seems a further shame that McCulloch's name is misspelt in the bibliography. Elsewhere in the scholarship he is neglected altogether.
[424] He cites, i.a., Carr (2006), Bernstein (1994), Hölscher (2003), Gadamer (1986), Danto (1985), Gumbrecht (1997), and Ankersmit (2005).
[425] Grethlein (2013) 7–8.

that the characters are subject to [sic] with regard to their future, and accordingly the experience of the same emotions but in an 'as-if' mode," which Grethlein terms "narrative re-experience."[426]

The *locus classicus* of *enargeia* is Thucydides' account in books 6 and 7 of the Athenian siege of Syracuse, which emphasizes what the various commanders were thinking at the time and refers only minimally to his and his reader's undoubted knowledge of the siege's issue. A teleological passage, on the other hand, composes the event with a clear knowledge of their place in the broader narrative. Tacitus, he argues, depicts the trial of Cremutius Cordus with his own memorializing of Cremutius in mind: in the speech that Tacitus reports for him, Cremutius looks forward to his eventual immortalization in a future historian—which will be Tacitus. This bipartite schema can conveniently be applied to any narrative passage of any historian, to produce, as Grethlein does, an anthology of brief case studies to illustrate the broader point. In these studies, Grethlein is reading at the level of the event or the episode. In short, then, he reads historical narratives for their focus upon either immediacy (*enargeia*) or retrospect (*telos*) and deduces from the reader's experience of time as narrated in an author that author's "temporality." He then infers from temporality the author's broader attitude toward time as essentially either phenomenological or objective.[427] Ultimately, the philosophy he deduces is distilled to how "present" the author makes the past.

In his brief case study of Tacitus, Grethlein concludes that, in the *Annales*, Tacitus assumes the composition of his own history to be the narrative *telos*, as some of the speeches he gives to historical actors suggest their anachronistic consciousness of how the issue under discussion will

[426] ibid. 20.

[427] ibid. 23, where he says that "the narrative treatment of time is far from being merely a technical aspect that is exhausted by identifying 'anachronies' and labelling modifications of speed and frequency, but can be read as a mode of coming to grips with temporality." See also Grethlein (2009) 154 and 172–74. It should be noted, too, that while Grethlein in both works can make a compelling case for a philosophy of history as reflected in the narratives of Herodotus and Thucydides, for both authors he takes a cue from an explicit statement of the grand narrative: in Herodotus's case, this is Solon's famous dictum of looking to the end. For Thucydides, of course, the Archaeology abounds in programmatic statements.

be remembered in future historiography.[428] At issue in Grethlein, too, is how "open" or "closed" the future is to the historical agents, as the historian's simulation, by means of suppressing the end, of the open future experienced by historical agents creates a sense of "narrative re-experience."[429]

This approach has a fundamental problem: it neglects that an historian's representation of time or his or her configuration of events may not reflect any broader ideological commitment. This correlation of configuration and ideology, will of course, vary somewhat by author: occasionally slipshod or careless histories, such Diodorus', which are thought to reproduce or closely paraphrase other historians' work, cannot be taken as fully representative of their author's temporality; for Tacitus, on the other hand, the difficulty of the style is consonant with the deeper themes of the work.[430] Some historians have greater control of their material than others. But even the most skillful historians sometimes write to impress or create an effect with no immediate relevance to their grand narrative: notwithstanding Thucydides' claim to have written a history that would be not a show-piece for the moment but a possession for all time, he wrote some of his more dramatic scenes rather as show-pieces for all time. Composing an episode mimetically so that the end might be as doubtful to the reader as to the participants cannot be taken as indicating that the historian believed the end to be in doubt. For not only was the Sicilian expedition known to Thucydides' audience to have been a spectacular failure, but the text itself foreshadows the event's issue in Nicias' and Alcibiades' speeches respectively in opposition and support of the Sicilian expedition. *Enargeia* and teleology describe a narrative technique, not a philosophy.

[428] Grethlein (2013) 161 and 166. In fact, Grethlein offers only one example, in the famous trial of the senatorial historian Cremutius Cordus, in which the historian's remarks appear to anticipate that Tacitus will one day write about him.
[429] ibid. 20.
[430] O'Gorman (2000) 2.

When as readers we can say that these techniques correlate with the themes of the history's grand narrative, it is because these themes are known from elsewhere, not necessarily explicitly, but usually fairly obviously, such as at the beginning of a work or of a section thereof. Hunter demonstrates how specific scenes in Thucydides may be read when the thematic concerns of the author are known from his explicit programmatic statement as established in the Archaeology (1.1–19),[431] in terms of which she reads the rest of the history. A notion of time at the level of the grand narrative cannot be induced from the level of the narrative, but it can be read into them. Grethlein's assertion, for example, that Thucydides was indicting teleology is based simply on the observation that a number of passages in his history are written in a style that obscures their *telos*, as in the Syracuse episode, and that therefore Thucydides was consciously countering "the tendency of teleologies to taint our memories of the past,"[432] takes a stylistic element as representative of a more general philosophy that is at odds with the explicit remarks of Thucydides elsewhere, as in the Archaeology. While Grethlein's method can offer perceptive analyses of individual scenes, he conflates the multiple levels on which an historian may write. He ignores, in the first place, that narrative comprises not just episodes, but also the joining and structuring of these episodes in relation to one another as a configuration (on which, see Chapter 1).

Grethlein's theoretical, deductive method may be contrasted with a more philological approach, the actuating question of which is whether one can reconstruct an implicit temporal system by looking first at individual words in a work. Thus Virginia Fabrizi's researches into a coherent periodization and conception of antiquity in Livy begins with a study of how, despite the minimal distinction between the adjectives *vetus* and *antiquus*, the noun *antiquitas* may be significantly

[431] V. Hunter (1982) 41–43 views the Archaeology as a programmatic statement written later in the history's composition.
[432] Grethlein (2013) 30.

differentiated from *vetustas*, and how at the chronological level *antiquitas* is not a relative term but an absolute designation for the period before the second foundation of Rome after the Gallic sack, in 390 B.C.E., and thus that at the structural level *antiquitas* is confined to the first pentad of Livy's *Ab urbe condita*.[433] Although this philological method is a sound foundation for understanding an author, it may not produce so systematic an understanding of an author's temporality as Grethlein's more theoretical approach, as it will confine itself to specific words to the exclusion of the position of these words within the temporal sequence of the narrative. It may also preclude consideration of words as imperfect signifiers of an implicit temporal system. Neither a word alone nor its synonyms fulfill a constant function in relation to historical time. A study of the word *initium*, for example, as we shall see in the next section, reveals that this word alone is not a reliable marker of what Tacitus considers to be the beginning of a causal chain of events, as many other words serve this function (e.g., *principium*), and *initium* itself has a variety of semantic meanings extending beyond 'beginning. 'Structural and other considerations are needed to make sense of this and other important words.

A related, third method is the comparison not of specific terms but of homologous passages, such as the beginnings and ends of years in Tacitus compared with those in Livy. This is the method employed by the most successful monograph relating to time in Tacitus, Judith Ginsburg's *Tradition and Theme in the Annals of Tacitus*, which compared the beginnings and ends of years to find that the annalistic organization of the *Annales*, conventionally thought to be an archaic hindrance in an otherwise dynamic author, is in fact ably manipulated by Tacitus to emphasize thematic development.[434] Closely related to this is the method of allusion, exemplified by Timothy

[433] Fabrizi (2017).
[434] Ginsburg (1981).

Joseph's study of epic allusions in Tacitus.[435] While Joseph himself does not elucidate the temporal implications of Tacitus's allusions to Vergil and Lucan beyond foreshadowing, Pagán adds the notions, adopted from Morson's *The Shadows of Time* (1994) and Bernstein's *Foregone Conclusions*, of 'sideshadowing' and 'backshadowing.'[436] Allusion, it appears, is considered temporally significant mainly for its relevance to the category Genette describes as 'order.'[437] In the case of Tacitus, homology and allusion are pillars of the prevailing interpretation especially of the *Annales*, that theme is the organizing principle, with chronology adjusted, within bounds, to suit it.

The tentative conclusion about the respective strengths and weaknesses of these three methods suggests that the philologic method of Fabrizi is the most direct approach to talking about Tacitus's temporality. Grethlein's method risks obfuscating the nuances of a particular author by omitting that which falls outside the premise: it is a deductive approach, and as such risks telling us more about itself than about an author's or work's temporality. Joseph's approach of using epic allusion can shed much light on the interpretation of individual passages, especially where he identifies epic allusion as being particularly prominent, as at the cruces of the action, but, like Grethlein's analysis, allusion does not lead directly to Tacitus's temporality, but rather to a clearer understanding of the structure of Tacitus's text, illuminating some nuances of the historian's narrative approach, which in turn can explicate temporality. None of these authors, however, conceived of his or her project under the same guiding question as the present chapter.

The nearest formulation of the question of Tacitus's temporality was in the final publication, in 1991, of Harold McCulloch, who went only so far as to frame the issue and propose a tentative methodology. First noting the tendency among historians to select a few episodes as the basis of

[435] Joseph (2012).
[436] Pagán (2006) 198.
[437] Genette (1980) 33–85.

an ancient historian's theory of history, he cautioned that because Tacitus is highly adept at rhetoric, arrangement, and subtlety, this selection overlooks the fact that his conclusions are more circumstantial than universal: they describe the contours of the events narrated without necessarily making a further claim. As such, McCulloch recommends that "The critic must not only be attuned to all the nuances of language in the narrative, but the critic must also continually read the text to extract new relations between and among episodic accounts, depictions of various historical figures, and kinds of language. Paradoxically, the philosophical assumptions that the writer of the text employs become apparent only at the conclusion of this synthetic analysis, and the synthetic analysis grows tighter and tighter only after reading and rereading the text."[438]

As Fabrizi's reading of Livy exemplifies the efficacy of the more philological approach, it has furthermore seemed sensible to follow McCulloch in focusing the study of time in Tacitus upon a close reading of Tacitus's words in the entirety of his historical works, as opposed to mining the text for examples of a theory conceived elsewhere. This does not entail, however, a focus solely upon individual words. Kroymann, for example, as McCulloch observes, "came closest to explaining Tacitus' conception of time, history, and fate, but he wrongly expressed those views in relation to the specific terms *fatum*, *fortuna*, and *fors*."[439] As to what should be sought in a text to illustrate an author's temporality, he identified, as quoted above, certain aspects of the text, namely, *nuance of language, relation among episodes, depiction of historical personages,* and *kinds of language*. Tracing the relation of these aspects, and others elaborated below, are first steps to allow an author's temporality to emerge from the text.

On the one hand, then, one should not begin with a theory of temporality whose corroboration may be found only in select passages, and on the other one should not seek merely to define certain

[438] McCulloch (1991) 2944–45.
[439] ibid. 2938 citing Kroymann (1952).

key terms in an author relating to time and expect their definitions to comprise the author's temporality. But in so far as Tacitus specified little about time, and furthermore held not altogether consistent views about the past, its significance, and its relation to the present,[440] a reconstruction of Tacitus's temporality purely in Tacitus's own terms would be severely limited, if not impossible. Something is needed from without. Comparison, therefore, will be beneficial when made in two ways: with Tacitus's predecessors, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, it illustrates discourses about time that either may have influenced Tacitus or will put his own temporal idiom in starker relief; then, analysis in the terms of more recent studies of temporality, though it risks introducing concepts alien to Tacitus, offers possibilities for talking about Tacitean temporality whose relevance may be judged case by case.

One question on which initial guidance is needed from both ancient and modern sources is how far an author's temporality is reflected in the narrative features of a text. Can one surmise a temporality from the temporal features of narrative, such as analepsis, prolepsis, or foreshortening? There is valid ground for doubt, for one of the often cited objectives of Roman historiography was, as Cicero observed in his letter to Lucceius, the *voluptas* and *delectatio* of the reader.[441] These were in part produced by recreating the contemporary sense of an unknown outcome of events, in part by a pleasant consciousness that the sense was illusory.[442] This objective implies that, even

[440] See, e.g., Ginsburg (1993) 87, "While the past is often invoked in the Annals as a standard against which to measure the present, it is not an absolute standard; nor is the view that the past was better than the present the only perspective we are given"; and McCulloch (1991) 2939, "What, in fact, makes Tacitus so exasperating for many of his readers is that he himself is not concerned about his failure to account for all historical phenomena in the same way."

[441] See also Livy *pr*. 4.6. Tacitus himself appears to acknowledge as much in *Ann.* 4.32 when he laments that, whereas the historians of old could narrate the sacking of cities, he must narrate *parva et levia*.

[442] Cic. *Fam*. 5.12.4, *Multam etiam casus nostri varietatem tibi in scribendo suppeditabunt plenam cuiusdam voluptatis, quae vehementer animos hominum in legendo te scriptore tenere possit. Nihil est enim aptius ad delectationem lectoris quam temporum varietates fortunaeque vicissitudines. Quae etsi nobis optabiles in experiendo non fuerunt, in legendo tamen erunt iucundae; habet enim praeteriti doloris secura recordatio delectationem* ("What befell me will also provide you in the writing [of your history] with great variety. Variety is full of a certain pleasure which (since you are the author) can hold your readers' passionate attention. For nothing is more suited to the reader's delight than the changes of the times and the vicissitudes of fortune, which while they were not desirable to use at the time, will make for pleasant reading, for the recollection in safety of past suffering is a source of delight").

while history was widely acknowledged to be concerned with *res gestae* ('deeds done,' or facts), as Cicero himself acknowledges in the same letter and Tacitus himself is at pains to stress in his prologues,[443] its narration may entail deviations from the facts whose significance is not so much temporal as aesthetic or thematic. For example, Tacitus's portrayal of the senate as immediately conferring honors in turn upon Otho (*Hist*. 1.47), Vitellius (2.55), and Vespasian (4.3), each of which conferrals is known to have occurred some time after Galba's, Otho's, and Vitellius's deaths, is probably a narrative device to eliminate the tedium of narrating the legislative process of conferring *honores* and a thematic device to emphasize the senate's servility—all the more so when he has gotten the order of events wrong.[444] Moreover, this foreshortening and the extensive omission of dates from the *Historiae* has the effect of accelerating the narrative.[445] It may thus appear at first glance that, since narrative structure can be determined by such considerations as the aesthetic (e.g., a swift and suspenseful narrative) and the thematic (e.g., the servile senate), which have little or no bearing on temporality, therefore a study of narrative is of only limited use and must therefore first determine whether an author's manipulation of narrative time be significant to his temporality, *i.e.*, that it bespeaks some underlying conception of time instead of serving as rhetorical ornament.

Whereas Cicero's dictum at first appears to separate temporality from aesthetic and thematic concerns, a potential solution may be found in a more expansive conception of temporality to include the aspects of narrative and theme. Ricoeur's definition of 'narrativity' as reciprocal with 'temporality' maintains temporality to be "that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity," while narrativity "is the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate

[443] Cid. *Fam*. 5.12.3, where Cicero concedes the ornamentation of historical violates the *leges historiae*.
[444] See Damon (2003) 195, *ad* 47.1.
[445] ibid. 126, *ad* 12.1., observes that only nine events are dated precisely in *Historiae* 1, which is still more than in any of the work's extant books.

referent."[446] The narrativity of Tacitus is thus that quality of Tacitus's language that constructs narrative, which in turn describes a structure of existence, one of the underlying features of which is temporal order, which Ricoeur calls the "chronologic" or "episodic" dimension of narrative.[447] This "structure of existence" may in turn be expected to have certain structural features, one of the most important of which for theorists of narrative temporality is what Ricoeur terms the "configuration," which is the aspect of narrative that retrospectively confers significance upon otherwise incoherent events in the past. [448] With the careful reading prescribed by McCulloch, the world as constructed in Tacitus's narratives may be pieced together so that, for example, the thematic significance of the senate's servility takes shape in retrospect, and so that ostensibly aesthetic considerations reveal the contours of temporal configuration, as, for example, the acceleration or omission of events give 'shape' to the narrative.

In the piecing together of this narrative world, other recent approaches may offer some further assistance in suggesting aspects of temporality that may not at first appear as obviously temporal as overt manipulations of time, such as prolepsis and analepsis. Carr, for example, following Aristotle's *Poetics* $1450^{b}27$ and $1459^{a}20$, offers the deceptively simple division of narrative into beginning, middle, and end, which turns out to be decisive in narrative for the ultimately arbitrary decision of what event or events shall occupy those positions.[449] Further relevant themes may be found in Mink (also discussed in Chapter 1) and especially Ricoeur, to whose concept of 'configuration' Carr is responding to assert the immanence of structure in experience.[450] Such qualities as these, if valid, are aspects of temporality which may be kept in mind as potential nuances in an

[446] Ricoeur (1980) 169.
[447] ibid. 178.
[448] Ricoeur, Mink, Carr, Morson.
[449] Carr (1986) 54.
[450] ibid. 45–72.

author's temporality. In addition, certain temporally significant topoi of historiography may be added as illustrating an historian's conception of history, which may be marked by *progress*, *stasis*, or *decline*, by the *permanence* or *mutability* of human nature, and by additional factors so numerous that they are best left to the individual author and his tradition to provide and define.

These considerations improve upon the propositions of Grethlein, upon whom the views of Carr and others allow us to make further comment. It will be recalled that he suggested that historiography extends between the poles of teleology (or determinism), in which, to continue the terminology used above, the events of the beginning and middle of the narrative are selected and oriented toward an end of which the author is at all points conscious, and 'experience,' in which the historian represses his knowledge of the end to create 'narrative re-experience,' which is "the experience of the same temporal openness concerning the plot that the characters are subject to with regard to their future, and accordingly the experience of the same emotions but in an 'as-if' mode."[451] Besides suppressing any intimation of the end, one of the main narrative means for creating 're-experience' is what Morson termed 'side-shadowing,' which, as distinguished from the foreshadowing of future events, is the suggestion of alternative futures available to historical actors to whom the future was unknown.[452] Side-shadowing reflects two possible attitudes towards time in an historian: if used in conjunction with a teleological model of history, it will either portray a tragic history, in which the historical actors are pathetically unaware of the fate that the audience knows *must* await them, or a contingent history, in which the historical actors *could not* know what future awaited them, because, in effect, there was no one future which awaited them: the historian will thus make the mental leap to conceive of alternative presents. Thus narrative re-experience *may* serve the aesthetic purpose of enlivening an otherwise deterministic model, or it may itself be

[451] Grethlein (2013) 10 on teleology; 20 on "narrative re-experience."
[452] Morson (1994) 6.

part of the historian's conception of history as a contingent process. This point is not incompatible with Grethlein's analysis, but articulates something which he does not: as Morson observes, "The awareness that the future could follow many distinct paths and that the present could easily have been quite different inclines us to entertain the possibility that events may validate opinions with which we strongly disagree."[453] Side-shadowing in Tacitus may thus indicate the prevalence of contingency not merely for the sake of *enargeia* but as a result of a contingent conception of history.

Conversely, the *enargeia* of the Tacitean narrative may be one marker of contingency in his narrative. Contingency's presence or absence is roughly measured by how "open" or "closed" the future is to the historical agents, and how "open" or "closed" the course of history is to the historian, which are questions of central importance to Grethlein. The narratives of Tacitus, however, suggest that historiography may be characterized not by this sliding scale of open or closed narrative; rather, his (and indeed almost any) historical narrative is, at least when an end has been chosen, innately closed and teleological, as any event related must be conceived in retrospect.[454] This creates what Morson, after Leo Tolstoy, calls "the fallacy of retrospection," namely, that earlier events 'lead up' to later events.[455] What may then be said about Tacitus, which Grethlein did not observe, is that the contingency of Tacitus's narrative can be read in light of the fallacy of retrospection, that is, that the prevalence of contingency is Tacitus's solution to the fallacy of retrospection. Events in Tacitus are determined up to a point, and are often narrated in a deterministic fashion, only to be disappointed in the end by contingency, as will be illustrated in the next section.

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[453] ibid. 14.

[454] Xenophon may be taken as an illustrative counterexample, who declines to determine an end of his history. Marincola (2005) 309 observes of Xenophon's *Hellenica*, which picks up where Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War broke off mid-sentence, never attains closure and undermines the notion of closure or teleology. Dillery (2018) 217 finds that "'endings' and 'beginnings"' turn out not to be true and lasting end- or starting-points; they are not true temporal boundaries, but evidently reveal that there will be more of the same." Tacitus, however, almost certainly determined the end of the *Historiae*, and did in fact determine the end of the *Annales*.

[455] Morson (1994) 239–40).

In sum, the most promising inquiry into Tacitus's temporality begins with McCulloch's recommendation of focusing on the internal characteristics of the text, from word up to episode. Thus may one find what words and patterns characterize the author's thinking. Even such structures of the narrative as are not obviously temporal will have bearing on the construction of reality, whose foundational component is, explicitly or implicitly, time. Moreover, a running list of the potential aspects of time as elucidated by the best thinkers on time should be ever on the reader's mind as features of potential relevance to the author's temporality. Two additional major features of historical narrative discussed in modern scholars appear also to have relevance to Tacitus, namely the binary of open and closed narrative and the fallacy of retrospection as they are conditioned by contingency. By putting these concepts in dialog, the features of Tacitus's temporality will emerge the more readily.

The most important premise as regards my view of temporality's analytic utility is that an historian's temporality is derivative, being determined by his or her explanatory strategy and having little if any determinative value itself.[456] To illustrate, consider the ideal-type process of writing history, i.e., the process in its essential form with the many complicating factors of actual historiography omitted: the raw material of history comprises all events, of which the selection, recording, and ordering into chronological sequence constitutes a chronicle.[457] To this chronicle, the historian applies an explanatory strategy and thereby reconfigures the events into a story by linking them meaningfully. This explanatory strategy is, especially in pre-modern historians, seldom explicit, but its logic is none the less inherent and identifiable in at least two of the ways that the historian

[456] The term "explanatory strategy," as all other terms here marked with quotation marks, are borrowed from White (1973).

[457] The "chronicle" here does not refer necessarily to a specific, actual chronicle listing events. The ideal chronicle is list of events their chronological order. The historian may derive these from another historian or from personal observation, or he may indeed consult an actual chronicle.

brings it to bear upon his subject.[458] One of these ways is to configure events by their "emplotment" in one of the generic structures, or plots, received and developed by tradition, such as tragedy, comedy, satire, romance, or epic (see Chapter 1).[459] Each of these generic structures has a conventional type of beginning, development, and ending. The other way that an explanatory strategy is brought to bear upon the subject is through the figure of language in which the events are made sensible, that is, in which they are expressed at more than simply the literal level (answering the question of what happened), but as referring to something beyond themselves (suggesting or indicating what the events mean or why they have been selected as important). Such figures are known as literary tropes. The well known trope of metaphor, for example, explains a novel phenomenon in terms of its similarity to or difference from a known phenomenon. These tropes, in turn, correlate with the aforementioned generic structures. The historian's application to the chronicle of either a certain generic structure or a literary trope determines both what type of events from the chronicle may appear in the history and the types of relations that these events may have to one another. The trope or plot thus "prefigures" the "field of history." We have noted that the trope of metaphor understands an object by analogy, or its similarity to or difference from known phenomena. It is an analogy to describe Caesar by his similarity to and difference from Alexander the Great, as does Plutarch, or to present the deeds of Scipio Aemilianus by reference to those of Scipio Africanus, as does Velleius Paterculus. Another trope, metonymy, understands the whole by its relation to an essential part; thus, Thucydides' configuration the Peloponnesian War as an instance of an immutable human nature that has played itself out in past instances and will likely occur

[458] White (1973) proposes other levels, but they are irrelevant to the present argument.
[459] These are White's categories. Others are possible. Mink (1987) 185 proposes narrative is itself an irreducible form of understanding. Certain modes of thought, in any case, will prevail in certain genres. Emplotment can sometimes appear synonymous with "genre," but for clarity I shall use genre strictly to refer to the literary categories customarily used in Classical studies, including history, epic, lyric, oratory, etc.

again is to see the War as the result of, or a part of, a larger truth about human nature. It is clear, then, that the relations between events in an history are fundamentally an ordering or configuration of the events of the chronicle, which is in turn a selection of all actual events. It can thus be seen that the relation of events as they appear in an history is primarily logical, their temporal relation or disjunction being a matter of the historian's chosen trope or plot. Time is the determining factor only in the chronicle. When events have been ordered by the logic of analogy, for instance, time ceases to be the principal factor: the interchangeability of the objects compared is a rejection of time as an organizing principle. Metonymy, in its supposition of superior whole and inferior part, contains an inherent subordination in the form of cause and effect. The historian's temporality, then, at the level of his selecting events from the chronicle and configuring them into a history, is the product of the explanatory strategy he or she employs.

The foregoing analysis should dispel any impulse to misconstrue an author's attitude toward time as being discernible by similar means as his attitude toward, for instance, an historical personage or war. Thus far, however, we have described the explanatory strategy mainly as it applies to differentiating the history from the chronicle. It must next be recognized that the work of history itself comprises units whose organizing principles may each be different from the other units' principles and from the history's principles as a whole. That is, the logic that defines the historical work as a whole need not permeate its every constituent. For these constituents themselves comprise elements which may be ordered by a logic altogether separate from, and even at odds with, the logic inherent in the trope that organized the history. Differentiating the levels will help to clarify how multiple logics, and thus temporalities, may inhere within the same work of history, and will suggest where, if the explanatory strategy is not explicit, one may or may not use temporality as a rough index for it.

The simplest practical formula is to recognize an history as comprising organizational principles on three levels, much as different principles determine the formation of words, sentences, and groups of sentences. Roughly comparable to individual words are *events*, which are the smallest sensible unit of narrative. Any number of these may be gathered into a *scene* or *episode*, which contain a distinct beginning, middle, and end and correspond, in our comparison, to the sentence. The size and complexity of scenes are, again like the sentence, so manifold as to defy a single classification, as they may constitute short or long episodes or entire books. The historical work as a whole, or the *grand narrative*, coheres on the motives for the historian's selection of a given event or scene as beginning or ending the history. Each of these three levels may be organized by a logic distinct from the other levels, though the logic of the higher levels may also determine that of the lower levels.

An illustration of this tripartition will simultaneously serve as a caution against reading "up" from the level of the event or scene to arrive by induction at the grand narrative. A negative example will serve:

Whereas analysis at the level of the narrative considers events as they are treated both to produce an aesthetic effect and to form a coherent episode, episodes may themselves be conjoined by a logic quite distinct from aesthetics. Thus while Thucydides might narrate the battle of Syracuse to give the reader a vivid sense of the battle, his choice of what episode should follow it is made using different criteria. To illustrate some of the logics available, one might observe that early Ionian historiography might join distinct anecdotes or episodes together by their relevance to a particular city's foundation, as in the ὥροι; to a particular mythological cycle and genealogy, as in Hellanicus; and to the geographic relation of the settings of the narratives, as in the genre of the περίοδος (Hecataeus' *Periegesis*, Hanno's *Periplous*). Episodes may thus be connected by spatial,

temporal, or, in the case of later historiography, causal logic. Ginsburg, for example, demonstrated that the episodes in Tacitus's *Annales* are arranged with reference both to chronology and to theme.[460] Dewald, too, demonstrates the stylistic development within Thucydides, whose earlier books make clear use of linking words to connect episodes paratactically, but whose later books (particularly the sixth) dispense with linkages and becomes a single, integrated unit without clearly identifiable episodes.[461]

This tripartite division, and an awareness of the top-down relation of the parts, will allow us better to read the ancient historians for their relation to time. This schema will be useful for appreciating the particulars of a historian's style and "temporality," which may be compared more systematically with other historians'. In the case of Tacitus, it permits the novel observations, first of distinctive aspects of his world view, then of previously overlooked similarities between him and the early Republican historians. Using a consistent framework of temporality also allows for mutually illuminating comparisons from unrelated historiographic traditions, as we saw in the case of the similarities between early Roman and Chinese historiography, in Chapter 3.

Contingency as Tacitus's Temporality

An inquiry into the temporality of Roman historians would reasonably begin with an assumption of determinism. Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* suggests in its prologue a narrative of the decline of morals, as does Livy in his. In Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius, the underlying presumption is of an end in some measure determined by the beginning, or by an unchanging human nature, or by fate, or by certain usually cyclic tendencies of history. In both historiography and in other genres may be observed a strong tendency towards patterning, especially of the kind mentioned above,

[460] Ginsburg (1981) 6.
[461] Dewald (2005) 158.

which so pairs beginnings and ends that ends are in some measure patterned or determined by their beginnings.[462]

Tacitus, however, appears to disappoint this tendency. Particulalry in the *Historiae*, it appears that the prominence of contingency in Tacitus's narrative illustrates the disjunction between narrative beginnings and ends, as the causes and origins of events may be known in painstaking detail, yet the final result cannot be predicted. From this, one may extrapolate a more general theory of history, that since there is no clear causal chain from past to present, there are no grand patterns across time, and the present is but one of many possibilities. In turn, this prominence of contingency may be found to characterize not just episodic and larger structures, but also to illuminate the other features of Tacitus's conception of time. The purpose of this necessarily brief section is to offer a compendium of several aspects of Tacitus's narrative which illustrate this hypothesis of contingency within a loose framework of determinism. Each paragraph may be explored in greater length elsewhere, as seems appropriate to the larger project.

Tacitus wrote in a tradition characterized by various forms of determinism, and more generally in an intellectual environment characterized by teleology. Shadows of these cultural and generic tendencies are thick in Tacitus's narrative, but they do not define its essence. There is thus some degree of large-scale patterning across the work which must be explained before one can speak of its opposite, contingency. For when the *Historiae* announce their beginning with the consulships of Galba and T. Vinius (*Initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules erunt*, I.1.1),[463] they will almost surely have been understood to end with Domitian's death, and any doubt will have been dispelled by Tacitus's acknowledgment eighty-eight words later of his connection

[462] For the close relation of beginnings and ends in classical literature, see the edited volume D. H. Roberts, Dunn, and Fowler (1997).
[463] All references are to the O.C.T. edition of Fisher (1911).

with the Flavians, including Domitian, and finally his promise to write of Nerva's principate if his life should be long enough (1.3–4). Each emperor will have been mentioned only because he would appear in the course of the history. Commencing with Galba and the news of the Vitellian revolt on the kalends of January will also have formed a neat ring with the death of Domitian and the rise of Nerva, with Domitian as a second Nero and Nerva's success in contrast to Galba's abject failure. The kalends of January also recall the convention of the annalistic tradition in the manner of the *tabulae pontificales*, which begin with the consuls of the year.[464] There thus appear to be a familiar annalistic framework and a beginning and end of the work selected for thematic resemblance.[465]

Disrupting this arrangement, however, is the future verb *erunt*, indicating that at the *initium* of the work Galba and T. Vinius *will be* consuls; hence the beginning of the *Historiae*, including the word *initium*, as Kraus and Woodman observe, is not actually the *initium* of the *opus* proper, but of the preface.[466] The practical effect of this false start is, first, to avoid a Thucydidean or Sallustian introduction, whose length might detract from the narrative, and, second, to separate the preface from the narrative with less abruptness than in Livy's preface.[467] It has the additional effect of imposing the commencement of the work's opening episode far along in the causal sequence of the narrative, which the reader later learns stretches back to the revolt of Julius Vindex, in late 67 or early 68, when Galba was, though not yet consul, already princeps after Nero's death, in June 68. There is, then, an appearance of pattern and determinism in the annalistic framework which patterns the probable end of the *Historiae*, but it is undermined almost immediately by Tacitus's

[464] This observation is one of the origins of Ginsburg (1981)'s arguments for annalistic structure of the *Annales*. See also Syme (1958) 191 on the seeming hindrance of the annalistic framework to an historical narrative.
[465] It is of course also politic for an historian as concerned with bias as Tacitus explicitly is to avoid writing about the current regime, and thus to come no nearer to the present than the end of the previous regime.
[466] Kraus and Woodman (1997) 97–98.
[467] Syme (1958) 144 also makes these points.

advertising with *erunt* that the beginning of the work is not the beginning of the narrative, and that the later comprehension of events does not necessarily follow the chronology of their occurrence.

The survey of the situation of the empire which follows the prologue and contents is a Tacitean innovation, albeit with precedent in Sallust (*Cat*. 5.9, *Iug*. 5.3, *Hist*. frr. 1.11–51),[468] and exemplifies the peculiar manner in which Tacitus unites determinism and contingency. Before he will relate those matters which are the intended subject of his narrative, Tacitus says, it must be recalled "what was the state of the city, what the mind of the armies, what the situation of the provinces, what in all the world was in good order and what in ill, so that we may know not only the *casus* and *eventus* of history—which are generally matters of chance—but also their *ratio* and *causae*."[469] In the subsequent survey, Tacitus reverts in time at multiple points to explain why at the beginning of 69 C.E. certain armies were already disloyal, why certain dispositions prevailed among certain peoples, *etc.*; at two points he looks forward in prolepsis, with the allusion at 1.10.14–17 to Vespasian's ultimate victory and with the reference at 1.11.11–15 to a "year all but fatal to the republic."[470] From these movements to and fro in the chronology, it is clear that an account of *ratio* and *causae* moves fluidly in time, especially backwards, and expects a certain end. The actual end, however, in the form of *casus eventusque*, is *fortuitus*, a matter of chance, and so Tacitus implies a disjunction between the causal chain and the result. He thereby not only produces

[468] Damon (2003) 99–100 *ad* chh. 4–11.

[469] Tac. *Hist.* 1.4.1–5: *Ceterum antequam destinata componam, repetendum mihi videtur quails status urbis, quae mens exercituum, quis habitus provinciarum, quid in toto terrarium orbe validum, quid aegrum fuerit, ut non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur* ("But before I narrate those things which I intend, I think it best to recall what Rome was like, what the attitude of the armies, what the status of the provinces, what in all the world was well and ill, that not only the occurrence and outcome of events should be known, as these are often matters of chance, but also the reason and causes of them").

[470] *Hic fuit rerum Romanarum status, cum Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules inchoavere annum sibi ultimum, rei publicae prope supremum* ("Such was the state of Rome's affairs when the twice-consul Servius Galba and consul Titus Vinius began the year which was the final to them and nearly the last for the Republic").

'narrative re-experience' but also implies that, even in retrospect, the *telos* is a matter of chance, and is thus as surprising in the present as in the past.

Omens, too, illustrate the opposition between contingency and determinism in Tacitus: on the one hand, he remarks that omens of Vespasian's future success were believed only *post fortunam* ("after fortune," *i.e.*, after events took their course in a way that was not at all clear at the time);[471] on the other, omens feature prominently in the narrative of the unsuccessful emperor, Nero's immediate successor Galba, who ignores ill omens and is shortly thereafter killed by Otho's followers.[472] Omens, then, are dismissed for having significance only in retrospect, but are still mentioned at significant junctures in the narrative where they will appear predictive. There is again a disjunction in Tacitus, within only a few chapters, between a more teleological judgment of omens as retrospective devices, and his employment of omens as useful to the narrative. Omens *at the time* are as fortuitous as *casus eventusque*; that their significance in retrospect is illusory is a comment upon retrospective analysis: the sense which retrospect makes of the past is illusory. By extension, events are no more comprehensible for their remove from the present, and indeed are wont to be obscured by reinterpretation: As Vespasian contemplates making his attempt at the principate in book two of the *Historiae*, Tacitus remarks that it is *superstitio* after his ultimate success that prompts Vespasian to recollect past events as portentous of his future success—a process he repeats because the earlier successes in his life themselves appeared to be the fulfilment of the portents in his childhood (2.78).[473] Past events may not, therefore, as Thucydides would see

[471] Tac. *Hist.* 1.10.15–17: *Occulta fati et ostentis ac responsis destinatum Vespasiano liberisque eius imperium post fortunam credidimus* ("The hidden workings of fate—the signs and oracles that imperial rule was destined for Vespasian and his sons, we believed these after his good fortune").
[472] At, e.g., Tac. *Hist.* 1.18.1.
[473] Tac. *Hist.* 2.78.3–12: *Nec erat intactus tali superstitione, ut qui mox rerum dominus Seleucum quendam mathematicum rectorem et praescium palam habuerit. Recursabant animo vetera omina: cupressus arbor in agris eius conspicua altitudine repente prociderat ac postera die eodem vestigio resurgens procera et latior virebat. Grande id prosperumque consensu haruspicum et summa claritudo iuveni admodum Vespasiano promissa, sed primo*

the Peloponnesian War, be adduced as instances or, as it were, cases of grand principles, nor may the present be seen in the fashion of a Suetonian biography wherein the past is a sort of discovery of an underlying character which is necessarily known better in the present. Such a teleological conception of events invites the fallacy of retrospection.

As Suetonius's conception of biography may be taken as emblematic of time as the gradual revelation of the underlying truth of a man's character, it is appropriate to look to Tacitus's treatment of historical figures, especially in their introductions and obituaries. Tacitus's understanding of many of the major figures in the surviving *Historiae* may be his most potent indictment of the retrospective fallacy. The famous assessment of Galba in his obituary is representative: *sed claritas natalium et metus temporum obtentui, ut, quod segnitia erat, sapientia vocaretur… maior privato visus dum privatus fuit, et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset* (*Hist.* 1.49.15–20).[474] The brief recitation of Galba's long political career, like the *status urbis* discussed above, expects a different conclusion than that which in fact befell a man who, as related in the *Annales* with Tiberius's prophecy of the future emperorship of Galba (6.20), seemed destined to be emperor. The *partial* fulfilment of this prophecy is consistent with Tacitus's method of tracing an ostensibly logical chain of cause and effect, only to discover that the final *eventus* or *casus* is largely or wholly unforeseen or even unforeseeable. Similarly Otho ultimately proves to be of a type contrary to the common perception of him, as he, who the reader is at first told lived a negligent childhood, a

triumphalia et consulatus et Iudaicae victoriae decus implesse fidem ominis videbatur: ut haec adeptus est, portendi sibi imperium credebat. ("Nor was [Vespasian] untouched by such superstition, as he openly kept a certain astrologer, Seleucus, as his guide and seer, even when he was soon to be the master of government. Omens of old kept reappearing in his mind: a cypress tree of remarkable height on his land had abruptly fallen and, rising up high again in the same place on the following day, it began to flourish even more abundantly. This portent was adjudged weighty and favorable by the unanimous view of the haruspices, and the highest honor was forecast for Vespasian still in his youth. But at first his triumphal honors and consulship and the distinction of his victory in Judaea seemed to fulfill the omen's promise. When he had attained *these*, he began to believe that imperial power was being portended to him.")

[474] "But the eminence of his lineage and the anxiety of the times were deceptive, so that what was actually indolence was deemed wisdom… He seemed greater than a private citizen while he was a private citizen, and in the common view he would have been considered capable of rule, had he never ruled."

wanton youth, and was agreeable to Nero for his indulgence,[475] dies in an heroic suicide after First Bedriacum in hope to spare his followers by his own death. In Otho's obituary, Tacitus frames contingency with determinism, and thereby exposes the fallacy of retrospection: he reiterates that Otho's youth was as he had earlier narrated, at 1.13.12–14, but concludes by observing that Otho's life was marked by two great deeds, the one most ignoble (*i.e.*, the murder of Galba) and the other most outstanding (*i.e.*, his suicide to prevent the continuation of the civil war).[476] As Ash has well suggested, one reason for this contradictory portrayal may arise from the focalization of the more negative comments about Otho from the perspective of his contemporary detractors, which suggests that their views may not represent Tacitus's own judgment of him.[477] But as the contradiction is consistent with the others mentioned, of a disjointed beginning and end, it is unnecessary to seek characterological explanations; rather Otho, like Galba and like the civil war itself, comports himself in a manner consistent with his beginnings, but only until the end, which, both as Tacitus narrates it and as he reflects upon it in Otho's obituary, could not have been foreseen. A similar process may be at work in the life of Vespasian, although his reign and obituary are lost, for he becomes the lone example of a *princeps* changed for the better by his success (1.50.22), though the narration of his career as governor of Syria depicts him ambiguously.

The contingency of Tacitus, however, is not the infinite *clinamen* of Lucretius. Although Tacitus's depiction of historical figures demonstrates his tendency to see the final result, whether in the course of events or in the gradual revelation of character, as unknown and possibly unknowable,

[475] Tac. *Hist.* 1.13.12–14: *Namque Otho pueritiam incuriose, adulescentiam petulanter egerat, gratus Neroni aemulatione luxus* ("For Otho had spent his boyhood indifferently and his young manhood impudently, pleasing Nero by the imitation of his luxuriousness").
[476] Tac. *Hist.* 2.50.3–5: *Pueritia ac iuventa, qualem monstravimus. Duobus facinoribus, altero flagitiosissimo, altero egregio, tantundem apud posteros meruit bonae famae quantum malae*. ("I have shown the nature of his boyhood and young manhood. By two deeds, the one most disgraceful, the other distinguished, he has earned in posterity a reputation just as much good as bad.")
[477] Ash (1999) 89.

there is a family of historical persons whose mutual relevance and antagonism against the *princeps* throughout both the *Historiae* and the *Annales* constitutes a development which Ellen O'Gorman has called "virtual history." This she convincingly argues in the form of the "Pisonian principate" beginning with Cn. Piso (*Ann.* 2.43) and constituting a "virtual" alternative to the historical principate of the Julio-Claudians. While the Pisones are a notable example of an implicit alternative history in Tacitus, one may observe more generally that the contingency early described necessitates the contemplation of alternatives, and that at every turn from Otho's surviving the night in spite of seditious soldiers (1.26.5–7), to the apparently fortuitous death of T. Vinius (1.42.1–3), and to Tacitus's characterization of the volatile situation at Rome as "ready not so much with a bias for any one person as for one who was daring" (*ut non in unum aliquem prono favore ita audenti parata*, 1.6.14–15), there is always an implication of which Tacitus must have been aware, that events might have concluded differently.

But what changes and what remains constant in an alternative history may reveal what an historian thinks to be essential to his historical narrative.[478] In the case of the hypothetical Pisonian dynasty, O'Gorman finds not that the alternative history stresses the contingency of the Julio-Claudians, but rather the inevitability of the Principate, for the Pisonian alternative, as most clearly articulated in *Historiae* 1.29, is not a restoration of the republic but a continuation of dynastic rule. Because the republic is never a viable alternative in Tacitus's eyes, its abeyance was not fortuitous. As she observes, "By choosing a virtual history that is imperial rather than republican, moreover, Tacitus makes a further political point about the principate: its emergence is not entirely contingent upon the existence and actions of the individual who happens to hold the position of *princeps*, but rather it is deeply embedded as a mode of political thinking and political desire in the aristocracy

[478] O'Gorman (2006) 300.

and plebs of first-century C.E. Rome."[479] There is, then, a broad framework of determinism in which Tacitus sees historical events as unfolding. The imperial government for him is a fact, and the senate's repeated incompetence in resurrecting republican governance constitute a decisive judgment of the republic's failure.

In the methodology that he exposits at the beginning of the *Historiae,* in his treatment of omens, and in his development of character, Tacitus implies a complex temporality which on the one hand offers a deterministic framework in annalistic format, and which furthermore acknowledges as its own purpose the comprehension of *ratio* and *causae* that move fluidly in time; and on the other undermines this deterministic framework by indicting the fallacy of retrospection and emphasizing that the final *eventus* or *casus*, or even the final turn of a man's character, appear, as the products of mere chance, to defy pattern and preclude prediction. There are thus multiple temporalities at work in Tacitus, both contingent and deterministic, which occasionally interact in dialog and occasionally seem to be in contradiction. It appears at this stage of the inquiry that the prevalent temporality is that of a contingency which reveals the fallacy of retrospection and understands the present to be one of many possible presents. The view is of an atomic present which is discrete among many and, even if within a deterministic framework in broadest terms, is still, in those particulars which interest the historian, like Epicurus's atom, traceable and comprehensible, but ultimately placed by the convolutions of chance.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the premise, developed in Chapter 5, that Tacitus's attitude toward the past borrows some of the features of both the Augustan and Republican discourses about moral

[479] ibid. 283.

decline, but that he does not appear to adopt either of these perspectives, nor any other, with enough consistency to offer a coherent narrative of Roman decline in his histories. It may therefore be more fruitful to recourse to the general terminology of describing an author's attitude toward the past and its relation to the present under the label of "temporality." In this behalf, we see that attempts, such as Grethlein's, to make generalizations about an historian's temporality based on how he or she narrates a given anecdote is to confuse the different levels of an historical work's configuration, namely, that anecdotes may be narrated on one temporality for mimetic effect, while the history as a whole, or even sections thereof, are joined and arranged on completely different criteria. Tacitus, when compared with other historians, appears particularly adept at refuting precisely the idea that any extrapolations can be made from the anecdotal level to the work as a whole. Specifically, in looking at a selection of episodes, we see that he undermines the common expectation in history (and, indeed, one of the fundamental assumptions of the project of historiography in the Warring States period, deriving perhaps from the practice of divination in the oracle bones) that one can make predictions about results based on the beginning. Tacitus instead emphasizes the primacy of contingency. Even contingency, however, is not supreme. The result, in short, is a mercurial conception of the processes of history.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have addressed two main questions: When did Roman historians first treat their history as a narrative of decline, and how did this narrative evolve? The answer, in brief, is that Roman historiography was probably not written with a notion of Roman history as a process of decline until the middle or late second century B.C.E. Even then, no strong evidence of the existence of such a narrative predates Sallust. The narratives that preceded his monographs, if they comprehended the deeds the Roman people as growing ever worse, may have been constructed on principles quite different from his, perhaps as implied configurations of events rather than Sallust's harsh, unambiguous denunciations. We may make educated speculations about the nature of the earlier annalistic narratives by looking at a comparable tradition from pre-Han China. The contours and emphasis of the narratives were shaped primarily by the author's status as either an advisor or a ruler, writing either within a time of imperial consolidation or before it.

In the course of arriving at this answer, we have also offered a clearer definition of an historiographic narrative of decline. It is defined, as we saw in Chapter 1, not by any single term or small set thereof. For although certain words for "decline" *may* appear in a declensionist text, no one term is diagnostic. This ambiguity is in part because decline is so broad an idea as to be applicable to almost anything. Decline might uncontroversially, if a little vaguely, be defined as "a thing (or things) getting worse." And yet the idea of decline as a process of *history*, in which the rubric of "things getting worse" applies generally to the factual events felt to be worthy of record, tends in the Roman and Chinese traditions to appear in association with a consistent set of desirable qualities or practices, such as *virtus* ('virtue') and *concordia* ('harmony') in the Roman tradition and

dé 德 (‘virtue’) and *lǐ* 禮 (‘ritual propriety’) in the Chinese tradition. These desiderata, in whatever oblique or periphrastic terms, are believed by the declensionist historian generally to diminish over time. Decline may thus be better understood not as a keyword but as one of two modes of what Louis Mink termed “comprehension,” or the mental gathering together of sundry data into a coherent whole. In historiography, decline as a comprehension of events may appear as a *theory*, in which a central proposition—such as the loss of *concordia* in Sallust—is held to be a general truth requiring elucidation in case studies, as in the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum*. It may also appear as a *configuration*, in which the idea of decline may not be explicitly articulated, or may appear only incidentally, but is delineated in the general shape of the narrative, wherein it transpires, even if only by implication, that some desired quality is lost and not recovered as time passes. Such is the case, generally, in the *Zuozhuan*. Within a work of history, both types of comprehension may appear, but one type predominates at the level of the work’s overall structure and governs the selection of the eminent constituents of the narrative.

With a clearer sense of how to define decline in historiography, we can address the two initial questions. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, it has been widely (though not universally) assumed that Roman historians were, from their tradition’s very beginnings, pessimists in the fashion so vividly attested in Sallust, and to some degree in select pronouncements of Livy, Tacitus, likely Asinius Pollio, and others. And although indeed this grim pessimism, as well as a sense that the present is an inferior time to the past, is all but ubiquitous in the best preserved portions of the Latin tradition, the little internal evidence that remains to us of the early historiographic tradition, mainly in Fabius Pictor and the elder Cato, does *not* suggest that historians conceived of Roman history as a story of things getting worse, either by internal evidence or by implication of their context. Where these earliest writers evince a moralistic concern, as does Cato, it is with the

possibility that things could take a turn for the worse if the bad apples in society, the Scipios or Manlius Vulsos, are not dealt with properly. Otherwise, the *res gestae populi Romani*, as these men are likely to have delivered them, are not tending inexorably for the worse. Indeed, there is no definitive evidence of this narrative's existence until Sallust, who may well have been the first to articulate the idea so clearly.

It is possible, however, that the narrative of decline pre-dated Sallust in a narrative form that did not survive its author, namely, as a configuration of events. The clearest illustration of this model of a narrative of decline in historiography is, as we saw in Chapter 3, in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, a composite work completed by ca. 350 B.C.E. comprising material that had accumulated around the court chronicle of Lǔ 魯 called the *Chunqiu* 春秋. Through the careful arrangement of anecdotes within the *Chunqiu*'s annalistic framework, the *Zuozhuan* depicts the decline of the virtues that mattered to its authors over the almost two-and-a-half centuries of its narrative. It does not offer a programmatic statement of decline in its authors' voice, as in Sallust, but rather adumbrates its narrative through the remarks of the historical figures whom it quotes and through the configurations of the major episodes of history that it selects for elaboration. It thereby offers an implicit but unmistakable trajectory of the failure of the Zhou dynasty as a backdrop against which the rise and fall of its vassal kingdoms may be observed. The history's narrative as a whole is oriented toward the unnarrated present time of the authors, when one of the narrative's protagonists, the domain of Jin 晉, has utterly collapsed. It is in this context that Jin's earlier successes and failures are to be read.

Although the nature of the early Roman historians must remain a conjecture, it is, on the model of the *Zuozhuan*, at least plausible that the annalistic Roman historians such as Piso Frugi configured their narratives with a subtlety akin to the *Zuozhuan*. Piso recommends himself in particular

for this possibility both because of a few suggestive fragments where he appears to be concerned with some type of moral failure or overthrow in the recent past, and because the time when he was likely writing would be shortly after the particularly traumatic shocks of the failed reforms of the Gracchi, when Republican political life had finally erupted into civil violence. Conceivably, he arranged his annals with that end in mind, and he might, like the compilers of the *Zuozhuan*, have had a particular interest in selecting and arranging episodes to configure a general shape of events as an exploration of the causes.

Since we can now see that the Roman historiographic narrative of decline did not begin until late in the tradition, but that it was present very early—perhaps from the beginning—of the Chinese tradition, we might ask, as in Chapter 4, wherefore this difference. The answer can be found in part by inquiring whether an early historiographic narrative was composed by a ruler or by an advisor, and whether these rulers or advisors acted within a centralized imperial system or not. Sallust's monographs and the *Zuozhuan* each suggest that the historical narratives of those advising rulers may be primarily concerned with explaining recent failures. Their histories are pragmatic works that seek to draw lessons not merely from a stock of anecdotes (though this mode of discourse is amply attested in both the Roman and the Chinese traditions), but from a more or less continuous narrative running from a past time of interest to the present or recent past. Historical narratives of rulers, on the other hand, who have, like King Cheng and the Duke of Zhou in the eleventh century B.C.E. and Augustus after Actium, effected a revolution and must persuade a noble or ministerial class to integrate into the new polity, orient their historical inquiries toward naturalizing the recent revolution. For the Zhou, this meant inventing a tradition of the Mandate of Heaven, which they claimed to have inherited from the Shang. The next development was the projection of the Mandate further back in history, to the dimly known dynasty immediately

preceding the Shang, the Xia. These seem to have been the earliest two steps in a Chinese historical narrative (that is, beyond simple genealogy). Augustus, for his part, was also interested to place his revolution within a mythic and historic narrative that would make it more palatable as a restoration of what had gone before. Some of the past to be restored, particularly at its earliest stages, had to be invented. As regards decline, these dynastic narratives do not, as a rule, dwell on it as a present reality or immediate inevitability, for obvious reasons.

Tacitus, as we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, employs the tropes of decline from the Catonian, Sallustian, and Augustan traditions in part to refute the Augustan contention that moral degeneracy could be reversed or forestalled with centrally enforced moral legislation, and in part, it appears, to deflate the romantic fantasy that the Republic was ever the golden age that its advocates under the early Principate made it out to be. One feature of the post-Sallustian narrative of decline that Tacitus well illustrates is the enduring trauma of the first century B.C.E. in the Roman historical imagination, which made the dreaded terminus of decline in the Roman historiographic tradition—sometimes explicitly and, implicitly, perhaps always—another civil war.

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