

TACITUS' *DIALOGUS* AS A SOURCE OF MINUCIUS FELIX' *OCTAVIUS*

GEORGE L. CARVER

THE possibility that Tacitus' *Dialogus* was a direct source for an author antedating the fourth century, such as Minucius Felix, commands more than general interest because of the special question of the *Dialogus*' authenticity.¹ In a work largely built out of classical reminiscences, the imitation of classical authors implies not only that the works imitated were current, but also that their authors were considered to be of such stature as to lend dignity to the imitation. Earlier interest in possible influence of the *Dialogus* on the *Octavius* has taken the form of hints that the shape of the dialogue in the *Octavius* was due in part to the introduction of an arbiter of the discussion, first found in the *Dialogus*.² But in the train of this question is a related and more basic problem, whether or not any individual passages in the *Octavius* stem directly from the *Dialogus*.

Thus, some eighteen years ago, K. Büchner³ suggested that the major source of *Oct.* 38. 7 is *Dial.* 41. 5 rather than Seneca's *Ep.* 26. The latter is cited in the Waltzing Teubner edition, but in context and situation it has nothing to do with the passage in Minucius. Büchner's general argument ran as follows. The subject of *Oct.* 38. 7 is the *bonum temporis*, not a *bonum* which is the property of some substance. Tacitus seems to be the source, first, because there is a summons to enjoy the good things of one's own time; second, because both Tacitus and Minucius deplore the depreciation of the good embodied in

their own ages; finally, because in both authors this motif forms the closing lines of the speeches—of Maternus in the *Dialogus* and of Minucius' leading speaker, the Christian Octavius. Büchner continued by stressing the altered stance and mood of the passage as it is adapted to the Christian work. Thus for the Christian, the tragic vision of life, in which one is faced with the antinomy between fame and peace set up by Tacitus, is nullified by a changed point of view in which *magna fama* and *quies* become unimportant beside *pietas* and *religio*.

A considerable objection to Büchner has been posed recently by C. Becker,⁴ who, while conceding that some significance may be attributed to the place of both passages at the conclusion, yet denies any dependence on the grounds of the total difference in spirit and content of the two works, their slight points of contact in detail, and the confidently hortatory nature of the Minucian lines in contrast with the fundamental thought running through Tacitus' passage—the antinomy of values, the unavoidable price to be paid for the sake of peace—themes alien to Minucius. The deliberate antithesis between ages, each of which is imperfect, highlights in turn the incompatibility of Tacitus' phrase *citra obtrectionem alterius* [*saeculi*] within the context of Octavius' speech. Becker closes with the wish that at least one more passage in the *Octavius* could be found in which there was clear dependence on the *Dialogus*.

In truth, it is remarkable how slight the verbal similarities of the passages are:

1. E. Paratore is an example of a modern author who denies the *Dialogus*' authenticity. See *Tacito* (Milan, 1951), pp. 148–81.

2. P. de Labriolle, *Histoire de la littérature latine chrétienne*² (Paris, 1924), p. 172; H. Diller, "In Sachen Tertullian–Minucius Felix," *Philologus*, XC (1935), 238.

3. K. Büchner, "Drei Beobachtungen zu Minucius Felix," *Hermes*, LXXXII (1954), 231–45. The part summarized is found at 231–34.

4. C. Becker, *Der "Octavius" des Minucius Felix* (Munich, 1967), pp. 5, 6, et *passim*, 61, 62, n. 88.

... nunc, quoniam nemo eodem tempore adsequi potest magnam famam et magnam quietem, bono saeculi sui quisque citra obtreactionem alterius utatur [*Dial.* 41. 5].

Quid ingrati sumus, quid nobis invidemus, si veritas divinitatis nostri temporis aetate maturuit? Fruamur bono nostro et recti sententiam temperemus: cohibeatur superstitio, impietas expietur, vera religio reservetur [*Oct.* 38. 7].

It would seem that the only definite point of contact lies in *bono*, in each passage the ablative object of a deponent verb (*utatur* and *fruamur*, both in the subjunctive mood).

Further reflection, however, will show a considerably closer alliance. It is definite that in both passages the *bonum* referred to is the good which is predicated of an age. Tacitus poses, to some extent, an idealized view of the peace and order of the monarchy⁵ in the foregoing lines of Maternus' speech, which plays on the analogy of war and peace to explain the decline of oratory: peace brings greater happiness than does war, but war breeds the best fighters (*Dial.* 37. 7).⁶ This passage has affinities with Minucius' contention that the dawning of truth in its fullness has raised his age to a privileged place, foreshadowed by the romantically idyllic friendship, sketched in the proem (1–4), of the Christian converts Octavius and Minucius.

5. Peace under the Empire is not, of course, perfect; the vestiges of oratory point up its imperfections: "sic quoque quod superest antiqui oratoribus fori non emendatae nec usque ad votum compositae civitatis argumentum est" (*Dial.* 41. 1). See also *Dial.* 27. 3. For the ambivalent views of Maternus-Tacitus toward monarchy, see K. Barwick, *Der Dialogus de oratoribus des Tacitus: Motive und Zeit seiner Entstehung* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 26–30; A. Michel, *P. Cornelii Taciti Dialogus de Oratoribus* (Paris, 1962), p. 128.

6. The corollary is that, in a clash of values between a brilliance in oratory that can thrive only in anarchic conditions and a state of peace in which oratory is redundant, one must invariably opt for the latter. Cf. A. Gudeman, *P. Cornelii Taciti Dialogus de Oratoribus*² (Berlin and Leipzig, 1914), p. 508 (*ad* 41. 11).

7. The variation of the source is not an end in itself, but is motivated by the changed orientation of the passage in its new context: Becker (n. 4), pp. 19, 21. For the infrequency of unaltered copying of his sources, see the remarks of Becker, pp. 80, 81, on the relationship between the *Octavius* and Tertullian's *Apologeticum*: "Beim Vergleich mit den Vorlagen zeigt sich nur, dass Minucius kaum je eine Wortgruppe

From what we know of Minucius' style, and especially of the patterns which he often follows in reworking source material,⁷ it would seem that one could on a priori grounds predict with some probability that, were he to draw upon such a passage as Tacitus' *bono* . . . *utatur*, there would occur, first, some variation in wording and, second, a casting of the expression in a more symmetrical form than that in which it had appeared in its original dress.⁸ Such adaptation can be observed in a passage which Minucius derives from Cicero's *De natura deorum*:⁹

... Xenophon . . . rettulit Socratem disputantem formam dei quaeri non oportere . . . [*Nat. D.* 1. 31].

... Socraticus Xenophon formam dei veri negat videri posse et ideo quaeri non oportere . . . [*Oct.* 19. 13].

Cicero's main verb has been altered, and the single member of his indirect statement (*formam dei quaeri* . . . *oportere*) balanced by the addition of the co-ordinate member *videri posse* connected by *et ideo*. Similarly, Tacitus' "bono saeculi sui quisque . . . utatur" could, in accord with Minucius' practice, well have been altered, we may conjecture, by the substitution of *fruamur*¹⁰ for *utatur*, and by the addition of the parallel member *et recti sententiam temperemus*.¹¹

unverändert beibehält, sondern es tritt auch eine bestimmte Technik dieser imitatio heraus" (p. 80).

8. For the strong propensity toward parallelism in Minucius' reworking of his sources, see Becker (n. 4), pp. 82–84; also E. Norden's remarks: "... die zierlichsten Figuren des modernen sophistischen Stils, vor allem den Gliederparallelismus mit Gleichklang am Ende, weiss er [Minucius] mit einer Grazie anzubringen, die, obgleich sie keine natürliche, sondern eine durch Studium und gelegentlich durch Raffinement erworbene ist, doch nirgends verletzt wie bei Apuleius" (*Die antike Kunstprosa*⁵ [Darmstadt, 1958], II, 605–606).

9. Another example of the same technique: "... postquam homines minus creduli esse coeperunt" (Cic. *Div.* 2. 117); "... cum et poliores homines et minus creduli esse coeperunt" (*Oct.* 26. 6). See Becker (n. 4), p. 43, n. 51.

10. Reasons for the change from *utatur* to *fruamur* may be surmised along the lines suggested by Büchner (n. 3), pp. 232–33.

11. The antithesis between *fruamur* and *temperemus* is characteristically Minucian. Note the following example of antithesis within a highly symmetrical construction: "... cum tantum absit . . . humana mediocritas, ut neque quae supra

Although Maternus' antinomy of values is foreign to Octavius' speech, and hence *citra obtrectionem alterius* [*saeculi*] is unusable, evidence of a vestige of it may lie concealed in Minucius' awkward *quid nobis invidemus*. In classical writers *obtrectatio* and *invidia* are in practice treated as synonyms, used sometimes in pairs.¹² *Invidere* with the dative of the person normally means "to envy someone." In order to make some sense in the Minucian context, the phrase must be understood in the derivative and rather twisted sense, "to grudge or wrong oneself," i.e., to be dissatisfied with the fullness of truth offered by a Christian age.¹³ Lactantius, in a passage closely modeled on this section of the *Octavius*,¹⁴ has with reason seen fit to change *quid nobis invidemus* to *quid nobis iniqui sumus*. The very awkwardness of Minucius' lines suggests that he was trying to force a source into an ill-fitting context.¹⁵

One should give due weight to the fact that the lines in question not only appear in similar positions within their respective works—at the close of the final speech in each case—but also are uttered by the dominant interlocutors. Although Maternus' last word does not have a dogmatic ring as does Octavius',¹⁶ and is not greeted by the same awe, Maternus still dominates the entire *Dialogus*,¹⁷ thus bearing a definite resemblance to Tacitus himself, in a manner paralleled by Octavius' relationship to Minucius.

We have a clue as to why Minucius was led to turn to so alien a work as the *Dialogus* in the immediately preceding section (*Oct.* 38. 5). In a blistering peroration, more germane in tone to Tertullian than to the suave Octavius of the earlier portions of the speech, Octavius roundly excoriates the skeptical philosophers as corrupters, adulterers, and tyrants, men eloquent in damning their own vices, *adversus sua vitia facundos* (38. 5). *Facundos* is the pivotal word motivating the transition, suggesting eloquence, the theme around which Tacitus built the *Dialogus*. The theme of eloquence is developed briefly in the next lines: "nos, non habitu sapientiam sed mente praeferimus, non eloquimur magna sed vivimus, gloriamur nos consecutos quod illi summa intentione quaesiverunt nec invenire potuerunt" (38. 6). As Tacitus had emphasized the antinomy of eloquence and peace, so Minucius opposes a sham, outward eloquence to genuine, inner truth, thus building up an antithesis that could bridge the gap between his own passage and the salient antithesis developed in the *Dialogus*. That Minucius was opposing truth (a leitmotiv in the *Octavius*)¹⁸ to the wisdom of the learned is a point which Lactantius, in an imitation of the passage, gives evidence of having seen:

Vox ecce de caelo veritatem docens et nobis sole ipso clarius lumen ostendens. Quid nobis iniqui sumus et sapientiam suscipere cunctamur, quam docti homines contritis in quaerendo aetatibus suis

nos caelo suspensa sublata sunt, neque quae infra terram profunda demersa sunt, aut scire sit datum aut rusparsi religiosum" (*Oct.* 5. 5).

12. Examples of *obtrectatio* and *invidia* used in pairs: Cic. *Brut.* 156; Cic. *Inv.* 1. 16; Caes. *BC* 1. 7; Livy 30. 20. 4; also Cic. *QFr.* 1. 1. 43: *obtrectione et malevolentia*.

13. Cf. Beaujeu's translation: "Pourquoi serions-nous ingrats, pourquoi nous ferions-nous tort à nous-mêmes, si la vérité sur Dieu est venue à maturité en notre siècle?" J. Beaujeu, *Minucius Felix: "Octavius"* (Paris, 1964), p. 67.

14. *Div. Inst.* 3. 30. 6-8. For the dependence of Lactantius on Minucius, see M. Pellegrino, *Studi sul l'antica apologetica* (Rome, 1947).

15. E. Löfstedt's observation is applicable to *Oct.* 38. 7: "... an expression, a phrase, a thought, which in its original

place is natural, clear and well motivated, usually becomes somewhat peculiar, a trifle hazy or less suitable in the context, when borrowed or imitated by another author, especially if this author is not a very great artist" ("Reminiscence and Imitation," *Eranos*, XLVII [1949], 148).

16. Michel (n. 5), pp. 131-32, believes that this is the result of the skeptical strain in the *Dialogus*.

17. For the similarity of Maternus to Tacitus, see Barwick (n. 5), pp. 26-30; R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), I, 109-10. For the dominance of Maternus, see A. Michel, *Le "dialogue des orateurs" de Tacite et la philosophie de Cicéron* (Paris, 1962), p. 14. Perhaps one can see in Aper a personality similar to Caecilius; both are like the Velleius of *Nat. D.* 1.

18. See the entries under *veritas* in Becker's *Register* (n. 4), p. 108.

numquam reperire potuerunt? [*Div. Inst.* 3. 30. 7].¹⁹

The immediate result of Octavius' speech is stupefaction on the part of his hearers;²⁰ thereupon Minucius continues his strongly subjective narration with a passage that appears to be a direct imitation of Maternus' comments at the conclusion of Aper's speech, earlier in the *Dialogus*:

Quanto non solum ingenio ac spiritu, sed etiam eruditione et arte ab ipsis mutuatus est per quae mox ipsos incesseret [*Dial.* 24. 1].

... quod ea ... et argumentis et exemplis et lectionum auctoritatibus adornasset et quod malevolos isdem illis, quibus armantur philosophorum telis retudisset, ostendisset etiam veritatem non tantummodo facilem sed et favorem [*Oct.* 39].

In both passages there is juxtaposition of two members, the first a compliment paid to the speaker's deft use of learning and skill ("eruditione et arte"; "et argumentis et exemplis et lectionum auctoritatibus"),²¹ the second a statement to the effect that he undercut his adversaries by dispatching them with their own weapons.²² In both second members, the antithesis is sharp ("ab ipsis ... ipsos"; "isdem illis, quibus armantur ... telis"), and the military metaphor is prominent (*incesseret*; *armantur* ... *telis retudisset*).²³ Where Tacitus sub-

ordinates the first member to the second, Minucius predictably co-ordinates them in a parallel construction (*quod ... et quod*) and substitutes two verbs for Tacitus' one (*mutuatus est*). In being tailored to fit Minucius' apologetic purposes, the Tacitean antithesis loses some of its bite. The point which Maternus makes in the *Dialogus* is that Aper is inconsistent when he draws upon a copious knowledge of ancient literature to attack that same literature. Minucius, however, has not been at all inconsistent, but simply skillful in debate, when he refutes pagan philosophy from its own literature. The jettisoning of Tacitus' *ingenio ac spiritu* was necessary because it savored too much of Aper's ardent, aggressive temper to suit Octavius' more typically urbane, judicious personality.

Minucius' fondness for thematic links between passages in widely separated sections of the dialogue is evident in 39, which is a triumphant answer to Caecilius' challenge in the proem: "itaque progrediar ulterius: de toto integro mihi cum Octavio res est. Si placet ut ipsius sectae homo cum eo disputem, iam profecto intellet facilius esse in contubernalibus disputare quam conserere sapientiam" (*Oct.* 4. 4). The military motif (*conserere sapientiam*) is

19. Toward the beginning of Caecilius' speech (*Oct.* 6. 1), there is a curious reference to *antistitem veritatis*, which may be an allusion to and rejection of *eius artis* [sc. *eloquentiae*] *antistes* referred to by Cicero at *De or.* 1. 202, a passage which extols eloquence as divine; the *De oratore* was Tacitus' main model for the *Dialogus*. See Michel (n. 17), p. 11, for Tacitus' dependence on the *De oratore*, and J. P. Waltzing, *Minucius Felix: "Octavius"* (Bruges, 1909), p. 64, for the Minucian passage.

20. A clear-cut imitation of Virgil's line: "conticuere omnes, intente ora tenebant" (*Aen.* 2. 1).

21. Becker (n. 4), p. 26, shows how Octavius' teaching of one God follows the division *exempla-argumenta-lectionum auctoritates*.

22. In the case of both Tacitean members, parallels can be found in classical authors, but they do not correspond so closely as the Minucian text does with the Tacitean, nor do they juxtapose the complimentary *topos* in the first member with the *topos* of turning the enemy's weapons against him in the second member. The parallels cited by Gudeman (n. 6), p. 377, are the following. (1) For complimenting the skill of a speech: Cic. *De or.* 2. 362: "cum humanitatem et facilitatem agnoscimus tuam, tum admiramur istam scientiam et copiam,"

etc.; *De or.* 3. 126: "quantam rerum varietatem, quantam vim, quantam copiam, Crasse, complexus es," etc. (2) For the antithesis: *De or.* 2. 39: "debet enim ad eam [eloquentiam] laudandam ipsam illam adhibere quam laudat"; *Div.* 2. 8: "Stoico Stoicorum sententiam defendisti"; Livy *ap. Sen. Suas.* 6. 22: "in cuius [Ciceronis] laudes exsequendas Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit"; Quint. *Inst.* 2. 16. 1: "quod sit indignissimum, in accusationem orationis utuntur [sc. detractores rhetorices] orandi viribus." The closest that any of these passages comes to juxtaposing the two *topoi* in Tacitus' order is in *De or.* 2. 39, where the antithesis quoted above is immediately preceded by the following: "Non enim possum quin exclamem, ut ait ille in Trinummo: ita mihi vim oratoris cum exprimere subtiliter visus es, tum laudare copiosissime. Quod quidem eloquentem vel optime facere oportet, ut eloquentiam laudet." The antithesis of *Div.* 2. 8 is immediately followed by praise: "quodque me maxime delectat, plurimis nostris exemplis usus es, et iis quidem claris et illustribus."

23. Lactantius, in imitating this passage of Minucius, smooths over the sharpness of the antithesis: "... vel certe ut ipsi philosophi suis armis potissimum, quibus placere sibi et confidere solent, opprimerentur a nobis" (*Div. Inst.* 3. 1. 2).

resumed in 39 by "isdem illis quibus armantur, philosophorum telis retudisset"; Caecilius' *intellet facilius* has been turned by Octavius into "ostendisset veritatem non tantummodo facilem sed et favorabilem" (39).

The care with which Minucius has linked the proem with the Tacitean imitation in 39 sheds light on an important facet of his use of sources. Though it is an imitation of Tacitus, *Octavius* 39 is woven more elaborately into its new context than was its exemplar in the *Dialogus*,²⁴ an exception to the more typical relationship existing between an imitation and its original. In the case of the *Octavius*, it is dangerous to determine literary dependence and hence dating by resting too heavily on the supposition that the original source will more likely show thematic links with the passage in question or will utilize its vocabulary in other sections to a greater extent than will the imitation. Such a supposition shows a failure to realize the degree of sophistication to which Minucius brought the art of the cento.

The closing lines of the *Dialogus* bind together a cluster of *topoi* frequently employed by classical writers in the conclusions of dialogues. The remarkable thing is that Tacitus has bunched together so many at the end of a single work.²⁵ In the *Octavius* as well we find, not only the same exaggerated bunching of *topoi* in the last

lines of the work, but the very *topoi* of Tacitus:

Erant quibus contra dicerem, erant de quibus plura dici vellem, nisi iam dies esset exactus. "Fiet," inquit Maternus, "postea arbitrato tuo, et si qua tibi obscura in hoc meo sermone visa sunt, de iis rursus conferemus" . . . Cum adrisissent, discessimus [*Dial.* 42. 1–2].

Etiam nunc tamen aliqua consubsidunt non obstrepentia veritati, sed perfectae institutioni necessaria, de quibus crastino, quod iam sol occasui declivis est . . . requiremus . . . Post haec laeti hilaresque discessimus . . . [*Oct.* 40. 2, 4].²⁶

There are basically four *topoi* which appear in both dialogues:²⁷ (1) the end of day as the motive for concluding the dialogue; (2) the proposal to continue the discussion later; (3) the necessity of clarifying the discussion at a future session;²⁸ (4) a smiling, jocose departure. The appearance of these four *topoi* juxtaposed cannot be found, so far as I can determine, in any other Latin or Greek work antedating the fourth century.²⁹ The inescapable inference, it would seem, is that Minucius has imitated the *Dialogus* in this place as well, though he avoids direct quotation.³⁰

If we turn from the conclusion of the *Octavius* to Caecilius' speech early in the dialogue, there is probably still another instance of direct imitation of the *Dialogus*. Chapters 6 and 7, dealing in general with Roman piety and augury, rely heavily on source material drawn from Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*.³¹ In *Oct.*

24. There is, however, some probability that a single word *vexata* (*Dial.* 1. 4) is echoed intentionally by *vexavit* in *Dial.* 24. 1. See Gudeman (n. 6), p. 376 (*ad* 24. 2).

25. Gudeman (n. 6), p. 509: "Was die taciteische Schrift besonders auszeichnet, ist die Tatsache, dass alle diese Mittel hier vereinigt erscheinen."

26. Note the apparently deliberate contrast between this passage and the picture of Caecilius in the proem: "cur non agnosco, Caecili, alacritatem tuam illam et illam oculorum etiam in seriis hilaritatem requiro?" (*Oct.* 4. 2). There are only three occurrences of *hilaris* and *hilaritas* in the dialogue; the third (31. 5) describes Christian feasts, not persons.

27. The classification is Gudeman's (n. 6), p. 509 (*ad* 42. 1).

28. In the *Dialogus* the future session is necessary for two purposes, contesting some points in Maternus' speech and clarifying others. Since Octavius' speech successfully argued

the case for Christianity and resulted forthwith in Caecilius' conversion, Minucius could use only the second of Tacitus' reasons for the future session.

29. The classical works that come closest to employing the four *topoi* in juxtaposition are the following (with the *topoi* enumerated as in the body): Cic. *Nat. D.* 3. 94 ff.: 1 and 2; Cic. *De or.* 1. 265: 2 and 4; Cic. *De or.* 2. 367: 2 and 4; Cic. *Acad.* 2. 148: 2 and 4; Cic. *Fin.* 4. 80: 2 and 1; Lucian *Anach.* 40: 1 and 2; Philostr. *Heroicus* 331: 1 and 2.

30. The language of some of the four *topoi* in the *Octavius* comes either from still another author or, more probably, from expressions in common use: e.g., Seneca, in a description of falling asleep with a good conscience, uses the expression *laeti hilaresque* (*Ep. Mor.* 12. 9).

31. Beaujeu (n. 13), pp. 83–85.

7. 5, however, there appears a line which is much closer to one in the *Dialogus* than to its analogue in *De natura deorum*:³²

Quodsi ea *ficta* credimus licentia *fabularum* . . . [*Nat. D. 2. 7*].

Vel si haec *fabulosa nimis et composita videntur* illud certe mihi concedes . . . [*Dial. 12. 5*].

Omitto vetera quae multa sunt, et de deorum natalibus, donis, muneribus neglego carmina poetarum, praedicta etiam de oraculis fata transilio, ne vobis antiquitas *nimum fabulosa videatur* [*Oct. 7. 5*].

In *Dial. 12. 3–5* (*ceterum felix . . . Varii Thyestes*), Tacitus himself seems to be imitating the main train of thought in *Nat. D. 2. 7–8* (*praedictiones . . . vulnere*), though the general subject of the two works is utterly diverse. Thus Cicero's Balbus attempts to prove the existence of gods from the fact of divination, arguing that, even if one believes the stories told of the soothsayers of a mythical past—Mopsus, Tiresias, Amphiaras, *et al.*—to be fictitious, yet instances from Roman history, in which auguries were ignored with calamitous results, will bring conviction. So in the *Dialogus*, Maternus, while extolling the poets' idyllic retreat from the world, argues that in the Golden Age poets and bards like Orpheus, Linus, and Apollo held the place of honor; but if the fictitious element in all this seems excessive, then the honor accorded such "modern" poets as Homer, Euripides, Sophocles, and others will prove his point.

The link that joins the very different contexts of the *De natura deorum* and the *Dialogus* is *poetis et vatibus* (*Dial. 12. 3*), which, coming shortly after the transitional *ceterum*, moves the thought toward the themes of Balbus' argument from divination: "*ceterum felix illud et, ut more nostro loquar, aureum saeculum, et oratorum et*

criminum inops, poetis et vatibus abundabat, qui bene facta canerent . . ." (*Dial. 12. 3*).

For Tacitus, *compositus* is synonymous with *fictus* and appears in his works paired with it.³³ With this in mind, one can understand the transition from Cicero's *ficta . . . fabularum* (*Nat. D. 2. 7*) to Tacitus' coordinate construction, "*fabulosa nimis et composita videntur*" (*Dial. 12. 5*), and, in a third stage, by suppression of the second member of the parallel, to Minucius' *nimum fabulosa videatur* (*Oct. 7. 5*). Contrary to his familiar practice of fashioning parallel structures from his sources, Minucius here rejects Tacitus' ready-made parallel in favor of a variant.

Within the Minucian passage, two significant expressions emerge which do not appear in Cicero's context: *carmina poetarum* (7. 5) and *vates* (7. 6). The former suggests the motif of the Tacitean passage; the latter is Tacitus' own link with Balbus' speech.

If there is a single, powerful rhetorical device dominating *Nat. D. 2. 7*, it is the repeated use of asyndeton in three striking runs of infinitives and nouns; the asyndeta reinforce the theme of soothsaying by imitating hieratic formulas: "*ostendi, monstrari, portendi, praedici*"; "*ostenta, monstra, portenta, prodigia*"; "*Mopsum, Tiresiam, Amphiarum, Calchantem, Helenum*." Minucius reproduces these in four series with asyndeton: *natalibus, donis, muneribus* (7. 5); *incolis, praesentibus, inquilinis* (7. 5); *videmus, audimus, agnoscimus* (7. 6); *negamus, nolumus, peieramus* (7. 6). Such close imitation of his Ciceronian source makes even more obvious his departure from Cicero's *quodsi . . . fabularum*, so undoubtedly analogous to Minucius' *ne vobis . . . videatur*, toward a literal

32. This parallel was suggested, but not developed, in the appendix of K. Büchner's *Tacitus und Ausklang* (Wiesbaden, 1964), p. 158; Becker (n. 4) rejects it (pp. 62, n. 88 and 42, n. 50).

33. Gudeman (n. 6), p. 270, for this fact and for a list of examples, especially Tac. *Agr. 40: fictum et compositum*; Tac. *Hist. 2. 50: fabulosa et fictis*.

reproduction of the very analogous phrase in Tacitus' imitation of the Ciceronian passage.

This reminiscence of Tacitus is indeed slight, but the evidence would incline one to believe that it is deliberate. How then does the allusion function within the *Octavius*, and what are its implications for Minucius' use of sources? It would be hard to see anything beyond the desire for a variation in the wording of the principal source, which Minucius had, in this instance, the happy possibility of realizing through imitation of Tacitus' own parallel to Cicero's lines.³⁴ Thematic and structural functions can be excluded, since *Dial.* 12. 5, which Minucius reproduces, is so similar in theme and structure to the Ciceronian passage, which Minucius is clearly imitating both on the larger canvas and in detail. Delicate use of one source to modify details of a more extensive section taken from another source points up the complexity of design in this cento and the extremely light touch with which its author handles his classical models. In most cases such minute imitations of phraseology, though they are doubtless present and contribute their flavor to the whole, would be impossible to identify with any certainty; usually there is much greater divergence between the various sources than obtains here with the *De natura deorum* and the *Dialogus*.

As for other allusions to the *Dialogus* outside of the conclusion to the *Octavius*, M. Pellegrino notes a phrase in the proem describing Caecilius as an understudy in relation to Minucius. Pellegrino argues that the phrase is similar in theme and language to Tacitus' description of his own appren-

ticeship to Aper and Secundus, interlocutors in the *Dialogus*.³⁵

When one adds this passage to the others discussed, there is considerable evidence to support the conclusion that Minucius used the *Dialogus*. It is also possible to form some idea of the course which his imitation followed. While it is true that the *Octavius* and the *Dialogus* are works so diverse that common ground can be perceived only with close study, still Minucius' willingness to cull his material from a province so alien finds its justification in the extent to which the borrowed passages are transformed, pruned, and re-oriented in his apology. Minucius and Tacitus had a slender point of contact in the exaltation of their respective ages. From that point Minucius sets out, shaping the well-recognized Tacitean material to portray a Christian age of fulfillment by elevating Tacitus' antithesis of war and peace, by making Octavius' speech parallel to Maternus', by carefully joining themes in the conclusion with the romantic age sketched in the proem, all with only a scant word of direct citation. Within this complex of literary allusions, enough of the original remains to give a distinctive, and sometimes awkward, nuance to the Christian work. What Becker in particular writes of the devices by which Minucius transforms Ciceronian material—parallelism, interconnection, restructuring of sources—is thus valid for Minucius' use of Tacitus. If Cicero's *De natura deorum* remains the chief model for Minucius Felix, it is fitting that he also borrowed bits and pieces from a great historian's most Ciceronian work.

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34. Becker (n. 4), p. 91, n. 59, for modification of a basic source by another from a different author; also p. 8, n. 7.

35. M. Pellegrino, *M. Minucii Felicis Octavius con introduzione e commento* (Turin, 1947), p. 69: "... quos [Aprum et

Secundum] ego utrosque non modo in iudiciis studiose audiebam, sed domi quoque et in publico adsectabar..." (*Dial.* 2. 1); "non boni viri est, Marce frater, hominem domi forisque lateri tuo inhaerentem sic... deserere..." (*Oct.* 3. 1).