REMARKS ON THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF TACITUS, *ANNALS* 4. 57–67

I. THE EVIDENCE

BOOK 4 of the *Annals*, covering the years A.D. 23–8, traces the turning-point in the story of Tiberius' reign. Tacitus prepares us for disaster from the start. After a reference to *fortuna* in suitably Sallustian language (1. 1 *repente turbare fortuna coepit, saevire ipse*, cf. Sall. *C.* 10. 1) and the *deum ira in rem Romanam* (1. 2), we are told that the year A.D. 23 'initiated the deterioration in Tiberius' principate' (6. 1).[1] Modern historians are agreed that a decisive factor in this deterioration was the emperor's determination to leave Rome in A.D. 26, a move which Tacitus gloomily portends in chapter 41 (A.D. 25) and eventually records, in due chronological sequence, at 57. 1. Suetonius is our other main source for this momentous event, and it is instructive to compare his treatment of it with that of Tacitus.[2]

Suetonius		Tacitus
secessum Campaniae petit; [39]	(a)	tandem Caesar in Campaniam [57. 1, cf. abscessus below]
constanti et opinione et sermone paene omnium quasi neque rediturus umquam et cito mortem etiam obiturus. [39]	(b)	ferebant periti caelestium . . . ut reditus illi negaretur, unde exitii causa multis fuit, properum finem vitae coniectantibus vulgantibusque; [58. 2]
quod paulo minus utrumque evenit: [39]	(c)	mox patuit breve confinium artis et falsi, veraque quam obscuris tegerentur: [58. 3]
nam neque Romam amplius rediit, [39]	(d)	*nam* in urbem non regressurum haud forte dictum. [58. 3]
et *paucos post dies* iuxta Tarracinam (here follows the cave-disaster at Spelunca). [39]	(e)	ac forte *illis diebus* oblatum Caesari anceps periculum (here follows the cave-disaster at Spelunca). [59. 1–2]
peragrata Campania cum Capuae Capitolium, Nolae templum Augusti, quam causam profectionis *praetenderat*, dedicasset, [40]	(f)	at Caesar dedicatis per Campaniam templis, [67. 1, cf. 57. 1 tandem Caesar in Campaniam, *specie* dedicandi templa apud Capuam Iovi, apud Nolam Augusto.]
Capreas se contulit, [40]	(g)	Capreas se in insulam abdidit; [67. 1]
praecipue delectatus insula, quod . . . (here follows a description of the island). [40]	(h)	solitudinem eius *placuisse maxime*[3] crediderim, quoniam . . . (here follows a description of the island). [67. 2]

statimque revocante assidua obtes-   (*i*) nam coepto apud Fidenam amphi-
tatione populo propter cladem qua   theatro (here follows the amphi-
apud Fidenas . . . (here follows the   theatre-disaster). [62–3]
amphitheatre-disaster), [40]

transiit in continentem potestatem-   (*j*)
que omnibus adeundi sui fecit; [40]

tanto magis quod urbe egrediens *ne*   (*k*) quamquam *edicto* monuisset *ne quis*
quis se interpellaret *edixerat* ac toto   quietem eius inrumperet, [67. 1]
itinere adeuntis submoverat. [40]

regressus in insulam, *rei publicae*   (*l*) quanto intentus olim *publicas ad*
quidem *curam* usque adeo abiecit   *curas* . . . [67. 3]
ut . . . [41]

Suetonius gives us what is surely the most natural account of the journey.
Starting from Rome the imperial retinue took the Via Appia south as far as
Spelunca, where the cave collapsed during a banquet (cf. (*e*) above); thence
along the Appian Way inland to Capua and Nola for the dedication of
temples (cf. (*f*) above), and finally to Capri (cf. (*g*) above). Tacitus' account
is strikingly similar,[1] even in its circumstantial detail,[2] so much so that both
authors would appear to be using the same source. Yet there is one glaring
difference between the two accounts. Whereas Suetonius gives a continuous
narrative of the emperor's departure, running through from chapter 39,
Tacitus does not: having presented us from 57. 1 to 59. 2 with various initial
aspects of the journey in A.D. 26 (57 reasons and motives, 58. 1 the retinue,
58. 2–3 rumours, 59. 1–2 the Spelunca incident), he then breaks off quite
suddenly and does not return to the narrative of the journey until several
chapters later at 67. 1–3 (cf. (*f*) above),[3] a point which is only two sentences
away from the end of the *following* year, A.D. 27 (67. 4). It is highly unlikely
that the journey from Rome to Capri took this length of time,[4] quite apart
from the evidence to the contrary of Suetonius, who definitely states that the
collapse of the amphitheatre at Fidenae in A.D. 27 took place *after* Tiberius
had settled on Capri (chapter 40, cf. especially (*j*) above); Tacitus, because
he has interrupted the narrative of the journey so extensively, seems to imply

[1] Tacitus does not make it clear that the
episode at Spelunca (in (*e*) above) actually
took place on the journey, but his intro-
ductory phraseology (*illis diebus*) closely
resembles that of Suetonius, who *does* assign
the incident to the journey (*paucos post dies*)—
naturally, since Spelunca is in fact *en route*
from Rome to Capua and Nola. The reason
for Tacitus' obscurity on this point is doubt-
less to be attributed to his summary of the
reasons for Tiberius' departure, an 'insertion'
which somewhat disrupts the narrative (see
Syme, *Tacitus*, 695).

[2] Suetonius' slick comment at (*c*) above
contrasts strongly with Tacitus' typically
heavy philosophizing here, but the sub-
jectivism of both authors would seem to have
a common origin in some earlier source (see
how their next statements both commence
with *nam* (*d*)).

[3] E. Koestermann's note on 67. 1 (p. 196
of vol. ii of his commentary) is the only
helpful observation on the problem. On this
point he says: 'Tacitus begleitet nunmehr
den Kaiser auf seiner Reise nach Capri und
nimmt damit den cap. 58, 2 abgerissenen
Faden wieder auf' (he ought to have said
59. 2, cf. my n. 1 above).

[4] Although Tiberius had spent a whole
year in Campania before, A.D. 21–2 (cf. Tac.
Ann. 3. 31. 1–64. 1). Koestermann (loc. cit)
opts for an intermediate view: 'Da sich die
Erzählung in dem Zwischenstück über zwei
Jahre erstreckt, muß sich der Aufenthalt
in Kampanien über längere Zeit am Ende
des Jahres 26 ausgedehnt haben', a comment
which, if I understand it correctly, would
seem to be at variance with his next state-
ment (quoted below, p. 152 n. 3).

that the collapse of the amphitheatre (62–3, cf. (*i*) above) took place *before* Tiberius settled on Capri (67. 1).[1]

This presents us with a question. Why should Tacitus, a writer who on occasion can conjoin even the most protracted sequences of events,[2] here choose to interrupt a single and relatively short episode, one of the most decisive of the reign, by interposing an account of an amphitheatre-disaster at Fidenae and various other apparently irrelevant topics?

The latest commentator on the *Annals*, E. Koestermann, has rightly suggested that Tacitus did so 'aus kompositionellen Gründen',[3] and it is my purpose to demonstrate what this means.

II. THE STRUCTURE

We saw that the two points where Tacitus treats the journey to Capri are 57. 1–59. 2 and 67. 1–3. It is important to note that when Tacitus resumes his narrative of the journey in the latter section, he picks up several aspects of it which he had already mentioned in the earlier section. Thus the actual retirement at 67. 1 *se in insulam abdidit* recalls 57. 1 *procul urbe* and *abscessus*; the emperor's desire for solitude at 67. 2 *solitudinem eius placuisse maxime* recalls 57. 2 *secreto vitare coetus*;[4] the emperor's dereliction of duty and voluptuous living at 67. 3 *quanto intentus olim publicas ad curas, tanto occultior⟨es⟩ in luxus et malum otium resolutus* recall 57. 1 *saevitiam ac libidinem . . . locis occultantem*, 57. 2 *recondere voluptates*,[5] and much of the section 58. 3–59. 2 (on which see below, pp. 155 and 157 f.). Moreover, the actual wording with which Tacitus returns to the theme of the journey at 67. 1 (*at Caesar dedicatis per Campaniam templis*) picks up almost identically the wording with which he introduced the journey at 57. 1 (*tandem Caesar in Campaniam, specie dedicandi templa*). Tacitus' treatment of the journey has thus come round in a circular movement, assisted by the repetition of ideas and even of phraseology. This method of writing, familiar from archaic Greek onwards, has been called 'ring composition',[6] and though commonest perhaps in poetry,[7] is found also in historical prose. A classic example is the first 23 chapters of Thucydides,[8] but there is an excellent illustration in Tacitus' *Histories*, Book 3. Having described the burning of the temple

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[1] Koestermann again: 'Das cap. 67 Erzählte geht also zeitlich dem Einsturzunglück in Fidenae und dem Brand in Rom (cap. 62 ff.) voraus, wie denn auch mit *dedicatis per Campaniam templis* auf cap. 57, 1 zurückgegeiffen wird.'

[2] e.g. at *Ann.* 12. 31–40, on which see (most conveniently) F. R. D. Goodyear, *Tacitus, Greece & Rome*, New Surveys in the Classics no. 4 (1970), 24, who refers to W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der röm. Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1924), 371 ff.

[3] 'Daß aber der Historiker den zeitlichen Zusammenhang aus kompositionellen Gründen unterbrochen hat, geht aus Suet. Tib. 40 hervor, wo es heißt, Tiberius sei auf die Kunde von der Katastrophe in Fidenae noch einmal auf das Festland zurückgekehrt.'

[4] This particular phrase strictly refers to Tiberius' previous sojourn in Rhodes, but we are clearly meant to understand it as

referring to Capri also. Cf. next note.

[5] This phrase, together with the one that immediately precedes it in our texts (cf. previous note), perhaps ought to follow on straight after 57. 1 *saevitiam ac libidinem . . . locis occultantem*; cf. J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *CR* lxi (1947), 44 f., on the possibility of textual displacement.

[6] See A. Lesky, *History of Greek Literature* (1966), Index, s.v. 'Ring composition'.

[7] For Latin instances see G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (1968), Index, s.v. 'Ring composition'.

[8] See F. E. Adcock, *Thucydides and his History* (1963), 91 f., who refers to R. Katičič, 'Die Ringkomposition im ersten Buche des Thukydideischen Geschichtswerkes', *WS* lxx (1957), 179–96. Cf. also N. G. L. Hammond, 'The Arrangement of Thought in the Proem and in other parts of Thucydides I', *CQ* ii (1952), 127 ff.

on the Capitol, Tacitus writes (71. 4), *sic Capitolium clausis foribus indefensum et indireptum conflagravit*; there then follows what E. Fraenkel has called 'a funeral speech to the temple',[1] which lasts until the end of the next chapter, where Tacitus concludes (72. 3), *ea tunc aedes cremabatur*. Here it is two polar sentences which mark the limits of the ring composition, whereas in our example from the *Annals* the device is extended beyond this to include repetitions of ideas as well as of phraseology;[2] but in both cases the end result is the same—the intervening narrative appears to be 'framed' by such repetition.[3]

Being a primarily artistic device, ring composition lends itself to various elaborations. Its essence, as we have seen, consists of certain repetitions at the beginning and end of a section of narrative, and similar structural correspondences, often of a quite complicated nature, are regularly found *within* a section of narrative framed by ring composition.[4] I believe this to be true of the section which interrupts Tacitus' account of the emperor's journey to Capri, 59. 3–66. 2. It will be most easily explained if I start with chapters 62–3, the amphitheatre-disaster at Fidenae.

The actual *disaster* at Fidenae (which I shall call A^1) lasts from 62. 1 to 63. 2, where Tacitus concludes the episode by referring to the *generosity* of some leading men (B^1), adding that their relief work recalled the practice of the *old days* (C^1): 'patuere *procerum* domus, . . . veterum institutis similis, qui . . . *largitione* et cura sustentabant.' In these two chapters there are, as indicated, three main ideas. There is next a link-sentence at 64. 1 ('nondum ea clades exoleverat *cum* ignis violentia urbem ultra solitum adfecit, deusto monte Caelio'), introducing a second set of topics, a fire on the Caelian Hill at Rome and its sequel (64–5). The actual *disaster* (A^2) is quickly dismissed in a few words by Tacitus, who proceeds (64. 2) to record the *generosity* of the emperor (B^2); the part Tiberius played in the relief work was, says Tacitus, epitomized by the discovery of a statue of him unharmed among the ruins (64. 3), an incident which leads Tacitus into recalling a similar incident in the *old days* (C^2), which in turn develops into information on the appellation of the Caelian Hill in the *old days* (chapter 65; again C^2): 'munificentia iuverat . . . evenisse id olim . . . maiores . . . antiquitus'.

We have thus been presented with two parallel episodes, each constituting two chapters, and their parallelism is confirmed by another link-sentence at 66. 1 where the two incidents are deliberately grouped together to contrast with the account of delation which follows: 'sed *ut* studia *procerum* [B^1] et *largitio* principis [B^2] adversum casus solacium tulerant, *ita* accusatorum maior in dies et infestior vis sine levamento grassabatur.'[5] Within each of the two

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[1] *Kleine Beiträge*, ii. 594.

[2] On this extended type of ring composition compare the remarks of C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, ii. 453 f.

[3] Cf. W. A. A. van Otterlo, *Untersuchungen über Begriff . . . der griech. Ringkomposition* (1944), 3, 'Der ganze Abschnitt . . . umrahmt . . . wird', although the rest of his definition is more narrow than the type under discussion here. For sentence-framing in Latin prose (Livy), cf. H. Klingelhöfer, *Philol. Quart.* iv (1925), 321 ff.; in Latin poetry (Lucretius), P. H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina voluptas* (1970), 154. Reference may

also be made to J. J. Keaney, 'Ring Composition in Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*', *AJPh* xc (1969), 406–23, which I came across only after my paper had been accepted for publication and which has some useful introductory remarks for those who cannot get hold of van Otterlo's monograph.

[4] See the complicated internal chiastic structure explained by Fraenkel on Aesch. *Ag.* 205, and compare the structure of some of Catullus' longer poems (especially in Williams, *Tradition and Originality*).

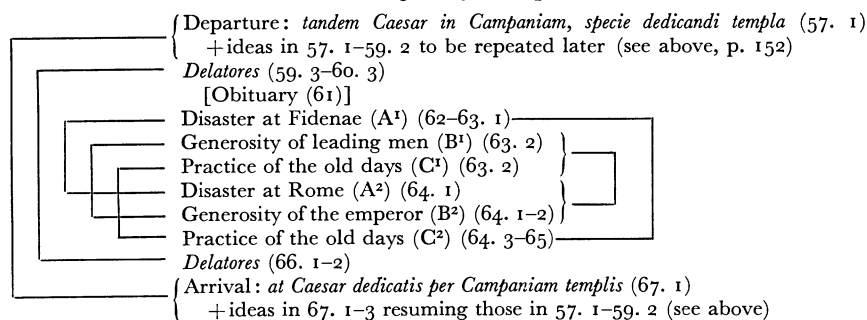[5] *procerum* here picks up *procerum* at 63. 2;

episodes we have been given parallel treatments of three main ideas (disaster, generosity, the old days); but whereas in the first episode the disaster is magnified and the leading men's generosity and the recollection of the past are only briefly mentioned, in the second episode the disaster and the emperor's generosity are only briefly mentioned, and the recollection of the past is extended by means of the antiquarian addition. The scale of treatment is therefore chiastic, in contrast to the parallel run of thought.

The link-sentence at 66. 1 firmly joins chapter 66 to the two preceding episodes, although its subject-matter (the *delatores*) has, of course, no correspondence in 62–5. But now that we have observed the highly artificial arrangement of 62–5, we are entitled to ask whether chapter 66 corresponds to anything earlier than 62, thus confirming the interrelated structure which seems to be emerging. (It naturally cannot refer to anything later than 67, since at section 1 of that chapter Tacitus returns to his narrative of the journey.)

The chapter which immediately precedes 62 can, I think, be omitted with justice from structural consideration. It is the final chapter of the year A.D. 26; it consists entirely of an obituary notice and is simply a conventional method used by the annalistic historian to conclude his account of a year's activities.[1] It is an insertion into the narrative which has no bearing on the surrounding structure one way or the other.[2]

We are therefore thrown back on the previous section of the narrative, which most certainly deals with the topic of *delatores* (59. 3–60. 3; cf. *accusatorum* at the very beginning of 59. 3 and *accusatorum* also in the link-sentence at 66. 1). Thus, in the same way as we saw that 57. 1–59. 2 corresponded to 67. 1–3, so now 59. 3–60. 3 corresponds to 66. 1–2. These correspondences, together with those between the disaster at Fidenae and the disaster on the Caelian Hill, are most clearly brought out with the help of a diagram.

Tiberius' Journey to Capri[3]

{ Departure: *tandem Caesar in Campaniam, specie dedicandi templa* (57. 1)
{ +ideas in 57. 1–59. 2 to be repeated later (see above, p. 152)
Delatores (59. 3–60. 3)
[Obituary (61)]
Disaster at Fidenae (A¹) (62–63. 1)
Generosity of leading men (B¹) (63. 2)
Practice of the old days (C¹) (63. 2)
Disaster at Rome (A²) (64. 1)
Generosity of the emperor (B²) (64. 1–2)
Practice of the old days (C²) (64. 3–65)
Delatores (66. 1–2)
{ Arrival: *at Caesar dedicatis per Campaniam templis* (67. 1)
{ +ideas in 67. 1–3 resuming those in 57. 1–59. 2 (see above)

largitio used of Tiberius here picks up verbally *largitione* at 63. 2, showing that the emperor's *munificentia*, like the activities of the *proceres* at 63. 2, is to be applauded as *veterum institutis similis*.

[1] See Syme, *Tacitus*, 312 f., 'Obituaries in Tacitus', *AJPh* lxxix (1958), 18 f., 30 f., (= *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (1970), 79 f., 89).

[2] Nevertheless there is a sort of correspondence between chapters 61 and 66:

each contrasts a pair of men, one of whom is *claris maioribus*, and in each case there is a distinguished *nobilis* who fails to live up to his family tradition. This surely confirms the care which Tacitus has put into the writing of this whole section.

[3] The correspondences indicated on the left-hand side of the list denote thematic links; those on the right denote scale of treatment.

From what I have said in this part of my discussion it should be clear that in this section of the narrative of Book 4 Tacitus has arranged his material with great care. Whether this arrangement is successful, however, is a question we must leave until we have considered in more detail the content of the narrative at this point.

III. THE CONTENT

My remarks on the content of these chapters will be restricted to two main sections, the first part of the journey (57. 1–59. 2) and the disaster at Fidenae (62–3).

First, the journey. Why did Tacitus not discuss the dedication of temples in Campania, only mentioning them briefly at 57. 1 and 67. 1? There would seem to be two reasons. The subject of temples (this time in Asia) had already occupied the two chapters preceding 57; since it would have been monotonous to proceed directly and in detail to temples in Campania, Tacitus simply reports the emperor's intention and the eventual *fait accompli* without intervening comment. This is in the interests of *variatio*. We should also note that all of chapter 57 consists in various motives for the emperor's departure for Campania, the dedication of temples being only one of them. Tacitus is in reality much more concerned with the alternative and less pleasing motives, such as Tiberius' tendency to vice. This is the historian's characteristic *insinuatio*, and it is continued into chapter 58 by means of a brilliant double paradox which emphasizes the emperor's dereliction of duty. At 58. 2–3 Tacitus employs two phrases which can be taken to mean that he visualizes Tiberius as an exile (*patria careret*) returning to assault the city which has evidently rejected him (*saepe moenia urbis adsidens*).[1] Tiberius is made to look like a reincarnation of Marius. Yet Tacitus also describes Tiberius as *libens*: he is a *willing* exile, *not* rejected by his citizens, and, since his real duty is that of *princeps* (cf. Tiberius' speech in the senate as reported at 38. 1), he is reprehensible on this count too. This is a typically Tacitean use of language.

Secondly, the collapse of the amphitheatre at Fidenae (62–3). Tacitus begins the episode by likening it to a military disaster (62. 1): *ingentium bellorum cladem aequavit malum improvisum*. He is preparing to treat the whole catastrophe in metaphorical terms derived from the sphere of warfare; more particularly, since it was a *building* that suffered the disaster (an amphitheatre), the most appropriate comparison within the general military sphere was that of a city under siege, where the collapse of buildings was to be expected. It is hardly surprising that Tacitus wanted to treat the episode at Fidenae in these terms. The besieging and capture of cities was an extremely popular *topos* with ancient historians,[2] so much so that references to beleaguered cities become proverbial for cruelty[3] and theorists like Quintilian issued detailed instructions

[1] For *patria carere* in this sense cf., e.g., Cic. *Att.* 3. 26, Val. Max. 3. 8. 4. For *adsidere* see the remark of Koestermann here, 'An unsere Stelle klingt also die Bedeutung „feindlich belagern" mit unter', and to his examples of the verb in this sense now add R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Latomus* xxviii (1969), 694 ff.

[2] See P. G. Walsh, *Livy* (1961), 191 ff.,

and compare Virg. *Aen.* 2. 746 *quid in eversa vidi crudelius urbe?*

[3] e.g. Cic. *Dom.* 37. 98 *ea quae capta urbe accidunt victis*, Sall. *C.* 52. 4 *capta urbe nihil fit reliqui victis*, *H.* 1. 30 *speciem captae urbis efficere*, Catull. 62. 24 *quid faciunt hostes capta crudelius urbe?*, Ov. *Met.* 12. 225 *captaeque erat urbis imago.*

on how the topic should be treated.[1] Quintilian envisages two main parts to the description. First, the actual collapse of the city—and here most of the details which he mentions are also used by Tacitus in his own description.[2] Secondly, the plundering of the vanquished and the taking of spoils, activities not so apposite for a disaster-area such as there was at Fidenae, so Tacitus omits them. But this is not to say that Tacitus' writing becomes any the less rhetorical or dramatic: the commentators observe how his elaboration of the confusion (63. 1 *et saepe certamen, si confusior facies, sed par forma aut aetas errorem adgnoscentibus fecerat*) finds its parallels in those two most rhetorical of writers, Curtius Rufus and the younger Seneca.[3]

Tacitus himself admitted the popularity of the 'captured-city *topos*',[4] and in view of the evidence there can be little doubt that he described the amphitheatre-disaster in such terms simply because the *topos* was so popular with authors and readers alike. Indeed his treatment is so rhetorical, as we have seen, that I am inclined to think he had no more source-material for this episode than is provided by Suetonius, our only other authority for the event (*Tib.* 40): *cladem qua apud Fidenas supra XX hominum milia gladiatorio munere amphitheatri ruina perierant*.[5] Having thus displayed his prowess at vivid description,

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[1] Quint. 8. 3. 67–70, cf. Hermogenes in *Rhet. Graec.* ed. Spengel, ii. 16, *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4. 39. 51 (and the parallels there cited by H. Caplan in the Loeb edn., p. 358 n.).

[2] Quintilian mentions: the crash of falling roofs (*ruentium tectorum fragor*), the confusion (*ex diversis clamoribus unus quidam sonus, aliorum fuga incerta*), the clinging to relatives (*alii extremo complexu suorum cohaerentes*), the wailing of women and children (*infantium feminarumque ploratus*), the cruelty of fate (*male usque in illum diem servati fato senes*). Tacitus mentions: the falling structure (*conferta mole, dein convulsa, dum ruit intus aut in exteriora effunditur, . . . praeceps trahit atque operit*), the confusion (*nequedum comperto quos illa vis perculisset, latior ex incerto metus*), the presence of women and children (*virile ac muliebre secus* [an impressive phrase, cf. H. Tränkle, *WS* lxxxi (1968), 128], *omnis aetas, . . . immensamque vim mortalium*), their wailing (*per diem visu, per noctem ululatibus et gemitu coniuges aut liberos noscebant*), the loss of relatives (*iam ceteri fama exciti, hic fratrem, propinquum ille, alius parentes lamentari*), the cruelty of fate (*quos principium stragis in mortem adflixerat, ut tali sorte, cruciatum effugere: miserandi magis quos abrupta parte corporis nondum vita deseruerat*).

[3] Curt. 8. 3. 13 *confuderat oris exsanguis notas pallor nec quis esset nosci satis poterat*, Sen. *Tro.* 1114 ff. *signa clari corporis et ora et illas nobiles patris notas confudit imam pondus ad terram datum*.

[4] In the famous digression in this book, 32. 1 (*expugnationes urbium*).

[5] This is a somewhat different appraisal from that of Koestermann, who says: 'Mit wenigen Strichen hat Tacitus so ein ausser-gewöhnlich lebendiges Bild der turbulenten Szenen entworfen. Die Erzählung, obwohl nicht frei von rhetorischen Elementen . . .'. Koestermann also invites us to compare Plin. *Ep.* 6. 20, on the eruption of Vesuvius. This letter was actually written to Tacitus, providing first-hand source-material for a part of his *Histories*, now lost. It would perhaps be attractive to imagine that when Tacitus came to write about Fidenae he re-utilized the account of Vesuvius which Pliny had sent on request a few years earlier. But this romantic view cannot be contemplated because Pliny, like his hero Cicero (*Att.* 2. 1. 1–2), elaborates even the factual fundamentals to make it look like 'real' (i.e. rhetorical) history (cf. H. W. Traub, 'Pliny's Treatment of History', *TAPA* lxxxvi [1955], 213 ff., esp. 229–31). Both Pliny and Tacitus, despite their different genres, are working within a common tradition. [An analogous case, also involving Pliny and Tacitus, can be found elsewhere in this book of the *Annals*. At *Ep.* 1. 20 Pliny writes to Tacitus on the question of style, saying (12): *plerumque parvae res maximas trahunt*. At chapters 32–3 Tacitus has a famous digression on historical style, saying (32. 2) that: *non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur*. The sentiments are identical; but they constitute a commonplace occurring first in Aristotle, *Politics* 5. 3. 1 (not 5. 4. 1, as Furneaux says, nor even 'Polyb. 5. 4. 1', as Koestermann curiously notes), and then in Caes. *BC* 3. 68. 1 and Liv. 27. 9. 1. Compare also Aeschin. *Tim.* 4 *fin.*]

Tacitus next proceeds to demonstrate his adroitness of *variatio* since, by coincidence, there was a second calamity in the same year, the fire on the Caelian Hill at Rome (64–5). Here Tacitus does not describe the disaster itself at all, for the same reason as he did not describe the temple dedications at 57. 1 (see above, p. 155), but concentrates instead on parallels with the past (64. 3–65), thus succumbing to another contemporary fancy, the love of antiquarianism.[1] It would appear that in these four chapters Tacitus is prepared to interrupt his account of the important journey to Capri for the sake of the rhetorical gratification of his readers.

But is Tacitus so frivolous a writer as this conclusion would imply? We agreed earlier that in this section of the narrative of Book 4 Tacitus has arranged his material with great care; we also agreed to leave in abeyance the question of whether his arrangement is successful (above, p. 155). We are now in a position to try and answer this question, and at the same time decide whether his method of composition at this point has been frivolous. The answer to these problems must lie with Tacitus' ability to link chapters 62–5—and, indeed, those other apparently irrelevant sections (59. 3–60. 3 and 66. 1–2)—to the narrative of the journey. In other words, we must determine fully what the above diagrammatic analysis of the narrative implies.

The incident in the cave at Spelunca, after which Tacitus actually interrupts his treatment of the journey (59. 1–2), plays an important part in answering these problems. When the cave collapsed, it was Sejanus who saved the emperor's life, and as a result of this action (says Tacitus) his influence with Tiberius increased and he could now intensify the delation against Nero Caesar (59. 2–3 *maior ex eo et, quamquam exitiosa suaderet, ut non sui anxius, cum fide audiebatur. adsimulabatque iudicis partes adversum Germanici stirpem . . .*). The first *delatores*-episode is thus made to arise out of the cave-incident. From a different angle, the same (it will be seen) may be said about the disaster at Fidenae.

We have noted (above, p. 155) how in chapters 57. 1–58. 3 Tacitus portrayed the emperor in an odious light as a lonely debauchee who has deserted his duty of *princeps*. The incident at Spelunca, which follows immediately, is simply a concrete example of this portrait. While he ought to have been engaged in the government at Rome, Tiberius instead was celebrating a banquet in the country (59. 2 *convivium celebrabant*); the banquet, however, was suddenly (*repente*) and violently (*obruit*) interrupted by a fall of rock, which killed some of the *ministri*, but not Tiberius, whose life was saved by Sejanus: the emperor, in other words, had his quite unjustifiable enjoyment cut short by disaster, but he nevertheless (undeservedly, many would have said)[2] escaped. We must now contrast this episode with the disaster at Fidenae. During Tiberius' reign, Tacitus claimed, there were but few public amusements (the word-order of 62. 2, *imperitante Tiberio procul voluptatibus habiti*, almost implies that Tiberius forbade them by law), with the result that when an event did take place (62. 1 *spectaculum celebraret*), it was overcrowded (cf. *avidi*, 62. 2); such overcrowding was asking for trouble, and when trouble came it was sudden (*improvisum*), violent (*conferta, convulsa, ruit, abrupta*), and all

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the worse for the excess of spectators (62. 2 *unde gravior pestis fuit*): many thousands, in fact, had their highly justifiable enjoyment cut short by disaster and a death which was as inescapable as it was undeserved. In these chapters, therefore, we are given a sickening contrast between what happens to the emperor and what happens to his people.[1] The disaster at Fidenae is thus linked to the foregoing narrative of the cave-incident in a highly dramatic fashion.

The second disaster, the fire on the Caelian Hill (64–5), has a more obvious *raison d'être*. This catastrophe too was an important event in the year A.D. 27, requiring the attention of the annalistic historian. What better than to make it parallel to the amphitheatre-disaster (which had to be included at some length, for reasons we have just seen), yet treat it in such a way that the narrative of two successive disasters did not bore the reader? This Tacitus has done quite brilliantly, joining the two episodes by a link-sentence at 64. 1, and then varying the scale of treatment chiastically to achieve *variatio* (see above, pp. 153 f. and 157).

Another link-sentence joins the second *delatores*-episode to both the disaster at Fidenae and the fire on the Caelian Hill (66. 1): here it is Tacitus' own characteristic *insinuatio* that enables him to bridge the gap between chapter 66 and the preceding narrative: 'sed *ut* studia procerum et largitio principis . . . solacium tulerant, *ita* accusatorum . . . vis sine levamento grassabatur'.[2] Finally, with repetitions of phraseology and ideas from the beginning of the narrative of the journey at 57, we are brought back at 67. 1–3 to our starting-point.

We saw that the obituary notice of chapter 61 was the only section which did not play an active part in this sequence of narrative from Book 4. It nevertheless contains an important statement which R. Syme has called 'Tacitus' testimony to his own quality':[3] *meditatio et labor in posterum valescit*. It seems fitting that the narrative I have just discussed provides such ample evidence of *meditatio* and *labor*.[4]

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[1] The pathos is driven home at 63. 1 where Tacitus tells us that the consequence of the collapse of the amphitheatre was even fewer games. This is no less ironical than pathetic: it almost vindicates the emperor's distaste for such spectacles.

[2] See above, p. 153, and compare, e.g., *A.* 1. 72. 2 *non tamen ideo faciebat fidem civilis animi; nam legem maiestatis reduxerat*, another typically Tacitean link-sentence.

[3] *Tacitus*, 624 n. 3.

[4] I am extremely grateful to Mr. R. H. Martin and Dr. T. J. Saunders for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.