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praecipuum munus annalium
The Construction, Convention and Context of Tacitus, *Annals* 3.65.1

By Anthony J. Woodman, Durham

I

Ed. Fraenkel in the preface to his *Horace* reflected that on many occasions, when he thought he had disentangled himself from "the snares of traditional exegesis", he found that he was "still interpreting not the words of Horace but the unwarranted opinion of some of his commentators"[1]. Often it is the most familiar passages which are most resistant to such reinterpretation. In 1989 I suggested that one of the most famous passages in Tacitus' *Annals*, his obituary of the emperor Tiberius (6.51), had been misinterpreted by generations of readers[2]. In the present paper I shall discuss another passage of the *Annals*, which is equally famous and which occurs during the narrative of A.D. 22 (3.65.1):

> *Exsequi sententias haud institui nisi insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore, quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit.*

This sentence, or at least the latter part of it, has been considered appropriate for use as an epigraph to translated and edited texts of the *Annals* and it is quoted or mentioned by most scholars who have written generally on Tacitus[3]. The almost universal appeal of the sentence is explained by the fact that here Tacitus is assumed to be offering his definition of "history's highest function"[4],

* For their comments on earlier drafts of this paper I am most grateful to R. H. Martin, C. B. R. Pelling, T. P. Wiseman and especially T. J. Luce, whose own article on the same subject helped me to develop some lurking suspicions. It should not be assumed that all of these scholars agree with the thesis of my paper, to which the pre-publication reaction has generally been one of disbelief and rejection. References, unless stated otherwise, are to Tacitus' *Annals*; scholarly works are usually cited in full on their first appearance, thereafter by author's name.

1 Ed. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) vii.

2 *ClQ* 39 (1989) 197–205.

3 Mostly recently by R. Mellor, *Tacitus* (New York/London 1993) 2. The translator is A. Murphy (London 1832), the editor H. Fuchs (Frauenfeld 1946). For some other examples see Section II below.

4 This is the translation offered by A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb, *The Annals of Tacitus translated into English* (London 1877), and adopted by T. J. Luce, "Tacitus on 'History's Highest Function': *praecipuum munus annalium* (Ann. 3.65)", *ANRW* 2.33.4 (1991) 2904–2927, esp. 2907–2914.

which, if the assumption is correct, is obviously a valuable disclosure from Rome's greatest historian. I wish to suggest, however, that this assumption involves difficulties of construction, convention and context which have been largely unrecognised or underestimated, and that there is an alternative way of reading the sentence by which these difficulties may be avoided.

II

We shall see in this Section that scholars are evidently unanimous in their assumption about the general meaning of Tacitus' sentence but that they do not agree on how it comes to have that meaning – or, putting things another way, they do not agree on the construction of the sentence[5].

H. Furneaux comments that *quod*, which he does not define, is "explained by the following clause"[6]. K. Nipperdey/G. Andresen define *quod* as "Relativpronomen mit nachfolgender Epexegese", words which are repeated exactly by E. Koestermann[7]. Yet such comments are by no means clear, as is shown by the passage at 4.4.3, which is quoted as a parallel in each of these three commentaries[8]:

> ... *percensuitque* [sc. *Tiberius*] *cursim numerum legionum et quas prouincias tutarentur. quod mihi quoque exsequendum reor, quae tunc Romana copia in armis, qui socii reges, quanto sit angustius imperitatum.*

This latter passage is capable of being understood in two different ways[9]. If *quod* is an adverbial accusative ("With regard to which I reckon I too should go through what Roman forces ..."), the implication is that 3.65.1 should be translated as it is by J. Jackson in the Loeb edition[10]: "It is not my intention to dwell upon any senatorial motions save those either remarkable for their nobility or of memorable turpitude; *in which case* they fall within my conception of the first duty of history – to ensure that merit shall not lack its record and to hold before the vicious word and deed the terrors of posterity and infamy."

5 Commentators such as J. Lipsius (Antwerp 1627), J. F. and J. Gronovius (Amsterdam 1685), G. H. Walther (Halle 1831), G. A. Ruperti (Hannover 1834), F. Ritter (Cambridge/London 1848), J. G. Orelli (Zurich ^{2}1859), W. Pfitzner (Gotha 1892) and A. Draeger/W. Heraeus (Berlin ^{7}1914) make no comment at all on the construction, perhaps because it seemed to them self-evident (see further below, n. 30). (The dates are those of the editions to which I have access.)

6 H. Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Oxford ^{2}1896) 1.469.

7 K. Nipperdey/G. Andresen, *P. Cornelius Tacitus: Ab Excessu Divi Augusti* (Berlin ^{11}1915) 1.294; E. Koestermann, *Cornelius Tacitus: Annalen* (Heidelberg 1963) 1.546.

8 A. Gerber/A. Greef, *Lexicon Taciteum* (Leipzig 1903, repr. Hildesheim 1962) 2.1309a add 6.7.3, which seems to me not relevant.

9 See R. H. Martin/A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus: Annals IV* (Cambridge 1989, repr. 1994) 99.

10 *Tacitus* (London/Cambridge, Ma. 1931), Vol. 2.

But this seems less than satisfactory, since Jackson has been obliged to supply the words "they fall within", which are not in the Latin. If, on the other hand, *quod* at 4.4.3 is to be taken with *exsequendum* ("Which I reckon I too should go through, namely what Roman forces ..."), the construction is facilitated by the fact that *exsequi* is similar in meaning to *percensere* in the preceding sentence. No such similarity obtains between main clause and alleged relative clause at 3.65.1, which translators seem reluctant to render along comparable lines. The version of Church and Brodribb, however, will serve to show where the difficulty lies: "My purpose is not to relate at length every motion, but only such as were conspicuous for excellence or notorious for infamy. This I regard as history's highest function, to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds."

Initially the reader is likely to understand "This" as referring back to the previous sentence; only when we reach "to let no worthy action ..." do we realise that "This" in fact looks forward. Now it would be difficult, I think, to suppose that "This" performs both these functions simultaneously, and it is almost equally difficult, though perhaps not impossible[11], to ascribe a similarly double function to *quod.*

It is no doubt for these reasons that other scholars assume, rather more simply, that *quod* at 3.65.1 is a causal conjunction ("because") and that it is *munus* which is explained by *ne uirtutes ... metus sit*[12]. Thus in the Budé edition of P. Wuilleumier[13]: "Mon dessein n'est pas de rapporter toutes les opinions, mais seulement celles qui se distinguent par leur noblesse ou par un insigne avilissement, parce que la tâche principale de l'histoire me paraît être de préserver les vertus de l'oubli et d'attacher aux paroles et aux actions perverses la crainte de l'infamie dans la posterité."

Or in the translation of Ronald Martin[14]: "I have made it my aim not to go through in detail every motion, but only those that are signalised by their integrity or a conspicuous shamefulness; for I regard it as the special task of history to see that virtues should not be passed by in silence, and that base words and deeds should fear the obloquy of posterity."

Finally there is a third group of scholars – amongst them H. Hommel, B. Walker and R. Syme – for whom *quod* seems to present no difficulty at all: they simply omit both it and the preceding words from their quotation of the passage[15]. Representative of this group is F. R. D. Goodyear, who writes: "For

11 See R. Kühner/C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache* (Hannover [4]1962, repr. Darmstadt 1971) 2.320–321.

12 Cf. Cic., *Fin.* 4.17, 38; Liv. 1.43.3; 37.56.7.

13 *Tacite: Annales* (Paris [2]1978) Vol. 1.

14 R. Martin, *Tacitus* (London [2]1989) 126. So too, e.g., P. Plass, *Wit and the Writing of History* (Wisconsin 1988) 39, 56.

15 H. Hommel, "Die Bildkunst des Tacitus", in: *Studien zu Tacitus* (Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft 9, Stuttgart 1936) 139; B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Manchester

Tacitus, as for Sallust and Livy, history has a moral and exemplary purpose, as he affirms expressly at *Ann.* 3.65.1: *praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit*"[16]. Since these scholars deprive *quod* of any antecedent to which it can relate, we must infer that they too interpret the word as a conjunction rather than a relative pronoun.

On this evidence, therefore, *quod* seems more likely to be the conjunction than a relative pronoun; but the difficulty remains that those who agree on the general meaning of the sentence cannot agree on how the sentence actually works. This difficulty should perhaps prompt us to ask whether that general meaning is itself correct.

III

Hitherto scholars have not questioned the general meaning of Tacitus' sentence because, like Goodyear, they have made the prior assumption that Tacitus' statement is hardly different, if at all, from statements in the prefaces of his great predecessors Livy and Sallust[17]. In 1991, however, T. J. Luce published a detailed discussion of Tacitus' sentence in which he argued (convincingly, to my mind) that this prior assumption is mistaken[18].

Livy, in a famous passage of his preface (10), says that historiography is particularly wholesome and fruitful because it has an exemplary function: men are encouraged to virtue and discouraged from vice by simply reading the examples of behaviour which the historian describes in his text[19]:

> *hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri: inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod uites.*

1952) 1; R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 520. So too, e.g., M. L. W. Laistner, *The Greater Roman Historians* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1947) 113; M. Grant, *The Ancient Historians* (London 1970) 279.

16 *Tacitus* (*Greece & Rome* New Surveys in the Classics 4, Oxford 1970) 29, repeated in *The Annals of Tacitus* (Cambridge 1972) 1.27.

17 See e.g. Furneaux 1.28; G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung* (Meisenheim am Glan 1956) 25; E. Herkommer, *Die topoi in den Proömien der römischen Geschichtswerke* (Diss. Tübingen 1968) 130–132 (with 132 n. 2); Grant 279; C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1983) 118; and, I regret to say, A. J. Woodman, *Velleius Paterculus: the Caesarian and Augustan Narrative* (Cambridge 1983) 274. To the references to Livy and Sallust one could add the famous statement of Sempronius Asellio fr. 2 (= Gell. 5.18.9): *nam neque alacriores ad rem publicam defendundam neque segniores ad rem perperam faciundam annales libri commouere quicquam possunt.*

18 See above, n. 4.

19 In general see now J. D. Chaplin, *Livy's Use of Exempla and the Lessons of the Past* (Diss. Princeton 1993).

Sallust takes a similar view of the encouragement to virtue[20], while elsewhere in the *Annals* Tacitus himself repeats that historiography has an exemplary function (4.33.2): *haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit, quia pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum euentis docentur.* Yet not only is there no hint in this latter passage that the exemplary function of history is its "highest" function[21] but in the famous passage at 3.65.1, as Luce has underlined, the exemplary function of historiography is not in question at all. This last point deserves brief elaboration.

On either interpretation of *quod* at 3.65.1 (see II above), the *praecipuum munus annalium* comprises the two elements *ne uirtutes sileantur* and *utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit.* These elements in their turn attribute to historiography two aspects: on the one hand the plain commemoration of moral excellence and, on the other, the capacity to deter readers from crookedness by the thought that one day they too may be exposed to criticism in the pages of some future historian. As Luce has pointed out[22], both the precise formulation of these two aspects and especially their precise combination here are quite different from the more conventional statements in Livy's preface and elsewhere. Indeed the nearest parallels to Tacitus' sentence as a whole, so far as Luce has been able to discover, are in Diodorus Siculus (1.1.5, 15.1.1)[23].

Yet there are two difficulties in this conclusion, of which the first is that it is based on a different analysis of Tacitus' sentence from that which Luce himself provides[24]. The second difficulty is whether, if Luce's conclusion is

20 His view of the usefulness of history (*Iug.* 4.1 *magno usui est memoria rerum gestarum*) has to be inferred from his analogy (4.5 *nam*) with *maiorum imagines* (4.6 *memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis uiris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari quam uirtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequauerit*).

21 So far from being assertive, the tone of the passage is apologetic throughout: see Martin/Woodman 169–172.

22 Luce 2907–2914.

23 Luce 2913.

24 Luce at the start of his discussion, though he makes no comment on the troublesome *quod*, detects a "double ellipse" in Tacitus' sentence (2906–2907): "The passage ... states first what history's role should be in respect to good behavior (*ne virtutes sileantur*) and second what the purpose is in recording instances of bad behavior (*utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit*). A curious double ellipsis results. We must understand that the historian is obliged to record examples of bad behavior as well as good (= *ne prava dicta factaque sileantur*; cf. *neque tamen silebimus* at *Ann.* 14.64.3), and we are left to infer what the purpose of recording good behavior might be." Then, after discussing the hypothesised ellipse in the *ut*-clause, Luce remarks as follows about the *ne*-clause: "We might then infer that the recording of virtuous behavior will have the reverse effect: i.e. it will serve as a stimulus or reward for good behavior (although Tacitus nowhere says this)." Luce, in other words, sees Tacitus' sentence as illustrating 'antallage', in which, for example, two clauses primarily fourfold in expression are set side by side and each of them is shortened by the ellipse of an idea which is expressed in the other (A. J. Bell, *The Latin Dual and Poetic Diction*, Oxford 1923, 340ff.). But the difficulty with this, as I mention in the text, is that Luce, having raised the question of the

correct, it is likely that Rome's greatest historian would have defined "history's highest function" in terms which are perceived by scholars to be emphatic but which are so unconventional that they cannot be paralleled except in a relatively minor Greek historian[25].

IV

The various difficulties so far encountered can be removed if we re-think the construction of the sentence once again. Let us assume that *quod* is, after all, a relative pronoun rather than the conjunction "because" but that the resulting relative clause is entirely *retro*spective rather than (as Furneaux, Nipperdey/Andresen and Koestermann say) partly prospective. On these assumptions the meaning of the sentence will be as follows: "It has not been my practice to go through senatorial *sententiae* in detail except those conspicuous for honour or of notable shame (which I reckon to be a very great responsibility of annals), lest virtues be silenced and so that crooked words and deeds should, in the light of posterity and infamy, attract dread."

According to this interpretation the *quod*-clause is in effect parenthetic and the clauses *ne uirtutes ... metus sit* become purposive[26], following on direct-

double ellipse, proceeds to discuss the clause *ne uirtutes sileantur* as if it were not elliptical at all: i.e. as if it denoted simply the plain commemoration of moral excellence (see 2907–2911). If the *ne*-clause were to be regarded as elliptical, Tacitus' statement would in fact be closer to those of Diodorus than Luce allows; but I have chosen to go along with Luce's notion of plain "commemoration", rather than that of "stimulus or reward", for reasons which will soon become clear (below, n. 27).

25 It should be acknowledged that Diodorus has often been thought to be a highly derivative author, although this view has recently been challenged by K. S. Sacks, *Diodorus and the First Century* (Princeton 1990).

26 For some other examples where a main clause is separated from a dependent *ne-* or *ut*-clause by a parenthesis see Tac., *Ann.* 12.11.2 *addidit praecepta (etenim aderat Meherdates), ut non ... cogitaret*; possibly *Dial.* 17.6 *colligi potest et Coruinum ab illis et Asinium audiri potuisse (nam Coruinus ... Asinius ... durauit), ne diuidatis saeculum et ...*; Sall., *Iug.* 15.5 *ueritus (quod in tali re solet) ne polluta licentia inuidiam accenderet*; Liv. 1.60.1 *flexit uiam Brutus (senserat enim aduentum), ne obuiam fieret*; 23.35.7 (possibly); 24.25.10; 26.33.4; 27.28.7; 29.12.10; 31.46.7 *eam classem in stationem ad Zelasium miserunt (Phthiotidis super Demetriadem promunturium est peropportune obiectum), ut, si quid inde mouerent Macedonum naues, in praesidio essent.* For examples of a parenthesis introduced by a relative pronoun see e.g. Tac., *Ann.* 15.61.2 *ubi haec a tribuno relata sunt Poppaea et Tigellino coram (quod erat saeuienti principi intimum consilium), interrogat an ...*; *Hist.* 3.71.4 *hic ambigitur, ignem tectis oppugnatores iniecerint, an obsessi (quae crebrior fama) nitentes ac progressos depulerint*; Liv. 5.46.11; 7.13.6; 7.28.3; 26.21.4 *an quem tradere exercitum successori iussissent (quod nisi manente in prouincia bello non decerneretur) eum quasi debellato triumphare*; 27.42.3; 29.25.12 *inbelles (quod plerumque in uberi agro euenit) barbari sunt*; 42.39.5; Virg., *Aen.* 6.96–97, 611 *nec partem posuere suis (quae maxima turba est)*; Sen., *Thy.* 176–178 *ignaue, iners, eneruis et (quod maximum / probrum tyranno rebus in summis reor) / inulte*; in general M. von Albrecht, *Die Parenthese in Ovids Metamorphosen und ihre dichterische Funktion* (Hildesheim 1964) 76–78. Obviously there is a degree of subjectivity here, since readers will differ in their

ly from the words *nisi ... dedecore*[27]. Hence "history's highest function" is no longer defined in terms of the commemoration of virtues and deterrence from vices. Indeed there is no longer any definition at all of "history's highest function": for, if *quod* is retrospective, it would be absurd to say that "going through senatorial *sententiae* only in significant cases of honour or shame" is "*the* highest function of history". We must assume that Tacitus, using a language which did not distinguish between the definite and indefinite article, intended the latter ("*a* very great ...")[28]; and, if we further assume that *munus* means "responsibility" rather than "function"[29], it becomes clear that Tacitus is saying, first, that he has gone through only those *sententiae* which are conspicuous for honour or of notable shame, and, second, that in so doing he has discharged one of the very great responsibilities of historiography[30].

notions of what constitutes a parenthesis: on the subject in general see J. Lennard, *But I Digress: the Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse* (Oxford 1991); also below, n. 50.

It can be argued whether, on my view of 3.65.1, the antecedent of *quod* is the whole of the preceding sentence *exsequi sententias ... notabili dedecore* or merely the words *insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore* (sc. *exsequi sententias*) or the noun *institutum*, inferred by synesis from *institui* in the main clause (for such *constructio ad sensum* see J. B. Hofmann/ A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, Munich 1972, 411); but there is little practical difference between these alternatives, and the sense seems at least as clear as that to be extracted from those scholars who offer neither an antecedent for relative *quod* nor a translation. Moreover, on the traditional interpretations, the singular *munus* is to be defined by the two separate clauses *ne ... sileantur* and *utque ... metus sit*, something which Furneaux simply sidesteps by referring to "the following clause" (singular).

27 For the idea (but not, admittedly, a clause) of purpose following *nisi* elsewhere cf. 1.3.6 *bellum ea tempestate nullum nisi aduersus Germanos supererat, abolendae magis infamiae* ... On my view of 3.65.1 the notion of "recording" bad behaviour is explicit in the main clause (*exsequi*) and therefore does not require to be supplied in the *ut*-clause: there is thus no ellipse in the *ut*-clause which invites us to infer an earlier ellipse in the *ne*-clause. The latter therefore refers to the plain "commemoration" of virtues (above, n. 24).

28 R. H. Martin has objected to me that at 2.71.3 (*non hoc praecipuum amicorum munus est prosequi defunctum ignauo questu*, cf. Ulp., *Dig.* 21.1.14 *praecipuum munus feminarum est accipere ac tueri conceptum*, quoted in *OLD munus* 1a) the same phrase "must mean 'the pre-eminent'"; but I think that the context determines the meaning, not the other way round. Thus at Plin., *Pan.* 85.6 *praecipuum est principis opus amicos parare* the sense must be "a principal task", unless we translate "the principal task ⟨in the context of *amicitia*⟩" (and of course a rendering such as the latter would suit my interpretation of 3.65.1 very well: "the very great responsibility of annals ⟨in the context of *sententiae*⟩"). Likewise R. G. Austin on Virg., *Aen.* 6.611 (quoted in n. 26 above) felt obliged to comment that "*maxima* is 'very great', rather than 'greatest'". Other scholars besides Martin (above, p. 113sq.) have translated *praecipuum* at 3.65.1 as "special" *vel sim.*, but in the *Annals* this adjective is used as an equivalent to the hackneyed *maximus* and almost never = "special" (J. N. Adams, *ClQ* 22, 1972, 361, not quoting our passage as one of the few exceptions). On *praecipuus* see further *ThLL* X 2.470.35ff.; at Liv. 43.5.8 *haec praecipua* [sc. *munera*] the meaning is "gifts".

29 For *munus* see e.g. Cic., *De or.* 3.121 *non est paucorum libellorum hoc munus*; Quint. 2.1.8 *grammatices munus*; *ThLL* VIII 1663.34ff.

30 I had reached these conclusions about *ne ... ut* and about *praecipuum* before I became aware that many older editors punctuate with either a colon (e.g. Lipsius, Walther) or a semi-colon

Now it was of course a recognised convention of classical historiography to claim that one is dealing with only the most significant material. As is illustrated by G. Avenarius' collection of examples[31], such claims occur in Greek and Roman historians of every period, they are deployed for a variety of purposes, and there are further examples in the *Annals* at 6.7.5, 13.31.1 (*res inlustres annalibus ... mandare*) and 14.64.3 (*neque tamen silebimus, si quod senatus consultum adulatione nouum aut patientia postremum fuit*)[32]. If Tacitus at 3.65.1 is making an emphatic claim of this conventional type, as I am suggesting, we must ask why he does so.

V

It is striking not only that scholars are prepared to truncate their quotation of the famous sentence at 3.65.1, as we have seen (above, Sections I and II), but also that they give little or no consideration to even the immediate context in which the sentence occurs. The commentators either remain silent or make brief and widely diverging comments.

The famous sentence occurs in the course of the following passage (3.64.4–66.1):

> *censuerat L. Apronius ut fetiales quoque iis ludis praesiderent. contra dixit Caesar, distincto sacerdotiorum iure et repetitis exemplis: neque enim umquam fetialibus hoc maiestatis fuisse; ideo Augustales adiectos quia proprium eius domus sacerdotium esset, pro qua uota persoluerentur.*
>
> 65 *Exsequi sententias haud institui nisi insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore, quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia*
>
> 1 *metus sit. ceterum tempora illa adeo infecta et adulatione sordida fuere ut non modo primores ciuitatis, quibus claritudo sua obsequiis protegenda erat, sed omnes consulares, magna pars eorum qui praetura functi multique etiam pedarii senatores certatim exsurgerent*
>
> 2 *foedaque et nimia censerent. memoriae proditur Tiberium, quotiens*

(e.g. Ritter, Orelli) after *dedecore*. Though typographical conventions have naturally changed from century to century, this punctuation may imply, as R. H. Martin has remarked to me, that those editors interpreted *quod* as a connecting relative, understood *praecipuum* as "a principal" (*vel sim.*), and took *ne* and *ut* as purposive: "... of notable shame; and this [sc. the aforesaid] I reckon to be a principal *munus* of annals, lest virtues ... and so that ...". This would certainly be close to my interpretation, which I nevertheless prefer because the verbal links *uirtutes* ~ *insignes per honestum* and *prauis dictis factisque* ~ *notabili dedecore* suggest to me that the purpose clauses depend upon the *institui*-sentence.

31 See Avenarius 128–129, but making no reference to 3.65.1.

32 Since I shall be arguing in Section VII that 3.65.1–3 must be interpreted as a whole, it is worth adding, à propos of 14.64.3, that *adulatio* also occurs at 3.65.3. For 4.32.1–33.4 see below, n. 41.

curia egrederetur, Graecis uerbis in hunc modum eloqui solitum: "o homines ad seruitutem paratos!" scilicet etiam illum, qui libertatem publicam nollet, tam proiectae seruientium patientiae taedebat.

66 *Paulatim dehinc ab indecoris ad infesta transgrediebantur. C. Silanum pro consule Asiae, repetundarum a sociis postulatum, Mamercus Scaurus e consularibus, Iunius Otho praetor, Bruttedius Niger aedilis simul corripiunt obiectantque uiolatum Augusti numen, spretam Tiberii maiestatem.*

Orelli, like Pfitzner and Draeger/Heraeus, says nothing about the context at all. Nipperdey/Andresen remark of chapter 65 as a whole that it "hat keinen Bezug auf das nächstvorhergehende, sondern ist vorbereitende Einleitung zum folgenden". Furneaux expands on this by observing that chapter 65, "though it does not appear to relate to those immediately preceding, leads from such motions as those mentioned in c. 57, to what follows in c. 66"[33]. As we shall see in Sections VI–VII below, such remarks about chapters 57 and 66 are correct; but it is clearly unsatisfactory to assume that chapters 58–64, which intervene, are simply irrelevant to the argument and structure of Tacitus' narrative.

Koestermann in his standard commentary first remarks, almost in passing, that Tacitus takes the proposal of Apronius at 64.4 "zum Anlass für eine grundsätzliche Erklärung" at 65.1; but then, after observing that "Die alten römischen normativen Ideen der *virtus constantia fides* sind für Tacitus die Leitsätze, nach denen er das Auftreten einer Persönlichkeit bewertet", he continues with these remarks on chapter 65 as a whole[34]: "Wenn der Historiker seine programmatischen Betrachtungen gerade an dieser Stelle eingeschoben hat, so präludiert er damit der weiteren Entwicklung unter Tiberius, die nach seiner Überzeugung von nun an immer dunklere Züge aufwies: Das ganze Kapitel dient wesentlich dem Zweck, den scharfen Einschnitt, den er zwischen dem 3. und 4. Buch vorgenommen hat, dem Verständnis zu erschliessen."

These seem to be the most substantial comments by any commentator on chapter 65, and in them Koestermann looks forward eleven chapters to the end of the book (3.76) in order so suggest what the effect of Tacitus' "programmatic reflections" may be. But a brief allusion to Apronius' proposal scarcely explains why Tacitus "has inserted his programmatic reflections precisely at this point" rather than at some other point, whether earlier or later. Luce, however, has elaborated on the passage at 64.4 and has argued that the statement at 65.1 is prompted by "a proposal of the senator L. Apronius that the fetial priests should be added to other religious functionaries who were to preside at games voted for the recovery of the emperor's aged mother from a serious illness"[35].

33 Furneaux 1.469.

34 Koestermann 1.545–546. Though he refers to F. Klingner for the ideals of *uirtus, constantia* and *fides*, Furneaux (1.28 n. 1) had already traced them back to Ranke.

35 Luce 2905.

Apronius' proposal, continues Luce, was "designed to flatter the imperial family"[36]. Yet, although such a hypothesis represents the converse (as it were) of that of Furneaux[37], there are several objections which can be brought against it.

First, it seems implausible that Tacitus would have used the verb *exsequi* ("to go through in detail") to refer to his treatment of so brief an episode as Apronius'. Second, it is not at all self-evident why Apronius' proposal should be thought flattering. The most natural explanation of the man's conduct is that he himself was a *fetialis* and, having no wish to see the *fetiales* excluded from the celebrations, risked Tiberius' displeasure in the same way as the *quindecimuir* Caninius Gallus some years later (6.12.1). (It must be admitted that there is no surviving evidence that Apronius was a *fetialis*, but it should also be noted that he was described as a "priest" by Syme, who may therefore have interpreted the incident along the lines which I have suggested[38].) Third, while Luce's hypothesis accommodates the notion of "shame" (*dedecore*), which he sees as being illustrated by Apronius' proposal, it can scarcely be argued that the proposal illustrates "*notable* shame" (*notabili dedecore*); nor does his hypothesis take any account of this phrase's polar opposite, *insignes per honestum*, which Luce is required to illustrate by passages far removed from the present context[39]. It is true that these illustrations can be defended on Luce's own terms, since he, like most other scholars, regards 65.1 as a generalised statement which is applicable to the *Annals* as a whole. But this in its turn brings us to the fourth and final objection, which is that the following sentence begins with the adversative conjunction *ceterum*. The implications of this are that the statement at 65.1 is part of a larger argument which continues to unfold subsequently and that the following context too should therefore claim our attention.

If these objections have any validity, we should perhaps look elsewhere for the context of Tacitus' statement at 65.1.

36 Luce 2912, cf. 2913, 2918.

37 In his note on 65.1 Ritter had already mentioned both chapter 57 (like Furneaux) and chapter 64 (like Koestermann and Luce).

38 R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford 1986) 293, cf. 349 n. 24 and 473 (index). It was Syme who drew the parallel with Caninius Gallus. Since L. Apronius' son was probably *septemuir* and possibly *flamen Quirinalis*, it is not unlikely that the father, one of Tiberius' trusted lieutenants, held a minor priesthood, despite its lack of attestation: in fact we know virtually nothing about the *fetiales* at this period (see M. W. Hoffman Lewis, *The Official Priests of Rome under the Julio-Claudians*, Rome 1955, 138–139; J. Scheid, "Les prêtres officiels sous les empereurs julio-claudiens", *ANRW* 2.16.1.640). We do know that Augustus was a *fetialis* (*Res gestae diui Aug.* 7.3), so perhaps Tiberius was too; but this cannot have been the basis of Apronius' alleged flattery of Tiberius, who as *pontifex maximus* or *sodalis Augustalis* (for example) was amply qualified to preside at the games. See further the commentary of R. H. Martin and myself on this passage (forthcoming).

39 Luce 2907–2911.

VI

It is, I believe, of crucial significance that the subject of 65.1 is senatorial *sententiae*. For Tacitus' narrative of the present year, A.D. 22, contains an extremely high proportion of senatorial material (85%). This figure is 20% higher than any other Tiberian year except A.D. 32 (81%); but, whereas the senatorial material of the latter year comprises a mere twelve chapters, with an interval between (6.2.1–10.1, 12–14), that of the present year comprises a quite unparalleled total of twenty-one continuous chapters (52–72)[40]. Thus the narrative of A.D. 22 is altogether exceptional, posing even more risk of the *rerum similitudo et satietas*, and of the corresponding lack of *uarietas*, to which Tacitus referred in his narrative of A.D. 24 (4.33.3). Moreover, the narrative of A.D. 22 is immediately preceded by a further five senatorial chapters at the end of the narrative of the previous year (47–51). What the reader might reasonably expect in these circumstances, as occurs in the narratives both of A.D. 24 (4.32.1–33.4) and of 32 (6.7.5)[41], is some acknowledgement on Tacitus' part that his narrative is risking monotony.

Yet such an acknowledgement is precisely what we are given at 65.1. Tacitus reassures his readers in conventional terms (*insignes, notabili*) that, despite any appearances to the contrary, he has gone through only the most significant material[42]; and he underlines his reassurance by saying that this is "a very great responsibility" for the historian (above, p. 117). Tacitus in his statement refers to senatorial *sententiae*, rather than to subject-matter in general, because they constitute the context which gives rise to the statement[43]; and the statement is cast negatively (*haud ... nisi ...*) because, given the sheer volume of senatorial material with which he is presently engaged, Tacitus is on the defensive.

The final defence in Tacitus' statement is provided by the clauses *ne uirtutes sileantur* and *utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit*. If these clauses are purposive rather than definitive of *munus*, as I have suggested (above, p. 116sq.), it follows that they depend upon a verb in

40 These figures are taken from J. Ginsburg, *Tradition and Theme in the Annals of Tacitus* (New York 1981) 143.

41 Each of these passages combines the 'monotony' motif with the 'significant material' motif, though at 4.32.1–33.4 the latter is presented in an unusual form (see Martin/Woodman *ad loc.*). For monotony see also 16.16.1–2.

42 Though other scholars have invoked 3.65.1 to illustrate selectivity (e.g. Syme [above, n. 15] 281, Ginsburg 9, 81), they talk in terms of Tacitus' selecting from the *acta senatus*, not of his deploying a device to defend his present narrative.

43 As I have already observed, it is usual to see Tacitus' remarks at 65.1 as generally applicable to the *Annals* as a whole: for a recent discussion see M. Vielberg, *Pflichten, Werte, Ideale: eine Untersuchung zu den Wertvorstellungen des Tacitus* (Stuttgart 1987) 105–108 "Ein Kompositionsprinzip der Annalen", with special reference to *adulatio*. It is of course obvious from Tacitus' other statements (e.g. above, n. 41) that he would wish the principle of selectivity to be seen as applicable ἐς πάντα λόγον (Herod. 7.152.3).

the perfect tense (*institui*) rather than upon one in the present (*reor*). Tacitus is referring to a practice (*exsequi sententias*) which has already achieved its purposes rather than to an aspiration which can be defined only in generalised terms. And it can be shown that this two-fold reference to achievement corresponds precisely and chiastically to the two immediately preceding senatorial debates to which the verb *exsequi* may reasonably be said to apply. These are: the debate on the proposed grant of *tribunicia potestas* to Tiberius' son Drusus (56–59) and the debate on provincial delegations concerning rights of asylum (60–63).

The two debates are presented as a contrasting pair. In the former the senators are collectively guilty of a whole range of *sententiae* which illustrate the vice of *adulatio* (57.1 *quaesitior adulatio*). The individual motion of M. Silanus to honour Tiberius and Drusus (57.1 *honorem principibus petiuit*) and to record the event (*ad memoriam temporum ... praescriberentur*) involved contempt for consular tradition (*ex contumelia consulatus*), and he was duly criticised by Tiberius for *insolentiam sententiae* (59.2)[44]; Q. Haterius' proposal for commemorating the senatorial decrees of that day by fixing them in golden letters in the curia (57.2 *cum eius diei senatus consulta aureis litteris figenda in curia censuisset*) also drew criticism from Tiberius for being contrary to inherited practice (59.2 *contra patrium morem*), as a result of which Haterius enjoyed only the infamy of his *adulatio* (57.2 *foedissimae adulationis tantum infamia usurus*). It therefore seems clear both that this first debate is characterised by *sententiae notabili dedecore* and that the *praua dicta factaque* of individuals are intended to live on in infamy in Tacitus' pages – exactly as he says at 65.1.

The latter debate is in every way the opposite of this. Once again the senate is responsible for a whole range of *sententiae* (60.1 *disquisitionem patrum*), including the *senatus consulta* by which honour was to be conferred and asylum regulated and which were to be preserved on bronze and fixed in the temples (63.4 *factaque senatus consulta, quis multo cum honore modus tamen praescribebatur, iussique ipsis in templis figere aera sacrandam ad memoriam*). But on this occasion it is Tacitus himself who praises the splendour "of that day on which the senate investigated" (60.3 *magnaque eius diei species fuit quo senatus ... introspexit*): his reasons are that the senate did not (as before) act in contempt of old-fashioned practice but in conformity with it, and that in so doing the senate did not (as before) display *adulatio* but its opposite, *libertas* (60.1 *imaginem antiquitatis*, 3 *libero, ut quondam, quid firmaret mutaretue*)[45]. No individual senators are named, but among the provincial delegations the

44 *insolentiam* here seems to mean both "unaccustomedness" and "insolence" (*OLD* 1–2 and 3–4 respectively). See below, p. 124.

45 Unlike e.g. Ginsburg 89–92, I think that chapter 60 is not ironic but is to be taken at face value and that the contrasts with 57–59 are evidence of this.

Magnesians recall their *fidem atque uirtutem* (62.1) and the Aphrodisians and Stratoniceans their *constantia* (62.2)[46]. It therefore seems clear both that this second debate is characterised by *sententiae insignes per honestum* and that Tacitus has ensured that the *uirtutes* by which it was distinguished are not silenced – again exactly as he says at 65.1[47].

Thus the sentence at 65.1 is seen to refer directly to the narrative of the two senatorial debates which immediately precedes it, a reference which seems to have remained entirely obscure to scholars as long as it was assumed that the phrase *praecipuum munus annalium* offered a definition of "history's highest function"[48]. Yet, if 65.1 refers back chiastically to chapters 56–63, what place has chapter 64, which intervenes?

It is regular for ancient historians to employ digressions or digressive passages in order to conclude a section of narrative or to make a transition between one section and the next[49]. Tacitus himself is particularly fond of this technique, of which an excellent example may be found in this same book of the *Annals* at 55.1–5. The narrative of *luxus mensae*, which began at 52.1, stops at 55.1 (*luxusque mensae ... paulatim exoleuere*); the narrative of Drusus' *tribunicia potestas* is about to start at 56.1: Tacitus effects the transition between the two sections by means of the digression at 55.1–5 (*causas eius mutationis quaerere libet ... ex honesto maneant*)[50]. Another example from the same book is chapter 70, which effects a transition between the narrative of Silanus' trial (66–69) and the section on religious and other matters (71–72). And as a final example we may note the passage at 31.5 (*idem Corbulo ... saeuiebat*), which separates the 'main' Corbulo story (31.2–4) from the African debate which follows (32–35). I suggest, therefore, that chapter 64 is another such digressive passage, separating the section on provincial asylum (60–63) from what follows.

46 It is an interesting coincidence that these are precisely the three ideals which, without any reference to the present context, scholars have mentioned apropos of 65.1 (see above, p. 119 and n. 34).

47 The conceit that free speech in particular should not be silenced is pleasingly Tacitean.

48 I have concentrated on the two debates at 56–59 and 60–63 because of their proximity to 65.1 and because they illustrate so closely the points which Tacitus makes there. But it could also be argued that Tiberius' written *sententia* in the first debate of the year's narrative (53–54) illustrates the virtue of *moderatio* (cf. 56.1 *Tiberius, fama moderationis parta*); and R. H. Martin has pointed out to me that, if it is legitimate to consider the senatorial material at the end of the previous year's narrative (see above, p. 121), there too there is an extended section (47 and 49–51) which illustrates the shame and crookedness of Dolabella and D. Haterius and the excellence of the virtuous M. Lepidus.

49 See e.g. A. J. Woodman, *Velleius Paterculus: the Tiberian Narrative* (Cambridge 1977) 154.

50 It is worth adding that the final sentence of this digression (55.5 *nec omnia ... maneant*) is itself digressive: for some other digressive sentences at the end of Tacitean paragraphs see e.g. 1.10.7 *etenim ... exprobraret*; 13.3 *de prioribus ... circumuenti sunt*; 13.6 *constat ... protegeretur*; 14.3 *quo minus ... erat*. Clearly there is again a degree of subjectivity here: readers will differ in their notions of what constitutes digressiveness and a paragraph. See above, n. 26.

Yet, if chapter 64 concludes a section, it seems to follow that chapter 65, despite the backward reference of its first sentence, must begin a new section. We are thereby returned to a point made earlier (p. 120), that 65.2 begins with *ceterum* and that the sentence at 65.1 is thus part of a larger argument which unfolds subsequently.

VII

Although the statement at 65.1 maintains a balance between virtues (*insignes per honestum* and *ne uirtutes sileantur*) and vices (*notabili dedecore* and *utque prauis ... metus sit*), as is appropriate to the preceding narrative, it soon becomes clear that the statement also functions as a foil for the *ceterum*-sentence which follows at 65.2 and in which vices alone are at issue. For the implication of the *ceterum*-sentence is obvious: even though the year A.D. 22 exhibited further *sententiae* whose detailed recording (*exsequi*) could be justified theoretically on the grounds of notoriety and deterrence, as Tacitus has just outlined (*notabili dedecore* and *utque prauis ... metus sit*), such *sententiae* were in practice so common (*non modo primores ciuitatis ... sed omnes consulares, magna pars eorum qui praetura functi multique etiam pedarii senatores*) that they became, paradoxically, commonplace. As a result Tacitus cannot, or will not, go through them in detail (*exsequi*). Indeed Tacitus' refusal is all the more apposite, since, as is made clear by verbal correspondences, the undiscussed *sententiae* would have focussed on *adulatio*, the vice that featured so prominently in the debate at 56–59 (above, p. 122): *adulatione* and *foedaque* at 65.2 look back to *quaesitior adulatio* and *foedissimae adulationis* at 57.1–2, while *nimia censerent* looks back to *insolentiam sententiae* at 59.2[51]. The risk of monotony was thus doubled.

Yet, just as at 65.1 Tacitus' justification of his preceding narrative turned out to be a foil for his subsequent refusal at 65.2, so his refusal at 65.2 turns out to be a foil for the anecdote which follows at 65.3. This anecdote, which itself is introduced defensively (*memoriae proditur*), is designed to illustrate the universality of *adulatio* and hence to compensate for Tacitus' refusal at 65.2 to speak about it in further detail. Thus the paragraph as a whole (65.1–3), though beginning with a sentence (65.1) which looks back over the narrative of 56–63, turns out to be an elaborate statement of the shamefulness of the age (*notabile dedecus*) as illustrated by *adulatio*.

In the light of this analysis it is surely significant that the next paragraph, the first in the lengthy narrative (66–69) of C. Silanus' trial for *maiestas*[52], is

51 See above, n. 44.

52 The narrative of Silanus' trial ends at 69.6 but the section as a whole does not end until 70.3 (see p. 123). The fact that Silanus was condemned only for extortion and *saeuitia* (68.1–2, as interpreted by R. Seager, *Tiberius*, London 1972, 160) is beside the point; it is the charges of

introduced by the statement that men now passed 'from the shameful to the harmful' (66.1 *Paulatim dehinc ab indecoris ad infesta transgrediebantur*). *indecoris* here looks back to *dedecore* at 65.1[53], just as the vocabulary of 65.2 looked back to the manifestations of *adulatio* at 56–59. And, just as the *indecora* of *adulatio* were practised by everyone from consulars through praetors to the lowest senators (65.2, quoted above), so the *infesta* of *maiestas*-accusations were espoused by the consular Mamercus Scaurus, the praetor Iunius Otho and the aedile Bruttedius Niger (66.1, quoted on p. 119), the itemisation of rank demonstrating that the latter vice was as universal as the former. It thus becomes clear that the introductory sentence of Silanus' trial (66.1) is to be seen in the light of statements in the previous paragraph (65). Tacitus' refusal to go into further details of *adulatio* (65.1–2), which is nevertheless briefly illustrated by anecdote (65.3), merely serves to emphasise the significance of the trial which he *will* describe in detail – a trial in which men transcended the boundaries of *indecora* and passed on to the even worse stage of *infesta*.

In other words the successive foils of 65.1–3 together serve as a foil for 66–69; and, since there is a qualitative difference between *indecora* and *infesta*, it follows that Tacitus' detailed recording of the latter, as represented by Silanus' trial, avoids the monotonous repetition which would have resulted if he had re-embarked on a detailed recording of the former. Moreover, since Tacitus names Silanus' accusers at 66.1 and then criticises each of them (again by name) at 66.2–3, just as he had named and criticised the *adulatores* at 57.1–2 (above, p. 122), it also follows that his narrative of Silanus' trial expressly provides the kind of deterrence which, despite the implication of the purpose clause at 65.1 (*utque ... metus sit*), his generalised remarks at 65.2–3 had failed to provide.

VIII

To conclude. In this paper I have suggested that the phrase *praecipuum munus annalium* does not define "history's highest function" either in conventional terms (as most scholars have assumed) or unconventional (as Luce has argued). Rather the phrase forms part of an apologia, in which Tacitus defends his preceding narrative on conventional grounds of importance and selectivity and which at the same time constitutes the first in a series of foils whereby the significance of the following narrative is emphasised. That the narrative of Silanus' trial merits such emphasising is confirmed, finally, by Tacitus' arrangement of the whole year's narrative (52–76). That narrative, it seems to

maiestas with which Tacitus is primarily concerned (cf. 67.3 *et ne quis necessariorum iuuaret periclitantem, maiestatis crimina subdebantur, uinclum et necessitas silendi*).

53 So too R. H. Martin, "Structure and Interpretation in the 'Annals' of Tacitus", *ANRW* 2.33.2.1539 (1990).

me, is arranged in seven sections, as follows: (1) 52–55 *Luxus mensae*, (2) 56–59 *Tribunicia potestas* for Drusus, (3) 60–64 Asia and asyla, (4) 65–70 Silanus' trial, (5) 71–72 Religious and other matters, (6) 73–74 War in Africa, (7) 75–76 Obituary notices[54]. It will be seen that the trial occupies the central section of the seven, attracting to itself the importance conventionally associated with such a position[55].

54 This arrangement differs from those proposed by Ginsburg 132 and G. Wille, *Der Aufbau der Werke des Tacitus* (Amsterdam 1983) 616–617.

55 See e.g. Martin/Woodman 17, 193.

Mitteilungen

Corrigenda

Nach der Autorkorrektur des Aufsatzes von Herrn C. Calame, «Variations énonciatives, relations avec les dieux et fonctions poétiques dans les *Hymnes homériques*» (diese Zeitschrift 52:1, 1995, 2–19) haben sich einige Irrtümer in die Anmerkungen eingeschlichen:
Anm. 2: statt '*A&A*' lies '*Ant. & Abendl.*'
Anm. 16: statt 'op. cit. (n. 1)' lies '*op. cit.* (n. 1)'
Anm. 30: statt 'ῥαψωιδία' lies 'ῥαψωδία'
Anm. 39: statt '*QUCC*' lies '*Quad. Urb. Cult. Class.*'
Anm. 42: statt 'hymne de Liménius = p. 149s. Powell' lies 'hymne de Liménius = p. 149–159 Powell' statt 'le *Péan* d'Isyllos (p. 149–159 Powell = *Paian* 40 Käppel)' lies 'le *Péan* d'Isyllos (p. 132–138 Powell = *Paian* 40 Käppel)'.
Die Redaktion entschuldigt sich für diese Versehen.

Bei der Redaktion eingegangene Rezensionsexemplare

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