

XXV.—Tacitus' Art of Innuendo

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This paper examines the technique by which Tacitus in the *Annals* conveys an impression for which as an historian he is not willing to take responsibility. Several literary devices by which this is achieved recur so regularly as to be characteristic features of his style. In the use of this technique there is a marked difference between the earlier and the later books: it appears constantly in the treatment of Tiberius, but only occasionally thereafter. The reason for the difference appears to be that the accepted tradition of the later Julio-Claudian emperors coincided with Tacitus' own prejudices, but that the recorded facts of Tiberius' reign failed at many points to support Tacitus' view. As an historian he would not suppress or misstate the facts, but as an artist he could guide the reader's interpretation of them.

Tacitus' picture of the early emperors, and in particular Tiberius, has been open to the most varied and contradictory interpretations. From the time of Voltaire his veracity as an historian has again and again been called into question.¹ Merivale regarded the *Annals* as almost wholly satire, and associated Tacitus as a writer most closely with Juvenal.² Boissier reinstated him as a sober historian who presented a picture of the Julio-Claudian emperors less lurid, on the whole, than that which has survived from other sources.³ Boissier's interpretation was in turn vigorously attacked by a number of scholars who condemned Tacitus on the evidence of his own inconsistencies and his glaring disregard, in his general interpretations, of the factual account presented in his own work.⁴ The most sweeping condemnation was made by Jerome, who regarded the Tacitean Tiberius as a fictitious character originating with Tacitus himself, invented in accordance with the devices taught and sanctioned by the rhetorical schools.⁵ The thesis that Tacitus himself

¹ See Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der roemischen Literatur*⁴ 438f.; G. Boissier, *Tacitus and other Roman Studies* (tr. W. L. Hutchinson, London, 1906) 87-92.

² Merivale, *History of the Romans under the Empire*, Vol. 7, ch. 64.342-346. Cf. Furneaux, *Annals of Tacitus*, Vol. I, 36f.

³ Boissier, *Tacitus*, 54-68.

⁴ T. S. Jerome, "The Tacitean Tiberius" *CPh* 7 (1912) 265-292; also *Aspects of the Study of Roman History* (London, 1923), chapters 15-17; J. S. Reid, "Tacitus as a Historian" *JRS* 11 (1921) 191-199; F. B. Marsh, "Tiberius and the Early Empire" *CJ* 24 (1928) 14-27; *The Reign of Tiberius* (Oxford, 1931).

⁵ *Loc. cit.* esp. 275-285.

invented the character of the tyrant Tiberius was easily disproved by references to earlier literature and to elements of Suetonius' account which are independent of the *Annals*.⁶ At the same time, while Jerome's view of Tacitus as a deliberate inventor of fiction has not been accepted,⁷ his analysis of the historian's use of recognized rhetorical technique was illuminating and has had an influence on subsequent interpretations.⁸

It is the purpose of the present paper to approach the study of Tacitus' rhetorical technique from another point of view. For in this, I believe, is to be found the explanation of the various and sometimes diametrically opposed estimates of Tacitus as an historian. It is by various devices of his style that Tacitus was able to make good his claim of writing, in the accepted historical tradition, *sine ira et studio*,⁹ and yet to leave etched on the reader's mind an ineradicable impression of tyranny and oppression under Tiberius. Certain of these devices have been noted by Jerome as traditional tricks of rhetoric.¹⁰ Certain others have been pointed out as inconsistencies or weaknesses in the author's method.¹¹ But when they are examined all together it becomes evident that they serve a consistent purpose: they are the resources employed by Tacitus the artist to produce an impression for which Tacitus the historian is not willing to take the responsibility.

First and foremost among these literary devices is the avoidance of direct accusations of crime. Up to the time of Tiberius' retirement to Capri¹² there is only one unequivocal criminal charge made against the emperor. This is the assassination of Agrippa Postumus, which is called, ominously, the first crime of the new

⁶ G. A. Harrer, "Tacitus and Tiberius" *AJPh* 41 (1920) 57-68; C. W. Mendell, "Dramatic Construction in Tacitus" *YClS* 5 (1935) 44-53; Boissier, *op. cit.* 97-103.

⁷ Cf. Marsh, *The Reign of Tiberius*, 6ff.; Mendell, *loc. cit.*

⁸ Cf. Reid, *JRS* 11 (1921) 191.

⁹ This claim of impartiality was a traditional feature of the preface to an historical work; cf. F. Klingner, *H* 63 (1928) 167-169; Mendell, *op. cit.* 3-9; J. Vogt, *Studien zu Tacitus, Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft IX* (Stuttgart, 1936) 1-6.

¹⁰ Jerome, *CPh* 7 (1912): p. 277, refusal to vouch for an improbable story; p. 278, implication of hypocrisyl; pp. 279-281, discrediting of facts hostile to the desired impression; pp. 279-282, attribution of motives, feelings and desires. Jerome, *Aspects of Roman History*, 324f. mentions also his use of rumor and of suggestions for which the historian does not vouch.

¹¹ Reid, *JRS* 11 (1921) 194-196, criticizes the presentation of alternative versions and of rumors with no statement of the historian's own estimate of them.

¹² From this point on, however, Tacitus is much more free in bringing charges against Tiberius; see *Ann.* 4.57; 67; 6.1 (7); 21 (27); 46 (52).

principate, "primum facinus novi principatus fuit Postumi Agrippae caedes."¹³ In his account of this murder Tacitus gives reasons for disbelieving Tiberius' pretense that he was acting on Augustus' orders, and states it as his own belief that Tiberius and Livia issued the order for Agrippa's death, Tiberius from fear, Livia because of the natural hatred of a stepmother. The account of Julia's death narrowly escapes being a forthright accusation of murder: "imperium adeptus extorrem, infamem et post interfectum Postumum Agrippam omnis spei egenam inopia ac tabe longa peremit, obscuram fore necem longinquitate exilii ratus." While the word "peremit" would ordinarily mean "killed," the context indicates that she was allowed to die in squalor and neglect, rather than actually assassinated or forcibly starved.¹⁴ Thus the statement stops short of a direct charge, and yet spares the emperor nothing of the burden of guilt.

This remarkable hesitation in making direct accusations is in strong contrast to Tacitus' willingness to ascribe motives, analyze reasons for action, reconstruct thoughts, feelings and intentions. He is willing to take responsibility likewise for statements about Tiberius' character, personality and habitual attitudes, so long as he is not obliged to commit himself on specific cases. Such interpretations appear constantly in the narrative, and are indeed the warp and woof of the whole fabric. This assumption of insight into the real intentions under the hypocritical exterior, the real character under the mask, is a feature of Tacitus' technique which has been most damaging to his credit as an historian.

While the pages of the *Annals* abound in imputation of evil motives, hypocrisy and dark purposes, Tacitus seldom remarks a good motive for any of Tiberius' actions. He does not fail to mention the emperor's praiseworthy deeds, which can be taken out of their context and gathered into a very creditable record.¹⁵ But the motives are either passed over in silence, with no comment on their significance as to the emperor's character, or, more often, they are in some way stultified by the context. This is done in several ways. Sometimes the effect of praise is cancelled by the implica-

¹³ *Ann.* 1.6. Even here Mendell notes, *op. cit.* 11, that Tacitus' choice of the word *facinus* may have been determined by its ambiguity: *facinus* originally meant simply an "act," but usage gradually established the connotation of "crime."

¹⁴ *Ann.* 1.53. This interpretation is accepted by Furneaux on *Ann.* 3.19.

¹⁵ See C. Mierow, "Two Roman Emperors" *CJ* 36 (1941) 259-274; cf. Vogt, *op. cit.* (see note 9) 15f.

tion of hypocrisy, as in *Ann.* 1.77, when Tacitus describes a free expression of discordant opinions in the senate, which took place, "silente Tiberio, qui ea simulacra libertatis senatui praebebat." In *Ann.* 1.81, the emperor's expressed willingness to consider all who applied for nomination to office is recorded with the comment: "speciosa verbis, re inania aut subdola."¹⁶ Sometimes a praiseworthy action is treated as exceptional, as in *Ann.* 3.69, where Tacitus follows the summary of an excellent speech by the emperor with the comment: "quanto rarius apud Tiberium popularitas, tanto laetioribus animis accepta."^{16a} Most frequently of all a word of praise is immediately outweighed by opprobrium, so that the good is made to seem negligible in the welter of evil. For example, *Ann.* 1.72 records Tiberius' refusal of honors and honorific titles, but Tacitus continues: "non tamen ideo faciebat fidem civilis animi; nam legem maiestatis reduxerat . . .," and he takes this occasion to describe "quanta Tiberii arte" this evil crept into the state and finally flamed up and consumed everything. Noteworthy instances of this method are to be found in the summary of popular estimates of Tiberius at his accession, where two phrases in his praise, "maturum annis, spectatum bello," are outweighed by six lines of the severest criticism of his character and his whole previous life;¹⁷ and likewise in the historian's own estimate of Tiberius' reign, in which a few words of praise are not only lost in the succeeding five lines of condemnation but are discredited by the implication of hypocrisy.¹⁸

Tacitus has several methods of escaping the onus of bringing charges against Tiberius without lessening the impression of his guilt. Accusations or criticisms are frequently not made in the historian's own person but quoted as hearsay, popular opinion, or common knowledge. Criticism of this practice is disarmed by an explicit statement of Tacitus' position in the treatment of hearsay. He declares it his policy to record the account found in the best authors, but at the same time he feels that he should not fail to include the rumors that have survived.¹⁹ As an example he cites

¹⁶ This device is noted by Jerome as a recognized rhetorical method of dealing with facts hostile to the impression which the writer or speaker wishes to produce. For other examples, cf. *Ann.* 3.56; 60; 4.8-9.

^{16a} Cf. also *Ann.* 1.75; 2.37; 4.31.

¹⁷ *Ann.* 1.4.

¹⁸ *Ann.* 6.51 (57). Cf. also 3.28; 29; 4.6; 31; 66; 6.17 (23)-18 (24).

¹⁹ *Ann.* 4.10-11.

the rumor, afterward proved to be false, that Sejanus tricked Tiberius into offering Drusus a poisoned cup. The story is told as a warning to the reader, Tacitus says, not to be deceived by improbable tales of current gossip, which were easily believed at the time because of the popular hatred of Tiberius and Sejanus.²⁰

The most famous example of a criminal charge based purely on hearsay is in the account of the death of Augustus, in *Ann.* 1.5. When Augustus fell ill there were some who suspected foul play on the part of Livia, "quidam scelus uxoris suspectabant." The reason for the suspicion was the rumor that Augustus had secretly visited Agrippa Postumus in exile.^{20a} While Tacitus declines to vouch for either rumor or suspicion, "utcumque se ea res habuit," he gives some color of plausibility to the story by noting that Tiberius and Livia did keep Augustus' death a secret until his stepson could be presented as emperor.

Almost equally famous are the summaries of popular opinion about Augustus and Tiberius recorded in the opening chapters of the *Annals*. With every appearance of impartiality Tacitus records both praise and blame, and himself states no preference between the contradictory estimates. But in each case the favorable comments are more meagre²¹—in the case of Tiberius confined to two brief phrases—and the unfavorable judgments are given in much greater detail, are placed last, and allowed to stand, with no correction, in the position of a final summing up. This is not "babble" indiscriminately repeated, as it is termed by Reid.²² It is a collection of hearsay carefully selected and arranged to throw discredit on the principate from its inception, designed to set the stage for the drama that is to follow.²³

While this use of hearsay to establish an impression is particularly prominent in the introductory chapters, where it serves to create the atmosphere for the ensuing account of Tiberius' reign,

²⁰ Cf. *Ann.* 3.19, where Tacitus warns the reader that the truth is hard to arrive at among the conflicting rumors, as many are prone to accept hearsay as fact, others to make any story worse. Again in *Ann.* 4.54 Tacitus records the rumor, which he gives good reasons for disbelieving, that Tiberius planned to poison Agrippina. See also *Ann.* 1.76.

^{20a} M. P. Charlesworth, *AJPh* 44 (1923) 145-157, discusses the origin of the rumor, and the sources upon which Tacitus is probably drawing at this point; cf. also *CR* 41 (1927) 55-57.

²¹ Cf. Vogt, *op. cit.* (see note 9) 14.

²² *Op. cit.* (see note 4) 196.

²³ Cf. Mendell, *op. cit.* (see note 6) 8f.

it appears frequently throughout the first six books of the *Annals*. For example, in the consulship of Tiberius and Drusus, Tacitus records two occasions, during the emperor's absence from the city, when trials for treason were suppressed. Both were set down to the credit of Drusus, for people believe that by his administration in the city "secreta patris mitigari." Even Drusus' gaiety was pardoned. For it was better, everyone thought, to live like that than like Tiberius, alone and distracted by no pleasures, to keep sad vigil and brood over evil, "maestam vigilantiam et malas curas exerceret."²⁴

In other cases accusations are put into the mouth of some individual. In *Ann.* 4.19 we are told that C. Silius, the defendant in the trial for treason, made no secret of knowing by whose wrath the charge had been instigated, "cuius ira premeretur." In the person of Arruntius, charged with treason in 37 A.D.,²⁵ Tacitus gives a sweeping condemnation of the whole reign of Tiberius and a dark prophecy for the next. His only regret, Arruntius told his friends who were urging him to delay his suicide, was that he had so long endured the perils and the mockery of subjection first to Sejanus, then to Macro. Granted that the emperor had little more time to live, what better was there to hope from his successor? Gaius was inexperienced and had been brought up by the worst example, "pessimis innutritum." Was he likely to be any better than Tiberius, with Macro as his guide—Macro, who had been chosen to destroy Sejanus, qualified only by being worse than Sejanus? This is one of the rare instances in which the historian expresses his own approval of the speech: "documento sequentia erunt bene Arruntium morte usum."²⁶

A third device is to state an accusation as an alternative for which the historian takes no responsibility. The most famous example of this is the quasi-charge against Livia in *Ann.* 1.3. Tiberius came into prominence as a possible heir to the principate, Tacitus tells us, only after the death of Agrippa and after Gaius and Lucius had died, one on the way to Spain and the other while returning from Armenia, either by unlucky chance or by the treachery of their stepmother: "mors fato propra vel Liviae

²⁴ *Ann.* 3.37. See also *Ann.* 4.28; 6.19 (25), and numerous examples from the account of Germanicus' death, cited below, pp. 393–396.

²⁵ *Ann.* 6.48 (54).

²⁶ For other examples of this device, cf. *Ann.* 4.70; 6.26 (32); 38 (44), and see below, pp. 394f., 398.

novercae dolus abstulit." Ordinarily Tacitus expresses no preference between the alternatives presented, but occasionally some trace of innuendo inclines the reader toward the worse interpretation. The illness of Livia in 22 A.D. brought Tiberius back to the city—an indication, says Tacitus, that they were up to that time on good terms or that he was still concealing his hatred, "sincera adhuc . . . concordia sive occultis odiis."²⁷ Here, as Furneaux comments, by going on to tell the reason for the hatred between Tiberius and his mother, Tacitus intimates his preference for the second alternative. *Ann.* 6.23 (29) records the suicide of Asinius Gallus, whether voluntary or under compulsion it was uncertain. But when Caesar was asked if Gallus might be accorded burial he did not blush, Tacitus tells us, to grant permission, "non erubuit permittere."²⁸

Most remarkable of all is the device of giving credence to such charges,—presented originally in the form of rumors, quotations, or unsupported alternatives,—by referring to them later in the narrative as if they were established fact. They are thus tacitly accepted, in spite of the fact that they have never been vouched for, and the impression which they create is powerfully implemented. The insinuations against Livia offer the best example of this artifice. In *Ann.* 1.3 Tacitus states no preference between the alternative explanations of the death of Gaius and Lucius: "mors fato propria vel Liviae novercae dolus abstulit." In *Ann.* 1.10 it is reported as common hearsay that Livia had been a grievous stepmother to the house of the Caesars, "gravis domui Caesarum noverca." This is still only rumor, but "noverca" and "domui Caesarum" clearly refer to her responsibility for the death of Gaius and Lucius as well as to the murder of Agrippa Postumus. In *Ann.* 3.19 Tacitus states that Vipsania died, the only one of Agrippa's children who died a natural death, "miti obitu"; for all the others were either unquestionably murdered or were believed to have perished by poison or starvation, "nam ceteros manifestum ferro vel creditum est veneno aut fame extinctos." This must refer to Agrippa Postumus (manifestum ferro), to Gaius and Lucius, and to Julia, who

²⁷ *Ann.* 3.64.

²⁸ For other examples of Tacitus' use of this device, cf. *Ann.* 1.10; 16; 53; 2.42; 6.1(7), and see below pp. 390, 392, 396. There are instances, however, which seem to support Boissier's belief that Tacitus' citation of alternative versions is an honest effort to present all the evidence, cf. *Ann.* 1.53; 80; 6.38 (44); 45 (51).

died "inopia et tabe longa." Furneaux comments that Tacitus had not stated that Julia died by violence. Nor indeed, one might add, did he state that Gaius and Lucius were done away with by the treachery of their stepmother. This is the loophole left by the expression "creditum est." But the sweeping statement that Vipsania is the only one to have died a natural death quietly assumes the authenticity of all four murders.²⁹ Finally, in the summary of Julia's life in *Ann.* 4.71 Tacitus states that Livia aided her stepchildren in adversity, though she secretly schemed against them while they were prospering, "florentes . . . cum per occultum subvertisset."

Most subtle and most constantly employed of all Tacitus' resources is the innuendo which depends purely on choice and arrangement of words, or on clever juxtaposition of ideas; and this, like his interpretation of character and motives, is so much a part of the fabric of the *Annals* as to defy analysis in detail. The story of King Archelaus of Cappadocia,³⁰ which is not among the best known examples, illustrates the subtlety and the variety of the technique. Archelaus was hated by Tiberius because he had not shown him courtesy during his stay in Rhodes. When Tiberius had come into power he lured (elicit) Archelaus to Rome through letters of his mother, which made no secret of her son's enmity but promised clemency if he would come to the capital. The king, unaware of treachery (ignarus doli) or fearing to show any suspicion, hastened at once to the city, where he was received harshly by the emperor (immiti a principe) and was accused in the senate. Not because of the charges which were invented (non ob crimina quae fingeantur), but because of worry and the weariness of old age, and because kings are not accustomed to being treated as equals, much less as inferiors, he ended his life "sponte an fato." The impression of Tiberius' guilt is implicit in every line of the brief narrative, though nowhere can there be found any actual charge. The whole context, the implication of treacherous intent in "elicit" and "ignarus doli," the assumption of falsity in "crimina quae fingeantur," inevitably leave in the reader's memory the condemnation which Tacitus actually did not sponsor.

²⁹ Similarly, Tiberius' life of debauchery in Rhodes, mentioned as a rumor in *Ann.* 1.4, is referred to as a fact in the analysis of his reasons for retirement to Capri, *Ann.* 4.57, "et Rhodi secreto vitare coetus, recondere voluptates insuerat."

³⁰ *Ann.* 2.42.

A few incidents which are told in greater detail illustrate the interplay and combined effect of all the devices by which Tacitus leads the reader to make the accusations which the historian is unwilling to make. The most important is the story of Germanicus. The final summing up of the whole account, of Germanicus' recall from Germany, his commission in the East, his illness and death, and the subsequent trial of Piso on the charge of murder, is a model of impartiality. After Piso's suicide and the acquittal of his wife Plancina, Tacitus comments, in *Ann.* 3.19: "This was the end of vengeance for the death of Germanicus, which gave rise to widely divergent opinions (*vario rumore iactata*) both at the time and later. For so hard it is to arrive at the truth, since many are prone to accept hearsay as fact, others to make any story worse; and these difficulties increase with greater distance from the event." This final summary offers no solution and fixes no guilt.

In the narrative as it is presented, likewise, there is never any direct accusation. But Tacitus feels entirely free to describe Tiberius' feelings toward Germanicus and to ascribe motives. While Tiberius was still pretending reluctance to accept the sovereignty he none the less took immediate control of the guards and the armies. This, Tacitus states, was because of his fear lest Germanicus might assume control.³¹ A little later Tiberius is described as tortured by Germanicus' popularity with the army. He reported Germanicus' achievements to the Senate, saying much about his valor, but in a style which Tacitus calls "*in speciem verbis adornata*" and not with any conviction of sincerity.³² The report of Agrippina's vigorous activity in the mutinous army, recorded in *Ann.* 1.69, cut still more deeply into Tiberius' heart, "*Tiberii animum altius penetravit.*" There follows here a passage in indirect discourse which apparently reproduces the emperor's reflections on the reports—that favor was being courted not purely as a support against the enemy; that her bringing up Caligula as a mascot of the army was no accident; that this woman had been able to calm the mutinous troops, when the name of the princeps had no effect. All these suspicions were aggravated and magnified by Sejanus, who, we are told, being well acquainted with Tiberius' temperament, stored up the grievance in order to pay it off with interest later. By reproducing the whole soliloquy Tacitus focuses

³¹ *Ann.* 1.7.

³² *Ann.* 1.52.

attention on Tiberius' jealousy, and by mentioning, as it were in passing, an ominous trait in his character conveys the suggestion that it will appear in later events.

The impression of ill will toward Germanicus is implemented by describing Germanicus himself as anxious because of the concealed hatred of his uncle and grandmother, which was the more implacable because unfounded, "anxius occultis in se patruī aviaequē odiis, quorum causae acriores, quia iniquae."³³ Tacitus goes on to imply that the only grounds for the hatred were his father's popularity and his own geniality and *civile ingenium*, which gave rise to the popular hope that if he were emperor he might restore liberty.

Later, in 16 A.D., when he was recalled from Germany and his request for another year's command refused, Germanicus did not delay, although, Tacitus says, he knew that the reasons were fictitious and that he was being recalled because of jealousy on the very eve of the completion of his achievement, "per invidiam partō iam decori."³⁴ In *Ann.* 2.5 Tacitus states that disturbances among the Parthians were by no means displeasing to Tiberius, for they gave a pretext to recall Germanicus from the legions familiar and devoted to him, and to place him in a strange province, subject to treachery as well as the chances of fortune, "dolo simul et casibus obiectaret." This implies, if not Tiberius' responsibility for Piso's plot against Germanicus, at least a knowledge and approval of it. The next mention of troubles in the East brings the closest approach to a direct accusation of the emperor. Not having succeeded in convincing the state of his sincerity in the honors conferred on Germanicus at his return from Germany, Tiberius decided to attack him under the guise of doing him honor, and invented opportunities or took advantage of those which chance offered, "amoliri . . . specie honoris statuit struxitque causas aut forte oblatas arripuit."³⁵ This is less than an actual charge only because of the somewhat vague meaning of "amoliri."

By such descriptions of the emperor's feelings and motives, the impression is by now well established that Tiberius' hatred of his adopted son is implacable and his intentions of the worst. The impression is strengthened by several statements which are no more than vague insinuations. In *Ann.* 2.26, in telling of the recall of

³³ *Ann.* 1.33.

³⁴ *Ann.* 2.26.

³⁵ *Ann.* 2.42.

Germanicus, Tacitus states that the war could have been finished in a year if only he had been allowed to complete his work,—a statement which, as Furneaux comments, is entirely unsupported by the evidence. But, Tacitus continues, Tiberius admonished him in repeated letters to come home to the triumph which had been decreed. The verb is “monebat,” which, combined with the adversative and with the hint in Tiberius’ next message that some glory should be left for his brother to win, conveys a vague threat rather than a welcome. For the purposes of his mission to the East, according to *Ann.* 2.43, the emperor gave Germanicus “maius imperium” in the provinces. But, Tacitus counters, he removed from the governorship of Syria Creticus Silanus, a kinsman of Germanicus, and assigned the province to Cn. Piso, a man of violent nature and a son of the Piso who had fought on the side of Brutus and Cassius. The implication of hostile intent lies entirely in the adversative, which balances the two statements against each other. There is perhaps no more than a vague sense of impending disaster in Tacitus’ description of an undercurrent of dread (*occulta formido*) in the popular rejoicing at Germanicus’ triumph. People remembered that Drusus’ popularity had been by no means a blessing, that Marcellus, the darling of the populace, had been snatched away in the flower of his youth, and that the favorites of the Roman people were unlucky and short-lived.³⁶ This has, however, a sinister implication, in view of the constant insistence on Tiberius’ jealousy of Germanicus’ popularity.

The rest of the case against Piso and Tiberius is built up on the evidence of hearsay, of Piso’s opinions, of Germanicus’ beliefs. In *Ann.* 2.43 Tacitus states that Piso himself believed that he had been put in charge of the province as a check on Germanicus’ ambitions, “ad spes Germanici coercendas.” Some believed (*credidere quidam*) that Tiberius had given secret instructions to Piso. But Tacitus is certain (*haud dubie*) only that Augusta had filled Plancina with feminine rivalry of Agrippina, “aemulatione muliebri.” And he takes this context to describe the keen partisanship which was splitting the household into the factions of Germanicus and Drusus, and to mention the hostility of Tiberius which increased the general sympathy for the former. After their arrival in the province, Plancina’s overbearing attitude toward Germanicus and Agrippina was imitated by the soldiers, because there was a whispered rumor

³⁶ *Ann.* 2.41.

that all this was by no means displeasing to the emperor, "quod haud invito imperatore ea fieri occultus rumor incedebat."³⁷

During Germanicus' illness Piso withdrew to Seleucia, awaiting the course of the disease.³⁸ "Opperiens aegritudinem" may be taken to imply that he had reason to expect it to be serious. At any rate, Tacitus goes on to tell how Germanicus' condition was aggravated by the conviction that he had been poisoned by Piso, and to state as a fact that there were found in the house *defixiones* and other magic charms by which souls are believed to be sentenced to the underworld. Germanicus' belief in Piso's treachery is elaborated by an imagined soliloquy in which he dreads what may become of his poor wife and innocent children if he himself succumbs to the murderous plots of his enemy.³⁹ In the next chapter Tacitus quotes in full, in direct discourse, Germanicus' accusation of Piso. He describes himself as "scelere Pisonis et Plancinae interceptus, . . . insidiis circumventus." In begging his friends to avenge him he mentions, but leaves open, the question of the emperor's implication in the crime: the tale that Piso had received criminal instructions, he says, will be disbelieved—or will be disapproved, "fingentibusque scelestam mandata aut non credent homines aut non ignoscent." Germanicus' suspicion that Tiberius may be behind the plot is one step further removed from Tacitus' own responsibility. In *Ann.* 2.72 we are told that after this speech to his friends Germanicus talked secretly with Agrippina. He was believed to have told her of his fears of the emperor's connivance, "metum ex Tiberio." It is uncertain, Tacitus continues in *Ann.* 2.73, whether Germanicus' body, cremated at Antioch, showed any traces of poison; for reports were contradictory, depending on the partiality of the reporters.

Having thus established the suspicion of poison by stating Germanicus' belief in it, and his own impartiality by stating the lack of any evidence for it, Tacitus strengthens the implication by a further incident. At the demand of *accusatores* in Rome who were preparing the case against Piso, the new governor of Syria sent back to Rome a certain Martina, infamous in the art of poisoning and a great friend of Plancina.⁴⁰ Beyond the juxtaposition of

³⁷ *Ann.* 2.55.

³⁸ *Ann.* 2.69.

³⁹ *Ann.* 2.70.

⁴⁰ *Ann.* 2.74. Later it is recorded (*Ann.* 3.7) that this Martina died suddenly at Brundisium on her way to Rome and, while she carried poison, her body showed no

these two phrases characterizing Martina, Tacitus makes no accusation.

The connivance of Tiberius and Livia in Germanicus' death is stated in the person of Domitius Celer, a friend of Piso, who reminds him that he has in his support "Augustae conscientia" and "Caesaris favor, sed in occulto."⁴¹ It is assumed likewise in the reflections of Piso, who was glad enough, Tacitus says, to stand trial before Tiberius, mindful that the emperor was staunch in scorning gossip and also was involved in the machinations of his mother, "conscientiae matris innexum."⁴²

The most open accusations of Tiberius and Livia are quoted from hearsay. After Germanicus' death people compared him with Alexander the Great: as a soldier he was no less than Alexander, even though he had been deprived of the glory of completing the conquest of Germany; and like Alexander he had met his death in a foreign land by the treachery of his own people, "suorum insidiis externas inter gentes."⁴³ "Suorum" could refer to Piso and Plancina, but few would fail to think of Tiberius and Livia.⁴⁴ In *Ann.* 2.82 a resumé of the rumors and gossip at Rome is presented with a warning—which establishes Tacitus' position of impartiality but does not diminish the effect—that in the bitterness of feeling at the time everything was exaggerated, "aucta in deterius." People were saying that this, doubtless, was the reason he had been sent to the East; that this was the reason Piso had been put in command of the province; this was the meaning of those secret conferences between Augusta and Plancina. The rulers, they said, had not been pleased with ability in their sons, and they were murdered because they wanted to restore liberty to the people. *Ann.* 3.11 is less specific in detail but scarcely less condemnatory. At the time of the trial of Piso, Tacitus states, the people were more open than they had ever been in whispered accusations, "occultae vocis." Everyone was curious to see whether the emperor would be able successfully to hide his feelings, "satin cohiberet ac premeret sensus

evidence of any. This statement is so equivocal in its relation to the whole account that there is no agreement as to what Tacitus actually meant to imply; cf. Furneaux, *ad loc.*

⁴¹ *Ann.* 2.77.

⁴² *Ann.* 3.10.

⁴³ *Ann.* 2.73.

⁴⁴ There is an implied accusation also in the popular sympathy for Agrippina, returning from the east uncertain of vengeance, anxious for her own and her children's safety (*Ann.* 2.75).

suos.”⁴⁵ At the trial, reported in *Ann.* 3.14, the judges were implacable, the emperor because Piso had tried illegally to seize control of a province, the senate because it was not convinced that he was innocent of Germanicus’ death, “numquam satis credito sine fraude Germanicum interisse.”

Finally in *Ann.* 3.16 Tacitus collects the remaining rumors, for the sake of completeness, although he cannot vouch for their truth. He had heard from his elders that Piso had in his possession a document, the contents of which he did not disclose. Piso’s friends said that it consisted of letters from Tiberius with orders against Germanicus, and that he intended to accuse the emperor but was bought off by the promises of Sejanus. They also said that Piso did not commit suicide, but was secretly executed, “immisso percussore.” When Tiberius at his mother’s request spoke in Plancina’s defense,⁴⁶ everyone who had any sense of justice seethed with indignation, “secreti questus . . . ardescebant,” to think that a grandmother could look with favor on the murderess of her grandson, that the emperor and Augusta saw fit to defend Plancina, so that she might turn her arts of poisoning against Agrippina and satiate the unnatural grandmother and uncle with the blood of the whole house.

To this weight of calumny quoted from popular opinion, hearsay and gossip, Tacitus adds a few comments on his own authority. In *Ann.* 3.3 he reports that Tiberius and Livia absented themselves from the public mourning for Germanicus, thinking it not befitting their majesty, or in order that their hypocrisy might not be visible to the scrutinizing eyes of the public, “an ne omnium oculis vultum eorum scrutantibus falsi intellegentur.” Tacitus goes on to mention that Germanicus’ mother Antonia likewise was absent, possibly because she was ill, or overcome with grief. He himself could more easily believe (facilius crediderim) that she was prevented from appearing by Tiberius and Augusta, so that people would assume that they were affected with equal grief. While an alternative was offered—with the usual appearance of impartiality—in accounting for the absence of Tiberius and Livia, this last statement assumes the truth of the worse interpretation. There is an unusually effective bit of innuendo in Tacitus’ description of the mourning of the populace. People grieved for Germanicus, he says in *Ann.* 3.4,

⁴⁵ Cf. also *Ann.* 3.2.

⁴⁶ *Ann.* 3.17; cf. 3.15, “secretis Augustae precibus veniam obtinuit.”

"promptius apertiusque quam ut meminisse imperitantium crederes."

A final reference to Plancia in *Ann.* 6.26 (32) records her death and gives a brief summary of her life: though openly pleased at Germanicus' death, she had been protected by the pleas of Augusta no less than by her hostility to Agrippina; and at length by her own hand she paid the penalty of death, long delayed rather than undeserved, "sera magis quam immerita." As in other instances, this later reference is more unequivocal in its condemnation than any statement Tacitus was willing to make in the course of the narrative.

Later references to Tiberius' hatred of Germanicus and Agrippina serve to keep before the readers' mind the suspicion of his guilt. In *Ann.* 4.1 Tacitus describes the ninth year of Tiberius' reign as "compositae rei publicae, florentis domus," explaining the second phrase by a parenthesis, "nam Germanici mortem inter prospera ducebat."⁴⁷ A final curse uttered by the young Drusus just before his own death assumes Tiberius' full responsibility for the death of Germanicus.⁴⁸

For an historian who refused in the final summing up to pronounce any judgment on the case, Tacitus has created a very convincing impression of jealousy, treachery and crime,—an impression built up by attribution of evil motives, by accusations put in the mouth of Germanicus, by quotation of statements from various individuals, by recounting of hearsay and rumors, and by later references which assume the truth of earlier implications.

The account of Drusus' death illustrates in much briefer compass the same interplay of the various resources of Tacitus' technique.⁴⁹ The initial statement is that Drusus died, after having kept himself alive for nine days by eating the stuffing of his mattress. The verb used is "extinguitur," which could be applied to any kind of death, natural or otherwise, but the context makes it clear that he was forcibly starved. Tacitus quotes his sources (tradidere quidam) to the effect that Macro had orders, in case Sejanus should incite a revolt, to take the youth from prison and put him in command to suppress the rebellion. The construction then changes to the indicative: "saevitiam quam paenitentiam maluit." In this clause

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ann.* 4.18, where friendship for Germanicus is given as the reason for the downfall of Silius and Sabinus; also *Ann.* 4.19.

⁴⁸ *Ann.* 6.24 (30); see below, p. 398.

⁴⁹ *Ann.* 6.23 (29)–24 (30).

Macro is apparently the subject of the verb and is accordingly the author of the final order to destroy the prince.⁵⁰ Tiberius' responsibility is implied, however, in the next sentence, which begins: "quin et invectus in defunctum." Tiberius was so shameless as to attack him before the senate even after his death, and to order the reading of an informer's record of all his acts. This insult would have seemed incredible, Tacitus comments, if it had not been outdone by the insolence of the centurion Attius, whose letter to the senate boasted of his own cruelty to the prince and reported in detail Drusus' dying agony and his last imprecations against the emperor. In the words of the dying Drusus Tiberius is accused of having murdered his adopted son, his daughter-in-law,⁵¹ his grandchildren, and having filled the whole house with slaughter.

The final condemnation takes the form of a reconstruction of the terrified reflections of the senators, who were seized with amazement and alarm that Tiberius, once so clever and secretive in concealing his crimes, had come to such a degree of assurance as to reveal openly the picture of his own grandson struck down by the hands of centurions and slaves, begging in vain for the mere means of sustaining life. By the end of this sentence the reader almost inevitably condemns Tiberius not only for the death of Drusus but for all the crimes suggested by the ominous phrase "callidum olim et tegendis sceleribus obscurum."

In the last six books of the *Annals* Tacitus' technique of creating an impression for which he declines to accept responsibility appears only rarely. Claudius' wives and his infamous successor are condemned without hesitation, indeed their wickedness is dwelt on with all the resources of rhetoric at the writer's command. The familiar devices for avoiding direct accusation come into service, however, at a few important points in the narrative.

The most striking instance is the account of the fire of 64 A.D., which Suetonius does not hesitate to ascribe to the deliberate com-

⁵⁰ The subtlety of Tacitus' technique is excellently illustrated in the difficulty of interpretation offered by the verb *maluit*. That its subject is Macro is indicated by the statement that Macro had charge of the young prince, and also by the immediately preceding clause, which mentions a rumor about Caesar as if he were not involved in the action of the verb. The next paragraph, however, opens with an action by Tiberius, "quin et invectus in defunctum," and this makes it possible to take Tiberius as the subject of *maluit*.

⁵¹ Agrippina was still alive at this time. The accusation must therefore be, as Furneaux comments, in anticipation, or must imply that the imprisoned Drusus assumed that she had been killed.

mand of Nero.⁵² Tacitus leaves the reader with no less vivid impression of Nero's guilt, but he achieves this without stating his own judgment on the question. As to the cause of the fire he declines to choose between two alternatives, "forte an dolo principis incertum (nam utrumque auctores prodidere)." ⁵³ The charge against Nero rests almost entirely on rumors and accusations made by others. The only detail which the historian states as a fact is that no one dared to fight the fire, because there were some who prohibited any attempts to do so and others who openly helped to spread it. These incendiaries shouted that they were acting on authority, "esse sibi auctorem vociferabantur." But Tacitus deliberately blunts the force of their implied accusation by the suggestion of alternative motives for their claim: "sive ut raptus licentius exercerent, seu iussu." Generous measures for relief of the victims of the fire were mistrusted because of the rumor that Nero had made use of the burning city as a stage-setting for his singing of the fall of Troy.⁵⁴ The breaking out of a new fire, this time on an estate of Tigellinus, increased the infamy of Nero, for it gave color to the belief that he had destroyed the city in order to rebuild it more magnificently and name it for himself: "videbatur . . . Nero condendae urbis novae et cognomento suo appellandae gloriam quaerere."⁵⁵ Here the interpretation of the motive as well as the accusation is allowed to rest purely on the evidence of hearsay. The statement that Nero took advantage of the ruin of the city to build his fabulous Domus Aurea is no accusation, but the phrasing "usus est patriae ruinis"⁵⁶ disposes the reader, on the principle of *cui bono*, to accept the cumulative evidence of the various rumors.

After a detailed description of the new magnificence of the city and the expiatory sacrifices in the temples of the Gods, Tacitus returns to the subject of Nero's responsibility for the fire, again under the guise of quoting hearsay ⁵⁷: "sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur." This passage repeats almost exactly the pattern of that in *Ann.* 15.39, in which the scandal was first mentioned, and thus insists on the universality of belief in the

⁵² Suet. *Nero* 38.

⁵³ *Ann.* 15.38.

⁵⁴ *Ann.* 15.39.

⁵⁵ *Ann.* 15.40.

⁵⁶ *Ann.* 15.42.

⁵⁷ *Ann.* 15.44.

rumor. Tacitus implements it further by connecting it immediately with the persecution of the Christians: "ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos . . . quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat." While the historian has little sympathy with the Christians, this ascription of motive for the persecution implies their innocence of the particular charge brought against them, and they are further exonerated by his mention of the pity which people felt for these scapegoats of Nero's cruelty, "miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica, sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur."

The final touch is given to the story by a later passage in which one of the Pisonian conspirators, when questioned by Nero, accuses him of being "parricida matris et uxoris, auriga et histrio et incendiarius."⁵⁸ This charge, made in Nero's presence, assumes the truth of all the rumors for which Tacitus had declined to take responsibility.

In the account of Seneca's career and death Tacitus' powers of directing the reader's judgment without revealing his own are used in Seneca's favor. While Tacitus is, as Furneaux points out, no "blind admirer"⁵⁹ of the philosopher-statesman, the picture of him in the *Annals* is in sharp contrast to the harsh and sometimes malicious condemnation in Dio's history.⁶⁰ At his first appearance in the extant books of the *Annals* Seneca is presented in a favorable light. Agrippina secured his recall from exile and his appointment as Nero's tutor, partly because the distinction of his philosophical studies would make the appointment pleasing to the public. Her second reason for choosing Seneca was to aid her own position in the imperial household: "quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur."⁶¹ This statement gives no countenance to the scandal which connected his name with Agrippina's.⁶² The word "iniuriae" likewise implies that there was no truth in the charge of adultery with Germanicus' daughter, which had brought about Seneca's exile.⁶³ To Seneca

⁵⁸ *Ann.* 15.67.

⁵⁹ *Annals*, Vol. 2, p. 76.

⁶⁰ D. C. 61.10; 12.1; 20.3; 62.2; 24.1; 25. Suetonius barely notices Seneca, but his attitude toward him is sympathetic, cf. *Nero* 7.1; 35.5.

⁶¹ *Ann.* 12.8.

⁶² The scandal is repeated without question by Dio (61.10).

⁶³ See Furneaux, *ad loc.* Dio, *loc. cit.*, accepts the truth of the charge, but Tacitus repeats it only as a part of Suillius' attack on Seneca, *Ann.* 13.42.

and Burrus is credited the restraining influence which prevented Nero from embarking at once on his career of crime: "iuvantes in vicem, quo facilius lubricam principis aetatem. . . voluptatibus concessis retinerent."⁶⁴ This somewhat tempered praise is supported by a citation of popular comment approving of Nero's advisers as "multarum rerum experientia cognitos."⁶⁵ In one later passage Seneca is associated with the much-admired Thrasea, with whom he shares the epithet "egregius."⁶⁶

Tacitus' comment on Seneca's oratorical ability is decidedly equivocal: "fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus adcommodatū."⁶⁷ He is laid open to the suspicion of insincerity by the suggestion of alternative motives for his composing speeches on moderation to be delivered by Nero. Seneca wrote the speeches, we are told, either to give testimony to the quality of his teaching, or to show off his ability in oratory, "testificando quam honesta praeciperet, vel iactandi ingenii."⁶⁸

Tacitus leaves it an open question whether Seneca and Burrus were implicated in the plot to destroy Agrippina by shipwreck.⁶⁹ In his alarm at the failure of his scheme, Nero hastily summoned them, but whether they were already cognizant of the plot Tacitus is uncertain, "incertum an et ante gnaros." At first they were silent,—and the reader infers their distaste for, if not their previous ignorance of, the treacherous scheme. Then, while it is not stated that they took any part in it, they at least countenanced Nero's determination to murder his mother, whether because it was hopeless to try to dissuade him, or whether they thought that things had come to the point where the emperor's survival depended on her death. Their motives are thus left in doubt, but either alternative suggests that they were making the best of a bad situation which they had had no opportunity to prevent. After repeating the substance of the hypocritical letter which Nero sent to the Senate after Agrippina's death, Tacitus comments, in *Ann.* 14.11, that this brazen audacity brought down the censure of popular opinion not on Nero, whose monstrous wickedness was beyond blame, but on Seneca, who had composed the letter, "ergo non iam Nero . . . sed Seneca adverso rumore erat, quod oratione tali con-

⁶⁴ *Ann.* 13.2.

⁶⁵ *Ann.* 13.6.

⁶⁶ *Ann.* 15.23.

⁶⁷ *Ann.* 13.3. Cf. Tacitus' opinion of the taste of the times, expressed in *Dial.* 26.

⁶⁸ *Ann.* 13.11.

⁶⁹ *Ann.* 14.7. Dio, 61.12, states that Seneca incited Nero to murder his mother.

fessionem scripsisset." This passage follows the pattern of the well-known rhetorical device of *amplificatio* by comparison, which, by dwelling on a minor detail, emphasizes by implication the magnitude of the main object.⁷⁰ The censure of Seneca for composing the letter is so placed as to emphasize, not Seneca's complaisance, but the enormity of Nero's crime.

Criticism of Seneca is repeated from various sources and in some detail, but in almost every case it is in some way discredited or minimized by its context. When, after the murder of Britannicus, Nero gave large gifts to the most powerful among his friends, Tacitus quotes the popular censure levelled at the recipients—especially those who made pretense to high character and austerity of life—for accepting estates and villas at such a time, as if they were booty, "quasi praedam."⁷¹ While Seneca was undoubtedly one of the chief objects of this criticism, he is not specifically named. The taunts are moreover immediately answered by comments of others, who believed that no refusal of the gifts had been permitted, since Nero needed partners to share the onus of the crime. Elsewhere criticisms of Seneca are put into the mouth of someone whose character is not calculated to give them credence. He is referred to scornfully by Agrippina, as an exile with a declaimer's tongue (*professoria lingua*) pretending to the direction of the empire.⁷² He is attacked at length by P. Suillius, on the ground of the scandals which connected his name with Julia (perhaps also with Agrippina), and of his ill-gotten wealth.⁷³ But Suillius was one of the most detestable of the informers, and the attack on Seneca was followed shortly by his exile.^{73a} The sneers of Tigellinus and his friends at the tutor whom Nero has outgrown make no serious charges and, set in the context of Tacitus' contempt for Tigellinus, "intimis libidinibus adsumptus," are not likely to be taken seriously.⁷⁴

A courtly speech is composed for Seneca's resignation from his position of power and wealth, and a reply from Nero which Tacitus

⁷⁰ Quint. *Inst.* 8.4.9ff., (*amplificatio*) quae fit per comparationem, incrementum ex minoribus petit. Augendo enim quod est infra, necesse est extollat id quod supra est."

⁷¹ *Ann.* 13.18.

⁷² *Ann.* 13.14.

⁷³ *Ann.* 14.42.

^{73a} *Ann.* 13.43. Suillius was condemned of having brought false charges against a number of persons, among whom Seneca is not named. But Tacitus manages to convey the suggestion that the attack on Seneca was the real reason for his downfall.

⁷⁴ *Ann.* 14.51-52.

brands as hypocritical.⁷⁵ As the narrative approaches the execution of Seneca among those involved in the Pisonian conspiracy, we come upon the familiar devices which lead the reader, without the aid of the writer's expressed judgment, to pass sentence on Nero and exonerate his tutor. Tacitus had previously cited the tradition—without stating an opinion on its credibility—that by Nero's order an attempt had been made to poison Seneca, but that he had been saved by the warning of the freedman who executed the order or by his own suspicions of the emperor's intent.⁷⁶ In the investigation of the plot of Piso, Antonius Natalis named Seneca as one of his fellow-conspirators.⁷⁷ Seneca's name had not been included in the list of those known to have been involved,⁷⁸ and here Tacitus offers alternative reasons for Natalis' accusation: "sive internuntius inter eum Pisonemque fuit, sive ut Neronis gratiam pararet, qui infensus Senecae omnes ad eum opprimendum artes conquirebat." The imputation to Nero of the intent to destroy Seneca appears as a subordinate clause in the statement of Natalis' possible motive, but the indicative "conquirebat" gives it credence as a statement of the author's own belief. Natalis' charge that Seneca was one of the conspirators is further weakened by details to show how vague his evidence was,⁷⁹ and by the quotation of Seneca's vigorous denial.⁸⁰ The key-sentence which sums up the incident describes Nero's satisfaction at the death of Seneca, denies that there was any proof of Seneca's implication in the conspiracy, and refers to the earlier rumor of poisoning as if it were established fact: "sequitur caedes Annaei Senecae, laetissima principi, non quia coniurationis manifestum compererat, sed ut ferro grassaretur, quando venenum non processerat."⁸¹ If any doubt still remains after this imputation of motive, suggestion of Seneca's innocence, and reference to earlier criminal attempts, the conviction of Nero is assured by the word "grassaretur," which could be used of any common criminal.⁸²

⁷⁵ *Ann.* 14.53–56.

⁷⁶ *Ann.* 15.45.

⁷⁷ *Ann.* 15.56.

⁷⁸ *Ann.* 15.49–50. Dio, 62.24, places the chief responsibility for the conspiracy on Seneca and Rufus.

⁷⁹ *Ann.* 15.60.

⁸⁰ *Ann.* 15.61.

⁸¹ *Ann.* 15.60.

⁸² Compare also the brief account of the death of Burrus, *Ann.* 14.51, in which the charge that he was poisoned on Nero's order is presented as an alternative version,

These two isolated incidents in the later books of the *Annals* exhibit all the devices noted in the treatment of Tiberius' reign, but here they are exceptional rather than typical.⁸³

This marked divergence in technique between the earlier and the later books of the *Annals* may offer some hint to explain the enigma which Tacitus the historian has presented to generations of readers. That he was possessed of a deep prejudice against the empire is undeniable, whatever the interpretation of its origin. Where the accepted historical tradition was in harmony with the attitude dictated by Tacitus' personal bias, as was true preëminently of the reign of Nero, he had only to enhance the account by his brilliant literary gifts. But the problems presented to the historian by Tiberius' reign were more complex. Tacitus found ready to his hand the traditional picture of Tiberius the tyrant, which coincided with his own prejudice. This picture coincided likewise with the natural desire of the literary artist to present a consistent picture of the development of the principate, for it was perfectly adapted to the interpretation of the Julio-Claudian dynasty as a steady advance toward the open and shameless tyranny of its most infamous representative. But it failed at many points to agree with the recorded facts of Tiberius' reign, and thus came into conflict with Tacitus' conception of the historian's task. It is at such points of conflict, frequent in the account of Tiberius but relatively rare in the story of Nero, that the technique of innuendo comes most conspicuously into play. As an historian Tacitus would not suppress or misstate the facts, but as an artist he could present them in such a way as to make the reader draw the inferences which the historian refrained from drawing.

given by the majority of his sources but not vouched for by Tacitus. Suetonius, *Nero* 35.5, states that Burrus was poisoned by order of Nero.

⁸³ Tacitus' technique in dealing with Claudius is quite different from that of his portrayal of either Tiberius or Nero. Here no less than in the early books of the *Annals* his literary skill creates a vivid impression of the emperor's character with almost no statement of the historian's own judgment, but the artifices of the narrative style are designed to excite contempt rather than condemnation. Throughout the narrative a number of devices serve to keep Claudius in the background or to ignore him. A summary of his public acts is made to seem trifling by the context in which it is introduced. He is seldom made the subject of the action, but is more often referred to indirectly or mentioned in a subordinate clause. His actions are frequently recorded as if they resulted from someone else's motives instead of his own. Direct mention of his name is often avoided by the use of passive verbs or impersonal expressions. An examination of these devices will form the subject of a later paper.