have been a candidate in the sortition for Asia or Africa: "occiso Ciuica nuper nec Agricolae consilium deerat nec Domitiano exemplum."[34] And L. Junius Caesennius Paetus, suffect in 79 and proconsul of Asia in the early 90s, was the son of L. Caesennius Paetus (consul in 61), who figures importantly in Tacitus' account of Corbulo's campaigns in the East. Tacitus is able to provide information about the elder Paetus' wife and family—both an adolescent son and an elder son, who was a tribune in Corbulo's army.[35] So Tacitus' praetorian career could well have been useful to his career as a historian.

In any event, the sources of Tacitus' widely recognized interest in the province of Asia are far better located in his career after the praetorship than in the proconsulate that began in 112. Tacitus' interest may be surmised to go back much farther than anyone had guessed. If we acknowledge that it does, we have to admit at the same time that the last weak support for a late date for the composition of the *Annals* has been swept away. There is simply no reason to keep Tacitus unemployed as a writer between 109 and 115. There is no impediment to believing that he began work on his last and possibly greatest achievement soon after his completion of the *Histories* in about 109. This means, in turn, that there is certainly no reason for thinking that the *Annals* occupied him much beyond the death of Trajan, if at all.

If contemporary events are mirrored in the narrative of the *Annals*, we should look for them in the reign of Trajan, not Hadrian. But for the man who had been courageous enough to tell the story of the last years of the tyrant Domitian, as he had in the final books (now lost) of the *Histories*, covert allusions would hardly be necessary. Tacitus had not only lived through those years but prospered in them, as he candidly acknowledged in the first chapter of the *Histories*.[36] After Domitian's death he clearly had no trouble in writing openly about his own times when he wanted to. The wisest course for us, therefore, is to believe that in the *Annals* Tacitus did exactly what he claims to have done: write a history of Rome from Tiberius to Nero.

[34] *Agr.* 42.1. Cf. Minicius Italus, who apparently replaced Civica (ILS 1374).

[35] For the proconsulate of the suffect of 79, see Thomasson (1984: cols. 218–19, no. 80). For the family of the man's father, *Ann.* 15.10.3 (cf. 13.1) and 28.2.

[36] *Hist.* 1.1.3: "dignitatem nostram a Vespasiano inchoatam, a Tito auctam, a Domitiano longius prouectam non abnuerim."

TWO

READING AND RESPONSE IN THE *DIALOGUS*

T. J. Luce

SINCE THE Renaissance scholarly investigation of Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus* has focused chiefly on placing the work in its historical and literary context. For a long time authenticity was an issue.[1] When at last most had agreed on Tacitean authorship, the question of the date of composition came to the fore. The year A.D. 81 was long favored: that is, the last months of Titus' reign before the accession of Domitian.[2] The Ciceronian, or rather neo-Ciceronian, style was the chief reason for postulating an early date: Tacitus needed time to make the 180-degree turn to the completely different style of his maturity. But Leo in a famous review article of 1898 established that genre determines style: since Cicero was Tacitus' model for a dialogue by historical personages on an oratorical topic, a Ciceronian style was clearly appropriate, if not obligatory.[3] Leo favored a date after Domitian's death, and most have followed him since. But the precise time after the emperor's assassination is still a lively question. Murgia and Barnes reckon the *Dialogus* as Tacitus' first work, written in 97, before the appearance of the *Agricola* and *Germania* in the next year.[4] Others are willing to put it as much as a decade or more later. Many opt for 102, the suffect consulship of the dedicatee, Fabius Iustus.[5]

I wish to thank A. J. Woodman for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[1] Heubner gives a succinct review of the question in Güngerich (1980: 191–92), as does Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 7–9); cf. Merklin (1991: 2259–61). For earlier views see Gudeman (1914: 1–10). Doubters included Beatus Rhenanus, Lipsius, J. F. Gronovius. As late as 1962 Paratore continued to hold out (1962: 101–69): Titinius Capito is his choice. Some regard the question as still unsettled: e.g. Bardon (1953) and Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 8). Some have identified the *Dialogus* with Quintilian's lost *De causis corruptae eloquentiae*, e.g. L. Herrmann (1955: 349–69).

[2] Tacitus at *Agr.* 3.2 implies that he wrote nothing during Domitian's reign ("per quindecim annos . . . per silentium uenimus"). On the general question, see Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 195–96). D'Elia (1979) would date it between 78 and 89.

[3] Leo (1898: esp. 172–83), a review of Gudeman's first edition (in English) of the *Dialogus*, which appeared in 1894. In the second edition of 1914 (in German) Gudeman persisted in dating the work to 81.

[4] Murgia (1980 and 1985), followed by Barnes (1986), but for reasons mostly different from those of Murgia.

[5] Murgia (1980: 99–100) and Barnes (1986: 229–32) review the chief opinions of their predecessors. See also Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 195–96). Kappelmacher (1932) first argued for 102: dedications to a consul in office are common—cf. Woodman (1975: 274–75). Syme (1958: 670–73) would put it in 102 or "some four or five years later."

Historical questions were also investigated during these years, such as the identity of the participants, the dramatic date, and references in the text to persons and events.[6] Nor was the literary background slighted: models, antecedents, and allusions were identified and lists were drawn up. Most significant is the debt to Cicero; the borrowings in language, subject matter, setting, and dramatic technique are extensive.[7]

Finally, the state of the text presented challenges, both the many errors and garblings of the Latin and the lacunae. The gap after chapter 35 has provoked much discussion: was it short or long and did it contain a speech by Secundus?[8]

As for the subject matter, most have interpreted it in light of its literary heritage and in the context of the debate about literary decline, which was carried on by many writers during the first century A.D. On both counts the work appeared to be derivative—lively and brilliantly realized, to be sure, but at bottom traditional in style and form, conventional in argument.

First, let us consider the form, which owes as much to Cicero as does the style. Parallels with the *De oratore* in particular are numerous and striking. In both works the setting is the home of an older man who has made his mark in oratory and public life (Crassus/Maternus). The dramatic date is put more than twenty-five years in the past (91 B.C./A.D. 75). The author, now in middle age, was in his teens when the dialogue took place; he took no part in the discussion, but simply reports what the various speakers said on the subject of oratory.[9] Among the interlocutors are two teachers of the author in his youth (Crassus, Antonius/Aper, Secundus), whom he used to attend in the forum, the courts, and as a visitor to their homes. The man at

[6] On the date and the interlocutors, see Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 196–200); on the interlocutors, Barnes (1986: 236–37).

[7] Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970) devotes her valuable monograph largely to Tacitus' debt to Cicero's dialogues (see pp. 5–6 for an overview). Güngerich in his commentary (1980) notes the many allusions and parallels. See also the useful collection in Gudeman (1914: 85–98).

[8] Barnes (1986: 226–28) mentions some of the textual problems that recent scholars have dealt with. On the lacuna after chap. 35 Merklin (1991: 2271–75) and Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 193–94) review the manuscript evidence and modern discussion, as do Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 106–11) and Bringmann (1970: 165–66, 177–78), to which add Murgia (1979), who argues for the loss of a single folium, equivalent to two and a half to three pages in the Teubner text; contra Merklin (1991: 2275). Brink (1989: 495) regards the argument for a long lacuna that included a speech for Secundus "by now as a dead duck"; cf. Barwick (1954: 4 n. 1, 33–39). Steinmetz has recently argued (1988: 342–57) for a short speech for Secundus, equivalent to some seventy lines in the Oxford Classical Text, in which Secundus explains the decline as the result of the natural law of growth and decay, as at Sen. *Contr.* 1 Praef. 7: "siue fato quodam, cuius maligna perpetuaque in rebus omnibus lex est, ut ad summum perducta rursus ad infimum, uelocius quidem quam ascenderant, relabantur." Steinmetz's arguments do not persuade me.

[9] Cicero does not represent himself as present. His friend, Cotta, reports the whole of the two-day conversation to him (*De or.* 1.26–29, 3.16).

whose domicile the dialogue is set is the commanding figure, the one to whom the climactic speech of the dialogue is given. The next most important interlocutor is a crusty orator (Antonius/Aper) who argues against the *communis opinio* of the others. They characterize him as habitually taking the opposite side in debate and maintain that he really does not believe what he says. There are other speakers, including an aristocratic younger man (Caesar Strabo/Messala) who accepts the task of discussing a major aspect of the practice of oratory. The setting of the sun puts an end to the discussion. As the participants prepare to depart, they make good-humored jibes at one another, and vow to continue the discussion another day.

Just as the form and style are traditional, so also the subject matter—which is, one might say, even hackneyed. During the first century A.D. many people acknowledged the fact of oratory's decline and inquired into its causes.[10] Some carried on the debate in the larger context of the vicissitudes and decline of artistic talent generally. We see the issue discussed in Velleius Paterculus (1.16–18), the elder Seneca (*Controuersia* 1, praef. 6–10), Petronius (1–2, 88), the younger Seneca (*Epistulae* 114, esp. 1–2), the elder Pliny (*Naturalis Historia* 14.1.3–7), Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 8.6.76), the younger Pliny (in a sour mood, *Epistulae* 2.14), and the author of *On the Sublime* (44), if that work is to be dated to the first century A.D., as some think.[11] Tacitus comes toward or at the end of the debate.

The introduction to the *Dialogus* is brief (1.1–5.2: some three pages in a modern text) and its conclusion briefer—less than ten lines (42). The main body consists of three pairs of speeches, each pair devoted to a different topic.[12] The domestic setting, many realistic touches, and deft characterization help to soften and distract from the underlying formality of structure. The interaction seems spontaneous, while the argument gives the impression of moving forward in an uncontrived manner.[13] The speeches themselves, however, are long and rather monolithic.

Tacitus first introduces the subject: his friend, Fabius Iustus, has often

[10] Heldmann (1982) treats the topic for both Greece and Rome; at 255–86, 294–99, he discusses Tacitus and the *Dialogus*. See also Caplan (1944); Kennedy (1972: 446–64); Fantham (1978: 111–16); Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 201–2); cf. Barnes (1986: 233–34). Even Cicero at *Tusc.* 2.5 spoke of a decline.

[11] For a first-century A.D. date, see, e.g., Goold (1961—Augustan), Russell (1964: 185), Kennedy (1972: 369–77); for a later date, Williams (1978: 17–25), Heldmann (1982: 286–93; he argues that chap. 44 refers to the *Dialogus*), Barnes (1986: 233).

[12] On the structure, see Barwick (1929: 106–8), Häussler (1969: 46–50), Bringmann (1970).

[13] Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970) illustrates the many parallels, allusions, and imitations of the Ciceronian dialogues in setting and dynamics, especially *De oratore*, *De re publica*, and *De natura deorum*. On the interconnections that she sees Tacitus forging from speech to speech, see e.g. pp. 58, 63, 144–58.

asked him[14] the reasons for the decline of oratory at Rome (1.1–4). He then sets the scene (2.1–5.2): in the company of two admired teachers, Marcus Aper and Iulius Secundus, he arrives at the home of Curiatius Maternus. On the previous day Maternus had recited a new tragedy he had written, entitled *Cato*. It created quite a sensation, for it expressed sentiments that were said to have offended those in power. The three come upon Maternus in his bedroom, the manuscript of the offending *Cato* in his hands. Secundus requests him not to court danger so openly: please revise the *Cato*, he asks, by removing the objectionable passages. The result will be not a better *Cato*, but at least a safer one. Maternus declares he will do no such thing. In fact, he is now rapidly putting the final touches to it because he wants to get on with a new tragedy he has in mind, entitled *Thyestes*: he darkly remarks that whatever *Cato* had failed to say, *Thyestes* will.[15]

At this juncture the subject of the first pair of speeches (5.3–13.6) is naturally introduced: whether oratory or poetry is to be preferred. Aper rebukes Maternus for giving up his career as an orator and barrister in favor of writing poetry. He argues for oratory and against poetry on the grounds of utility, pleasure, and fame. At the end, he, like Secundus, appeals to Maternus to stop his poetic activity. He has nothing against poets, he assures his listeners: for those who do not have the talent to be orators, poetry is a creditable fallback. At the end, he, like Secundus, makes a personal appeal to Maternus. Do not, he asks, flirt with danger by speaking on behalf of Cato: speak, rather, on behalf of beleaguered friends who need your help in the courtroom. In his rebuttal (11.1–13.6) Maternus criticizes contemporary oratory; poetry, he says, enables him to retreat from the hurly-burly of public life into the "groves and glades" of poesy (*nemora et luci*).[16]

[14] For the request as a *topos*, see Janson (1964: 117–20).

[15] The subjects of these tragedies offended because they treated the themes of tyranny and liberty. See Syme (1958: 104, 110); Heldmann (1982: 257–71). For their probable connection with the downfall of Helvidius Priscus in 74–75 at the hands of Eprius Marcellus (Dio 65.12, 13.1a; Suet. *Vesp.* 15), see Syme (1958: 104 n. 4, 211–12). Tacitus reports earlier clashes in 70 at *Hist.* 4.5–8, 43; cf. *Dial.* 5.7.

[16] Twice Tacitus uses the phrase *nemora et luci* to refer to the retreat by the poet into the quiet of the countryside to compose: "deserenda cetera officia, utque ipsi dicunt in nemora et lucos, id est in solitudinem, recedendum est" (9.6); and "nemora uero et luci et secretum ipsum, quod Aper increpabat, tantam mihi adferunt uoluptatem ut . . ." (12.1). Scholars are divided as to whether the *Dialogus* is being referred to by Pliny in a letter to Tacitus of about 107 (*Ep.* 9.10.2) "itaque poemata quiescunt, quae tu inter nemora et lucos commodissime perfici putas." Some believe that the phrase is so common (*ut ipsi dicunt*) that no such allusion can be meant: e.g., Sherwin-White (1966: 487–89), Güngerich (1980: 36–37, seconded by Heubner at 192). Along with others, such as Jones (1968: 135–36), R. Martin (1981: 59), and Murgia (1985: 176 and n. 16), I believe that Pliny is indeed alluding to the *Dialogus*. It is precisely because of the use of the phrase by others (*ut ipsi dicunt*) that, when Pliny identifies it

The unexpected arrival of the young aristocrat, Vipstanus Messala, introduces the subject of the second pair of speeches: namely, whether ancient or modern orators are better (14.1–16.3). All men are agreed, Messala asserts, that there has been a decline in oratory, and he—Messala—has long pondered the reasons why. Secundus and Maternus urge him to give his thoughts on the question. Before Messala can begin, Aper says that he will not let the moderns be condemned without a hearing and go undefended. The second phase of the *Dialogus* is thus launched (16.4–26.8).

Aper declares that he is tired of the knee-jerk reaction of so many contemporaries in preferring the old to the new (18.3). Simply because something is fresh and different does not automatically make it worse. What's more, just what *is* "old" (*antiquus*)? How old does a thing have to be to qualify? Why, when you look over the whole of history, Cicero lived yesterday, so to speak: he is our contemporary on the long view. Aper then turns to the question of taste: our present age is the product of an ever improving, an ever more sophisticated refinement. He has great fun skewering the faults of the older orators whom the others admire, particularly Cicero.

Maternus turns now to Messala (24.1–3), twice requesting him not to give a defense of the ancients—for, he says, they need none—but to say why he thinks oratory has declined. Messala says he will do so, but is immediately drawn into a defense of the old-time speakers Aper had criticized (25.1–26.8). Messala scoffs at the moderns for their effeminate, histrionic, meretricious habits of speaking. Aper, he charges, named the ancient orators one by one—Cicero, Calvus, Asinius, and so on—but he named not a single modern. Who are these paragons, anyway, he wants to know? Who is the modern Cicero? our Caesar? our Calvus? By God, declares Messala, if Aper won't name names, I will!

Maternus breaks in (27.1–3). Spare us, spare us, he pleads (27.1–3), for there can be no question that oratory has declined. What we want to know is why. This marks the end of the second pair of speeches. We are now launched on the last pair: why oratory has declined (28.1–41.5).

The chief cause of the decline, in Messala's view (28.1–35.5), is cultural and educational: he outlines both the careless way young children are now brought up in the home and the defective manner of educating them when they go to school.

The lacuna after chapter 35 contained the end of Messala's speech and the beginning of the last speech by Maternus. This final speech (36.1–41.5) offers a different reason for oratory's decline: namely, the changed political circumstances between the late republic and the empire of A.D. 75.[17] The

with Tacitus particularly (*quae tu . . . putas*), something special must be meant: not a phrase thrown out in conversation but, more probably, in a published work where the phrase stands out by emphatic use, as it surely does in the *Dialogus*.

[17] Brink (1989: 485, 493, 497) claims that Maternus' speech does not give a proper cause:

best kind of oratory, asserts Maternus, flourishes in times of political turmoil, when life-and-death issues are at stake and when danger and upheaval threaten. Such was the late republic of Cicero's day. But we now live in a period of security and tranquillity, he asserts, in which the emperor has pacified eloquence along with everything else. In short, if oratory is to be great, it requires a particular sort of environment; it is a historically determined phenomenon. In a striking conclusion he declares that had those present been born in the days of the collapsing republic, they would have been preeminent orators, and if the men of those days had been transported to the present, moderation and self-restraint would have been their lot. It is not possible to enjoy great fame and great security at the same time.[18]

Most readers have relied on Tacitus' chief literary model, Cicero, in understanding the *Dialogus*. The roles of Maternus and Aper, in particular, have been interpreted in the light of their Ciceronian counterparts. The character who speaks for Tacitus is believed by many to be Maternus,[19] just as in the *De oratore* Crassus is Cicero's acknowledged spokesman (1.120). It is clear, for example, that Tacitus himself is convinced of the fact of oratory's decline, as he states in the opening sentence: the question is not whether there has been one, but why. And when at 27.1 Maternus puts a stop to the debate between Aper and Messala on the primacy of the ancients and the moderns by asserting that as far as he is concerned the ancients were unquestionably better, he can be taken to be expressing Tacitus' view. Moreover, many believe that Maternus' retirement from forensic activity in order to take up literary pursuits mirrors a similar decision by Tacitus. After his prosecution with Pliny of the peccant governor Marius Priscus early in 100 we hear of no further oratorical endeavors on his part. Maternus gave up the forum for poetry, it is argued, Tacitus for

"its main function . . . appears to be to refute Messala's *causa* by implication" (p. 485); "Maternus too denies decline, or admits it only in a manner of speaking (*Dial.* 41). Hence again no aetiology is called for; the subject of the dialogue is invalidated: the orators of the day are as competent as they can be—in the conditions of the day, which have their own advantages" (p. 497). But this confuses what is potential with what is actual: contemporary orators have the potential to be great, but the political climate prevents that potential from being realized. Oratory itself has declined and no great orators exist at present.

[18] Two popular arguments explaining decline have no place in the *Dialogus*, or are touched on lightly: the general collapse of morality together with the growing spread of luxury (e.g., Sen. *Contr.* 1, praef. 6–10; Sen. *Ep.* 114.1–2; Pliny *NH* 14.1.3–7), and the biological explanation that all things go through cycles of growth and decay (e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 2.5); cf. Williams (1978: 49). At *Ann.* 3.55.5 Tacitus shows interest in the latter idea ("nisi forte rebus cunctis inest quidam uelut orbis"), but is wary about the former ("nec omnia apud priores meliora").

[19] See, e.g., Barwick (1929: 107–8) and (1954: 17–18, 23–24, 30), Syme (1958: 111 and n. 3), Kennedy (1972: 518); cf. Bringmann (1970).

history.[20] Then again, Maternus' final speech seems to many a tour de force, sweeping past the cultural and educational explanation offered by Messala to argue that both the flourishing and the decline of oratory depend on the political conditions of an age. In the debate on the cause of decline, this argument is unique; it may be original to Tacitus. Based as it is on a historical perspective, it seems particularly fitting for Tacitus to hold at this point in time, when he was preparing to write, or was in the course of writing, the *Histories*. To many readers the *Dialogus* thus ends on a note of impassioned eloquence that transcends the earlier arguments in power and persuasion. In sum, just as Crassus is Cicero's spokesman in the *De oratore*, so with Maternus in the *Dialogus*.

As for Aper, his role is viewed as devil's advocate.[21] Scholars have compared his role with that of Antonius in the *De oratore*, who at the conclusion of the first day's debate is accused of not believing what he has said (1.263), and who, at the start of the second day, admits that this indeed was true (2.46). Comparable also is the role of Furius Philus in the *De re publica*, who agrees to argue the case that no state can be governed without doing injustice, although he does not himself believe it.[22]

Finally, Messala. In explaining his role critics have looked not so much to a Ciceronian model as to issues contemporary with Tacitus. The arguments given to Messala, especially those in his second speech, which attributes the decline of oratory to a decline in education and cultural values, are evidently quite close to Quintilian's views as expressed in his lost treatise *De causis corruptae eloquentiae*.[23] Many see in Messala's rôle a critique, if not a polemic, by Tacitus against the views of Quintilian, both those concerning the causes of the decline as expressed in the *De causis*, and the rather optimistic assessment of the health of contemporary oratory that he made a few years later in the *Institutio Oratoria* (10.1.122).

The preceding sketch, admittedly selective and incomplete, has attempted to characterize the general approach many have taken in interpreting the *Dialogus*. The approach is from the outside in: from the conventions of style, genre, and form on the one hand, and from the debate on the decline of oratory and literature carried on in the first century, on the other.

[20] Pliny *Ep.* 2.11, esp. sec. 2. Cf. Kappelmacher (1932: 127), Syme (1958: 109–11, 672), Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 152–54). I myself believe that the evidence for the parallel is weak and that the case does not stand up; so also Bringmann (1970: 167 n. 25) and R. Martin (1981: 65–66), cf. Heldmann (1982: 286 n. 208a). Maternus' decision to abandon public life seems particularly at odds with Tacitus' praise for those who serve the state well, despite the dangers and difficulties: *Agr.* 42.4, *Ann.* 4.20.2.

[21] Cf. Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 131–43).

[22] See Cic. *De re p.* 2.70 (cf. Aug. *Ciu. Dei* 2.21) and 3.8. Philus' task is described as *improbitatis patrocinium*.

[23] See Barwick (1954: 8–18) and Brink (1989: esp. 484–88).

In the past few decades, however, some critics have felt increasingly uneasy about the validity of much of this standard interpretation; close examination of the text has revealed disturbing inconsistencies, contradictions, and illogicalities. Certain of these "imperfections" had been noticed by some earlier scholars, but for the most part they were glossed over or explained away. In recent years, however, the discovery of inconsistencies and contradictions seems to have grown exponentially in number: the entire fabric of the *Dialogus* appears shot through with them. Yet so far discussion has been piecemeal, focusing on this or that passage or, more commonly, on one or other of the interlocutors, while explanations to account for these problems have been divergent and at odds with one another. In the remainder of this chapter I will argue that many of the perceived difficulties are related to one another because they have a common cause: the nature of the argumentation in the *Dialogus*. But first it will be necessary to illustrate the nature of the inconsistencies and contradictions, and to review some of the explanations that have been advanced to account for them.

Some Problems and Solutions

Let us begin the discussion with Aper. A minor problem must first be addressed: is Aper a devil's advocate? That is, does he express views that he personally does not hold? The parallels with Antonius in the *De oratore* and with Philus in the *De re publica*, discussed previously, suggest that this is the case.[24] Yet Antonius and Philus tell us straight out that they do not believe what they say. Aper never does. To the end he makes no concession: the last words of the *Dialogus* are given to him, and, though said in jest, they suggest that he is as prepared to defend modern oratory as ever.[25] It would thus appear that Aper in the dramatic scenario Tacitus has devised is genuinely convinced of his position. This is a small but suggestive difference from the Ciceronian model.

But what is the reader to believe? Isn't it significant that Aper is charged with acting as devil's advocate no less than four times, twice by Messala and twice by Maternus (15.2, 16.3–4, 24.2, 28.1)? Doesn't this suggest that, even if the reader thinks Tacitus depicts Aper as believing what he says, the reader should think twice about believing it himself? Not necessarily. Charging one's opponent with not believing in his case has a long and honorable pedigree in ancient rhetoric. Cicero uses it against opponents on a number of occasions. It is a rhetorical ploy to unsettle one's opponent and make his case seem weak. Whether his case is really weak must be decided on other grounds.[26]

[24] Cf. Hass-von Reitzentein (1970: 27).

[25] *Dial.* 42.2: "ac simul adsurgens [sc. Maternus] et Aprum complexus 'ego' inquit 'te poetis, Messala autem antiquariis criminabimur.' 'at ego uos rhetoribus et scholasticis,' inquit."

Yet the question of Aper's sincerity is eclipsed by the following: as noted earlier, Tacitus in the opening sentence says that the question Fabius Iustus has posed is why oratory has declined. Whether it has declined is not mentioned as an issue: decline is taken for granted. And, as has been also noted earlier, Maternus at 27.1 states his firm conviction that decline has in fact occurred. So it would appear after all that Aper's defense of the ancients cannot be convincingly sustained: the other interlocutors do not believe it and Tacitus himself does not believe it.[27] What, then, is Aper doing in this dialogue?[28]

In an article of 1975 Deuse set out the dilemma more clearly and faced its implications more forthrightly than any of his predecessors.[29] For Deuse it is highly significant that Maternus interrupts Messala's rejoinder to Aper, since an impasse has been reached and feelings are running high. This is done, Deuse argues, because Tacitus wants to illustrate that discussions of aesthetic preference are subjective and emotional. Why eloquence has declined lends itself to rational analysis; whether it has declined does not. Thus we find no real rebuttal to Aper's thesis. Maternus cuts off Messala's rejoinder and moves the discussion at once to the causes of decline. Deuse

[26] For example, Cicero's treatment of the young Atratinus (*Cael.* 1–2); cf. Luce (1986: 150 and n. 20). A common variant was to charge the prosecution with failing to realize the true implications of the charges that have been brought, as at Cic. *Lig.* 10, 12–13. I must confess, however, that repeating the charge four times seems to be rather overdoing it, and the repetition may be intended to invite the reader to believe in it; note, too, that Aper does not contradict the charges when Maternus claims he does not believe what he says ("ne ipse quidem ita sentit," 24.2) or when Messala declares that what he will say is what they all believe: "non reconditas, Materne, causas requiris nec aut tibi ipsi aut huic Secundo uel huic Apro ignotas, etiam si mihi partes adsignatis proferendi in medium quae omnes sentimus" (28.1).

[27] Whenever we date the *Dialogus*—97, 102, or later—Tacitus' views on the poor health of oratory cannot be complimentary to Pliny. If 102 or later, it would be deflating to Pliny's amour propre, especially in connection with the *Panegyricus*: cf. Syme (1958: 112–15), Murgia (1980: 121–22), Barnes (1986: 244). If in 97, we must suppose that Pliny in his later correspondence on oratorical matters and fame chose never to refer to Tacitus' published verdict that modern oratory was less great and brought correspondingly less fame than in earlier days (cf. *Epp.* 1.20, 2.11, 7.20, 9.14); cf. *Dial.* 7.4 (Aper is speaking) with *Ep.* 9.23. 2–3.

[28] In the *De re publica* Laelius is made to assert that Philus' habit of arguing the opposing case is based on his conviction that by this method the truth is most easily discovered (3.8): "neque sit ignota consuetudo tua contrarias partis disserendi quod ita facillume uerum inueniri putes." Could this explanation be applicable to the *Dialogus*? It would not seem so, at least on the level of the dramatic scenario: Aper, unlike Philus, never admits he disbelieves what he says, and no interlocutor suggests, as Laelius does, a reason for his acting as he does (see also *De or.* 1.263). Cf. Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 37–43).

[29] Deuse (1975), commended by Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 198).

concludes, first, that Tacitus, who was convinced of the decline of oratory, must necessarily present an ambivalent picture of a man who defends the merits of contemporary eloquence, and, second, that when a person is convinced of the superiority of modern rhetoric, rational discussion and a conclusion logically arrived at are not possible. This, for Deuse, is what Tacitus is trying to convey in dramatic terms in the *Dialogus*.

Now, it may well be true that for Tacitus *de gustibus non disputandum*, and that this belief is illustrated in the *Dialogus*. But the Aper–Messala exchange takes up a third of the work; in fact, Aper has a greater share of speech than any other character. Why devote so much space to a man whose main position Tacitus considers untenable, and whose lengthy remarks lead to the banal conclusion that "there is just no accounting for taste"? I myself am not convinced that Deuse has fully explained the presence of the middle pair of speeches in the *Dialogus*.

Next, Messala. In his long speech on education he compares the defective methods of the moderns with the admirable training of Cicero's day. His two chief points are these. First, modern training is extremely narrow in comparison with the earlier period. Back then students of oratory knew about law and philosophy; they read widely in literature and history; they even swotted up subjects like geometry, music, grammar, and physical science. From this broad learning Cicero's marvelous eloquence wells up and overflows, says Messala (30.5). But nowadays ignorant students are content to acquaint themselves with a few rhetorical tricks: they know very little. Messala's second objection is that students in Cicero's day were quickly introduced to the real world: they chose certain eminent speakers and followed them about into the courts, the forum, and the senate, experiencing firsthand the heat of debate about real issues, some of great moment. Contemporary students, on the other hand, learn within the confines of the classroom, declaiming on unreal subjects before an audience composed of their peers, youths as ignorant and inexperienced as they. Ravished maidens, rewards to tyrannicides, incestuous mothers: these are their subjects. The real world has no place in their curriculum.

A powerful indictment of the present and a heady commendation of the past! But there is something skewed in Messala's picture. His description of education in Cicero's day derives chiefly from Cicero's own writings, especially the *Brutus* and the *De oratore*;[30] however, what Cicero describes there is an ideal, not what education was in fact like in his time[31] (it goes without saying that Cicero believed that he himself came closest to realizing this ideal). Many of Cicero's speakers in the *De oratore*, including

[30] Brink well argues that some of this Ciceronianism is really neo-Ciceronianism refracted through the spectacles of Quintilian (1989: 488–94).

[31] Cf. Barwick (1929: 87–90), Brink (1989: 490–91, 494).

Antonius and even his brother Quintus (1.5), to whom the work is addressed, doubt that such wide accomplishments are really necessary, much less possible. And Crassus, who speaks for Cicero, and even Cicero himself in the prefaces to the first two books of the *De oratore* (1.16–22, 2.5–7) concede that few have the drive or the ability to acquire such broad learning. Tacitus thus has Messala convert Cicero's sketch of an ideally educated orator into a description of the actual educational attainments of the age as a whole.

Messala's remarks present the reader with a number of other problems, of which I will mention two. The first is that declamation and its unreal subjects were not restricted to the young in their classrooms. Their elders indulged in them with gusto, as the reminiscences of the elder Seneca testify. Asinius Pollio and Messala Corvinus, whom Messala in his first speech cites as exemplars of bygone eloquence, appear regularly in Seneca as declaimers (e.g., *Controuersia* 3 praef. 14, *Suasoria*. 6.27). We find Pollio, for example, speaking on "The Madman Who Married His Daughter to a Slave" (*Controuersia* 7.6.12, 24). Pirates (1.6.11, 7.14), ravished maidens (2.3.13, 19; 4.3), and disinherited sons (1.6.11; 4.5; 7.14) are frequent subjects in the cases he argued. So dedicated was Pollio to declamation, Seneca tells us (4 praef. 2–6), that he performed only three days after the death of a son.[32] The second problem is this. Messala describes (34–35) how modern youth, shut up in their schools, have next to no experience of life beyond the schoolroom walls, whereas students in the late republic attended great orators in public, even following their mentors to their homes, where they enjoyed private conversation and informal instruction. Now this is exactly how Tacitus, at the start of the *Dialogus* (2.1), tells us he learned oratory from Aper and Secundus. Moreover, this custom continued long after Tacitus' youth in the 70s. We read in the letters of Pliny of many young men attending him both in public and as visitors to his home. As for Tacitus, he had a coterie of youthful aspirants; it was from their number that Pliny hoped a candidate might be found as a teacher for the new school in Comum that he had endowed.[33] In short, both the picture that Messala presents of education in Cicero's day and the picture he gives of his own are one-sided and overstated. What, then, are we to make of his role in the *Dialogus*?

[32] In addition, Maternus points out (38.2) that one of Asinius Pollio's most famous speeches, *Pro heredibus Vrbiniae*, was delivered during Augustus' reign before the centumviral court, which was the premier court of the empire: "postquam longa temporum quies et continuum populi otium et adsidua senatus tranquillitas et maxima principis disciplina ipsam quoque eloquentiam sicut omnia alia pacauerat."

[33] *Ep.* 4.13.10 (A.D. 104/5): "ex copia studiosorum, quae ad te ex admiratione ingeni tui conuenit." See Sherwin-White's note (1966: 289). Cf. also *Epp.* 6.11, 23, 29; 7.9; 9.13.1. Contrast, however, the pessimistic picture in *Ep.* 2.14.

Let me now turn to Maternus, in whose words we find equally marked peculiarities and contradictions. In his first speech he defends his decision to abandon his forensic career for poetry on the grounds that contemporary oratory is used as an offensive weapon to attack one's opponents for financial gain. Its most successful practitioners are men of evil character whose eloquence he calls "bloody" (*sanguinans*, 12.2), since it often ends in the victim's death on a capital charge (he is referring to informers, or *delatores*, and their victims).[34] At the end of his remarks (13. 5) he again describes public life, which he is forsaking, as tumultuous and dangerous. Yet in his final speech he characterizes the political climate of the present day as one of peace, security, and good order (41.4):

> Why is there need for long speeches in the senate when the best men quickly agree? Or for numerous speeches to the people, when the inexperienced masses do not decide matters, but a supremely wise individual? Or for prosecutions voluntarily undertaken, when wrongdoing is so rare and inconsequential? Or for speeches in defense that are intemperate and provoke resentment, when the emperor's pardon may come to the aid of the accused in his peril?[35]

Contrast, too, this rosy picture with Tacitus' unfavorable estimate of so many aspects of the principate in his historical writings.

Attempts to resolve the discrepancies between Maternus' two speeches have diverged greatly. The views of three scholars are illustrative. Reitzenstein[36] early in the century believed on the basis of Maternus' last speech that Tacitus early in his career, when he wrote the *Dialogus*, was a confirmed believer in the desirability of the principate, but that pessimism increasingly came over him in later years as he worked his way through the *Histories* and *Annals*. On the other hand, Köhnken believes that because the pessimistic view of the principate in Maternus' first speech is similar to the picture we find in the historical writings, the first speech must reflect Tacitus' real opinion. The last speech is thus for Köhnken pure irony: demolitionary in effect and intention.[37]

The third explanation is that of Williams in his book *Change and Decline*,[38] in which he emphasizes more strongly than anyone else to date

[34] See Winterbottom (1964: 90–94).

[35] *Dial.* 41.4: "quid enim opus est longis in senatu sententiis cum optimi cito consentiant? quid multis apud populum contionibus cum de re publica non imperiti et multi deliberent sed sapientissimus et unus? quid uoluntariis accusationibus cum tam raro et tam parce peccetur? quid inuidiosis et excedentibus modum defensionibus cum clementia cognoscentis obuiam periclitantibus eat?"

[36] Reitzenstein (1915: 226–52 = 1967: 70–96).

[37] Köhnken (1973: 32–50). Heubner in Güngerich (1980: 208) terms Köhnken's view "unwiderleglich." Cf. Heldmann (1982: 280, 285).

[38] Williams (1978: 26–51).

the many contradictions that inhere in the person and remarks of Maternus. To explain the particular discrepancy between the hostile description of the principate in Maternus' first speech and the positive picture we find in the last, Williams argues that the first part of the *Dialogus* describes conditions at the time of the dramatic setting, A.D. 75, whereas the last speech describes conditions when Tacitus was writing, A.D. 102. In 75 the *delatores* were much in evidence. The previous year Eprius Marcellus had brought down his old antagonist, the Stoic Helvidius Priscus, who was soon after put to death, possibly in that very year.[39] Four years later Marcellus fell: implicated in a conspiracy in the last months of Vespasian's reign. This is the political situation in which we find ourselves in the first part of the *Dialogus*, Williams believes. The happy days of Trajan's new reign, however, are what are being described in Maternus' last speech. In support of this interpretation Williams cites Tacitus' favorable remarks on the new dispensation at the start of the *Agricola* and Pliny's assertion in the *Panegyricus* (34–35) that the days of the *delatores* were over: Trajan had "abolished" them.[40]

The explanation does not convince me.[41] I find it difficult to believe a priori that the *Dialogus* suffers from the sort of chronological schizophrenia that Williams describes. Without warning, the reader is catapulted forward twenty-seven years. In partial support of his thesis Williams claims that all historical references to 75 are confined to the early part of the *Dialogus*. This is untrue. At 37.2, in the middle of his final speech, Maternus mentions an edition of eleven books entitled *Acta* and three entitled *Epistolae* being put out by Licinius Mucianus. Now the elder Pliny mentions that Mucianus was dead by the year 77, when Pliny published his *Natural History* (32.62). In the *Dialogus* Mucianus is still alive, as the phrase *a Muciano contrahuntur* shows. In short, Maternus' last speech is fixed in the 70s, not in 102.

Another contradiction deserves emphasis. Maternus argues that the orator's world is one of blood and peril, the poet's of peace and safety. Yet the reverse is true. It is not an orator who has offended those in power, but a writer of tragedies. Maternus is in danger, and his friends are worried for him. Secundus urges him to remove the offending passages from the *Cato*

[39] See Syme (1958: 104 n. 4; cf. 211–12): "the modern Cato."

[40] The word is Williams' (1978: 36). One cannot, however, "abolish" delation per se: *crimen deferre* is the only way in law that a charge may be brought (then, too, one man's *delator* might be another man's patriot). Certain restrictions might be enacted (cf. Suet. *Titus* 8.5), or certain extralegal abuses curbed (although Pliny in that curiously heated passage at *Pan.* 34–35 is remarkably short on specifics). It is instructive that Aquillius Regulus, notorious *delator*, half brother of Messala (*Dial.* 15.1), and Pliny's bête noire, was untouched by Trajan's punitive measures (nor does Vibius Crispus seem to have been affected by those of Titus). Cf. Winterbottom (1964: 93–94).

[41] Nor Murgia (1980: 118, 121–22).

(3.2), Aper to realize the danger he is in: he cannot plead as an excuse the quiet and security of the poet's life when he takes on the emperor.[42] On the other hand, the orator's world as Aper presents it at the end of his speech is one of compromise and little risk taking (10.6–8). The orator may be excused because he fulfills an obligation when he helps a friend in trouble and because his words are spoken on the spur of the moment; the poet may not be excused because he voluntarily chooses his subject and what he writes is premeditated.

At the end of his first speech Maternus makes a series of wishes: that when he dies he may not have more wealth than he may safely leave to the heir of his choice (he alludes to the prospect of imperial confiscation if he does not leave the emperor a share); that the statue on his tomb may be happy and ivy-crowned, not worried and grim; and "as for my memory, let there be no resolution in the senate or petition to the emperor" (i.e., should he die condemned or under a cloud).[43] The repeated references early in the *Dialogus* to the offense Maternus has given to the powerful and to the concern that his friends express for his safety and, above all, this highly charged conclusion to his first speech strongly suggest that Maternus soon after met an untimely end.[44]

Most scholars, such as Deuse, Köhnken, and Williams, have tended to concentrate on particular passages or persons to explain the difficulties they find in the text. A few have given explanations of wider applicability; these might be dubbed the "psychological factor" and the "ambivalence factor" (or a combination of both). Those favoring psychology believe that the conflicted and conflicting facets of Tacitus' own personality are mirrored in the opposing interlocutors and the opposing arguments. Two

[42] *Dial.* 10.7: "tolle igitur quietis et securitatis excusationem, cum tibi sumas aduersarium superiorem." I believe that the emperor is being referred to; denied by Gudeman (1914: 259).

[43] The translation is that of Church and Brodribb (1942) (13.6): "nec plus habeam quam quod possim cui uelim relinquere (quandoque enim fatalis et meus dies ueniet): statuarque tumulo non maestus et atrox sed hilaris et coronatus, et pro memoria mei nec consulat quisquam nec roget." Güngerich (1980: 58) and Talbert (1984: 365 n. 14) do not believe that the references here are to public memorials. But why would anyone use such language for a private memorial? (Take whose advice about what? Make what request and from whom?) See Barnes (1986: 239–40).

[44] So also Syme (1958: 110–11), Cameron (1967), Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 37), Williams (1978: 34), Murgia (1980: 122). Barnes (1986: 238–44) identifies the interlocutor with the Curiatius Maternus of a Spanish inscription published in 1973 (*AE* 283) and with the Maternus put to death by Domitian in 91 or 92 (Dio 67.12.5). I believe that the death of the Maternus of the *Dialogus* must have come shortly after the dramatic date. The worry repeatedly expressed by his friends seems premature for a death that was to come sixteen or seventeen years later, especially for a man already into middle age, as he seems to be in the *Dialogus*. Dio's language does not suggest to me a poet reciting tragedies, but an orator declaiming a speech, an activity that Maternus is represented as renouncing in 75: Μάτερνον δὲ σοφιστήν, ὅτι κατὰ τυράννων εἶπέ τι ἀσκῶν, ἀπέκτεινε.

examples of the psychological approach are Keyssner and Häussler. Keyssner argued that Tacitus' portrayal of Aper and Maternus reflects the tug-of-war in his own psyche, and that Maternus' discrepant views of the present—dangerous versus safe, free versus unfree—arise from inner conflict that Tacitus could not resolve himself.[45] Some thirty years later Häussler described the dilemma according to psychological and character types: "Tacitus is the historian Maternus (not the dreamy utopian), Tacitus is the moralist Messala (not the old-fashioned reactionary), and Tacitus is the literary critic Aper (not the superficial utilitarian)." [46] What we as readers are to do, according to Häussler, in the *Dialogus* and in the historical writings, is to separate out the admirable qualities—moral, psychological, aesthetic, intellectual, and so on—from the unadmirable ones. Each character is clothed in a wrapping that needs to be removed in order to find the essential person beneath: here, he argues, is where we will find what Tacitus really thinks and admires.[47] Now, there may be merit in this approach, but Häussler does not explain what this wrapping is, why it is there, and how much needs to be removed before we get to the real stuff beneath.

Still other critics resort to generalities when attempting to explain the *Dialogus*. Goodyear is a representative of the "ambivalence factor": "The thought of the *Dialogus* accords well with that of a historian who wavers between nostalgia for the past and realistic acceptance of the present. In a word, its elusiveness and ambivalence are eminently Tacitean."[48] Certainly "elusive" and "ambiguous" are popular terms in Tacitean criticism, and with reason. Still, they do not help us much in explaining the actual problems we encounter in interpreting the *Dialogus*. Even Williams resignedly observes toward the end of his analysis: "Consequently it is not easy to say what finally emerges."[49] Klingner in a famous article argued that Maternus in his last speech cannot be supposed to express fully his real opinions about the principate, much less be a spokesman for the views of Tacitus. For all that, Klingner believed, Maternus sees the unresolvable dilemma between the freedom enjoyed under the republic, together with its accompanying violence, and the repression under the empire, together with the settled conditions it brought. Tacitus, concludes Klingner, is not Maternus, but he felt the same antinomy as does the character he created.[50]

[45] Keyssner (1936: 94–115, esp. 108).

[46] Häussler (1965: 235): "Tacitus ist der Historiker Maternus (nicht der verträumter Utopist), Tacitus ist der Moralist Messalla (nicht der ewiggestrige Reaktionär), und Tacitus ist der Ästhetiker Aper (nicht der oberflächliche Utilitarist)."

[47] Häussler (1965: 248–49), cf. Luce (1986: 144–49).

[48] Goodyear (1970b: 16).

[49] Williams (1978: 45).

[50] Klingner (1961: 492): "Maternus nicht seine ganze Überzeugung und erst recht nicht die des Tacitus aussprechen kann"; (p. 493): "Seine Worte an Schlusse des Werkes sind also

The Argumentation

It is often stated or assumed that once Tacitus had decided to write on oratory, the dialogue form as we see it in Cicero was an obvious choice, if not obligatory.[51] Yet Quintilian, that committed Ciceronian, eschewed it. He preferred didactic exposition of the sort we find in the *Institutio*, which doubtless also characterized the lost *De causis corruptae eloquentiae*; it is a form well suited to Quintilian's personality and profession. A discussion of oratory in dialogue form was therefore not obligatory. On the other hand, it was clearly congenial to the temperament and manner of Tacitus, especially the opportunity to create a dramatic scenario involving historical personages at a particular moment in time: compare, for example, the remarkable exchange between Seneca and Nero in Book 14 of the *Annals* (53–56). Much excellent work has been done to illustrate Tacitus' debt to Cicero in the *Dialogus*. Yet as instructive as these results are, the similarities tend in people's minds to overshadow the differences between the two authors. And it is in these differences, more than in the imitation and borrowings, that the deeper significance of the *Dialogus* is to be found.[52]

One of these differences is the nature of the argumentation, which is unlike that in any of the ancient writers of dialogue who have come down to us. For example, in Plato, generally speaking, the conversational form involves the interlocutors in a common search into a complex, abstract question; the search proceeds by stages toward the truth, but not attaining it with sufficient certainty to warrant expounding it as dogma. Sometimes one or more of the interlocutors remain to the end unconvinced by Socrates' position. In Cicero, on the other hand, who claimed to be writing

hintergründig; mit ihrer überbetonten Einseitigkeit deuten sie etwas Verschwiegendes an, das innere Verhalten des Maternus zu den Wertenden der altrömishcen Staatsform"; (p. 494): "er erkennt und fühlt die Antinomie und empfindet sie nur noch bitterer als der Dichter, der sich leichter schadlos hält."

[51] Barnes (1986: 235) argues that, in part, Tacitus chose the dialogue form and set it in 75 to refute Quintilian's assumptions about the health of oratory "without needing to refer to Quintilian at all." I am not convinced that Tacitus aimed chiefly to criticize Quintilian, even in the speeches of Messala (see subsequent discussion).

[52] Perhaps the most striking difference is seen in Maternus' climactic speech, where he argues that oratory flourishes in times of political turmoil; this flatly contradicts Cicero's claim that oratory is the product of a well-ordered and peaceful state. The verbal parallels could scarcely be more pointed: compare 40.2, "est magna illa et notabilis eloquentia alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem uocant, comes seditionum, effrenati populi incitamentum," with *Brut.* 45, "pacis est comes otique socia et iam bene constitutae ciuitatis quasi alumna quaedam eloquentia," and *De or.* 2.35, "languentis populi incitatio et effrenati moderatio." See Koestermann (1930: 415–21), Bringmann (1970: 171–74), R. Martin (1981: 63–64). Caplan's statement (1944: 318) that "Cicero's thought is not necessarily in conflict with that of Tacitus' interlocutor" seems to me to be controverted by the facts and by the language.

Aristotelio more, "in the Aristotelian manner," the truth is already ascertained.[53] The dialogue form permits this truth to be expounded in a dramatic way and for other opinions to find expression.[54] But in the end the various parts fall together into a single system. In the extensive prefaces to each book of the *De oratore*, for example, Cicero tells his brother Quintus what his own beliefs are and that Crassus is his spokesman (1.120). All the interlocutors of the *De oratore* are in agreement when the long disquisition comes to a close. Moreover, some topics are discussed in an informal, piecemeal manner, marked by casual and occasionally frequent interruptions.[55]

Tacitus' manner is wholly different. He sets out six speeches arranged in three antithetical pairs. Each speech has been composed according to the formal rules of rhetoric. The first speech by Aper illustrates this formal structure. He begins with a *partitio*, or statement outlining the topics that he will cover: utility, pleasure, and fame—*utilitas*, *uoluptas*, *fama* (5.4). Each *topos* comes up in order and is formally introduced, the first by "nam si ad utilitatem uitae . . ." (5.5), the second by "ad uoluptatem oratoriae eloquentiae transeo" (6.1), the third (7.3) by "fama et laus cuius artis cum oratorum gloria comparanda est?" The main body, or *tractatio*, of the speech over, Aper then selects, in standard rhetorical fashion, some *exempla* by way of illustrative proof: in this case, the contemporary orators Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus. In power, wealth, and fame few can beat these fellows, Aper asserts. He next launches his *refutatio* (9.1–10.2) by arguing, as one might anticipate, that poetry cannot match oratory in respect to utility, pleasure, or fame. In his *conclusio* (10.3–8) he concedes that, for those who do not have the talent for oratory, poetry is a creditable substitute: a lesser form of *eloquentia*, in fact. At the end he makes an appeal to Maternus to give up his defense of Cato: it is dangerous, and Aper is worried for him. The appeal is cast in the form of the rhetorical figure of *anteoccupatio*, in which Aper anticipates arguments Maternus might use in his coming defense and rebuts them now.[56]

Each speech is formally structured, therefore. There are no interruptions;[57] each person finishes what he has to say before anyone else begins.

[53] Cic. *Fam.* 1.9.23; cf. *Att.* 13.19.4. Shackleton Bailey (1977: 315) cites *Acad.* 2.119, "flumen orationis aureum fundens Aristoteles," adding "mainly continuous exposition in well-rounded periods as opposed to Platonic conversation."

[54] At *De or.* 1.206, for example, we learn that what Antonius is about to say will express the opinion of Crassus also. Cf. Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 34, 74–75).

[55] Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 75–82, 91–94) analyzes the variety of techniques that Cicero used for the different types of dialogues he wrote. The *Dialogus* is closest to the *De oratore*, she argues. For Cicero's own comments, see *Att.* 4.16.2–3.

[56] *Dial.* 10.5: "cum praesertim ne ad illud quidem confugere possis, quod plerisque patrocinatur . . ."; 10.7: "sentio quid responderi possit." See Güngerich (1980: 43).

[57] The one at 27.1 is the exception; but note that Messala is allowed to speak in defense of the ancients for quite a while before being cut off (25.1–26.8). The statement at 16.4 is not an

Nor do the speeches show in any systematic way where opposing views are in error. Only on particular points (such as the naming of Marcellus and Crispus as exemplars of great orators, to which Maternus objects) do they respond to one another.[58] Nor are concessions made, since they are a sign of weakness.[59] No one, for example, says: "Well, you might be right on this point; so let's push the discussion forward on this basis." There is no dialectical progress. The job of the speaker is to defend a point of view with an appearance of full certainty, using all the weaponry from the rhetorical arsenal that he can muster.

It should be clear what type of argumentation is being deployed in the *Dialogus*. It comes from the courtroom and from the *suasoriae* and *controuersiae* as practiced in the schoolroom and the halls of adult declamation. The speaker voluntarily takes up, or is assigned, a point of view or a client, either for defense or for attack. Speeches in the Roman historians come from the same rhetorical workshop. The subjects of the *suasoria* were, after all, historical figures at certain crises in their careers: for example, "Cicero Deliberates Whether to Beg Antony's Pardon" (Seneca, *Suasoria* 6). Sometimes, by a perverse twist of fate, the bizarre topics of the *controuersia* appeared in real life. Take this case, which might well have been the subject of an actual *controuersia*. The Law says: An uncle may not marry his niece, for this is incest. The emperor Claudius declares his intention of marrying Agrippina. You, now, are picked to speak for the defense. This, of course, is what L. Vitellius finds himself doing in Book 12 of the *Annals* (5–7). Or, more notoriously, this case: The Law says: A son shall not kill his mother, for this is matricide. In Book 14 (10–11) of the *Annals* the unenviable task of defending the son is given to Seneca. Tacitus gives us an outline of Seneca's arguments in a letter to the senate that he composed for Nero. The historian has, however, two criticisms. It is instructive to note what he alleges bothers him and what does not. Not the plea that Nero killed his mother in self-defense after she had tried to have him assassinated (such a claim must form the basis of the defense in order to justify matricide). Not the list of outrages that she was alleged to have committed since the days of Claudius, and which her loyal son had spent much time over many years trying to conceal, or at least to palliate (some of which were true, others believed to be true). No, what bothered Tacitus was, first, the account in Nero's letter of the collapsed boat (14.11). Was anyone so

interruption by Aper of Messala, who has not yet begun to speak, but a preemption. At 32.7 Messala voluntarily ends, and is then urged by Maternus to continue with another phase of his subject, which he does at 33.4.

[58] Cf. the comments of Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 110 and n. 317).

[59] The passage at 10.8, to be discussed, is not a concession by Aper to an argument by Maternus, who has not spoken yet, but is an admission that a modern orator who wishes to play it safe will not go on the offensive as prosecutor (as do the *delatores*, Marcellus and Crispus, who are cited as the exemplars of the modern successful orator).

simpleminded as to believe that this happened by accident, as Seneca claimed? And, second, was anyone so simpleminded as to believe that a woman, after being wounded in what was claimed to be an accident at sea, would send a single man with a dagger through the ranks of soldiers that guarded the emperor to assassinate him? Tacitus is bothered less by the fact that the whole defense of the matricide was a tissue of inventions, which it patently was, than by Seneca's failure to make the inventions cohere and seem credible. In the face of the enormity of matricide, the connoisseur of rhetoric is alert to the plausibilities.

Putting one's case in the best light requires selectivity: what to include and what to leave unmentioned. Then again, certain facts and illustrative examples will, like objects positioned for a photograph, be spotlighted from flattering angles.[60] In addition, heightened colors will be applied, including whiteners to one's own case, blacking to that of the opponents.

Selectivity of argument in the *Dialogus* is everywhere present, both on a small and large scale. An example of the former comes in the debate between Aper and Maternus on the primacy of oratory versus poetry. When Aper maintains that oratory is superior to poetry in respect to utility, pleasure, and fame, Maternus counters him on the topics of pleasure and fame, but quite naturally does not mention utility. Were he to try to make a case for poetry's utility in first-century Rome, it would simply not be credible. On a larger scale we see selectivity in the overall picture of oratory that is given in the first and last speeches, especially concerning delation and *delatores*. In Aper's first speech in praise of oratory he does not directly touch on the subject; when he cites Marcellus and Crispus as examples of successful modern orators, he does not mention or hint at the real reason for their success (which would destroy the effect he is trying to achieve). It is left to Maternus in his reply to do that (12.2, 13.4–5). The end of Aper's speech is particularly striking (10.3–8), for here, when the subject of danger versus safety reemerges, he makes two concessions, the first apparent, the second real. First, he allows that poetry is a form of *eloquentia* (10.3–5): however, it is a lesser form of *eloquentia*, and Maternus, who has the ability to scale the heights of eloquence in oratory, should not be content to rest on the lower slopes with the poets (10.5): "cum natura tua in ipsam arcem eloquentiae <te> ferat, errare mauis et summa adepturus in leuioribus subsistis." Second (at 10.8), he concedes that considerations of safety require the contemporary orator to defend friends who are in trouble, rather than to go on the offensive in the role of prosecutor (as the *delatores* did).[61] The circumspect modern orator will therefore confine himself to "priuatas et nostri saeculi controuersias." He will, in effect, be

[60] Cf. Martin and Woodman (1989: 31).

[61] *Dial.* 10.8: "nobis satis sit priuatas et nostri saeculi controuersias tueri, in quibus si quando necesse sit pro periclitante amico potentiorum aures offendere et probata sit fides et libertas excusata."

content to rest at an elevation somewhere below the summit of true eloquence. This concession does not fit well with the picture of oratory that he sketched earlier in his speech.

Maternus argues in his last speech that the greatest orations in Greece and Rome were political in nature (37.6–8): Cicero's fame rests, for example, not on his defense of Quinctius or of Archias, but on the Catilinarians, the defense of Milo, the Verrines, and the Philippics. Speaking on civil cases in the modern centumviral court, he argues, limits the speaker in subject matter and freedom of expression (38.2–39.3). Maternus' case requires that he underestimate the possibility of great oratory in civil cases (yet on balance most ancients—and moderns—would probably agree with his judgment about the primacy of political oratory). Conspicuous by its absence in this speech is any reference to the activity of the *delatores*. Maternus cannot mention them because they do not fit with his speech's picture of the contemporary world as an age of security and little wrongdoing (41.4): "quid [sc. opus est] uoluntariis accusationibus cum tam raro et tam parce peccetur?"[62]

Exaggeration, like selectivity, is everywhere present in the argumentation of the *Dialogus*. In the first debate between Aper and Maternus, Aper argues that the poet gets little respect (9.1–10.2). He has a great deal of fun (9.3–4) describing how the harried poet, after sweating over his verses day and night for a year, is forced, when it comes time to give a recitation, to pressure friends into attending. At his own expense he fits out an auditorium, rents the seats, and gets the programs ready. His reward? At the recitation he is greeted with a scattering of applause and a few empty-headed bravos; within two days no one remembers a thing about it. An amusing picture: selective in the unflattering details it includes, and exaggerated, although not overly so. The scenario is based on believable elements (compare the first satire of Persius). At the same time, Aper foresees an argument that Maternus might use in rebuttal: the recent gift of 500,000 sesterces from the emperor Vespasian to the poet Saleius Bassus, Secundus' best friend (9.5). Aper must preempt that argument now (*anteoccupatio*), before Maternus gets to it. How to do this? Well, says Aper, the 500,000 is certainly marvelous and generous. But how much better it would be if Bassus earned his own keep, rather than being beholden to the liberality of others.[63]

[62] On the narrow focus of this last speech, despite its fundamental brilliance, see Heldmann (1982: 274).

[63] *Dial.* 9.5: "laudauimus nuper ut miram et eximiam Vespasiani liberalitatem, quod quingenta sestertia Basso donasset. pulchrum id quidem, indulgentiam principis ingenio mereri: quanto tamen pulchrius, si ita res familiaris exigat, se ipsum colere, suum genium propitiare, suam experiri liberalitatem!" Aper's language implies that the poet must play up to the emperor from a position of dependency. Earlier at 8.3 he had argued that the orators Marcellus and Crispus, by contrast, stood on an equal footing in their friendship with Vespasian, who, *patientissimus ueri*, well knew they brought to the friendship something he could never give them (i.e., their oratorical talent). The logic here is obviously defective, both because without the emperor neither orator would have much standing, and because Vespasian is as unable to give Bassus his poetic talent as Marcellus and Crispus theirs in oratory.

Maternus' description of the poet's world is more exaggerated than Aper's picture of the harried poet. Poetry emerged in the far-distant days, he says, of a golden age. There were no orators then because there were no wrongdoers for orators to defend.[64] Poets in those days were the vehicles of divine utterance; they even broke bread with the gods. Maternus cites as examples Orpheus and Linus. He concedes that all this may seem to Aper "excessively mythological—and made up" ("fabulosa nimis et composita," 12.5). Well, yes. And Maternus' examples should make us think twice also, for while the *fame* of Orpheus and Linus is indisputable, their poetic careers were scarcely such as to give one confidence about the repose and security that the poetic calling is supposed to entail. What happened to Orpheus and Linus was not pleasant. And, of course, there is Maternus himself. It is he, and no orator, who has offended those in power and who will not abate his freespokenness. His is a retreat not from danger, but into it. The utopian world of the poet that he depicts seems particularly unreal in the face of the perilous situation his poetry has put him in at the present moment.[65]

When educated people heard speeches such as those in the *Dialogus*, therefore, they judged them on two broad levels. On one, they listened as knowledgeable practitioners and as connoisseurs, looking for ingenuity and plausibility: are the arguments apt and clever, are the examples telling, has the opponent's case been adroitly impugned, is the language choice and apposite? Yet a case that is clever and plausible will not necessarily convince. Hence they also listened on a second level: namely, does the speaker have a *good* case? Do I myself believe it? The listener recognizes easily the rhetorical cosmetics the speaker is using, since the listener regularly employs them himself. He will be aware of how the speaker has attempted to camouflage the weaker aspects of his case. And because you cannot identify the weaker aspects without being aware of the stronger, the listener will also be alert to the speaker's effectiveness in playing to the real strengths of his case.[66]

[64] Cf. Hor. *Ars* 391–407. From *Ann.* 3.26 it would appear that Tacitus believed that early man lived in state of happiness and virtue, untouched by evil desires, committing no criminal acts and hence having no need of laws to punish wrongdoers. Heilmann (1989) assumes that Maternus speaks for Tacitus here and that there is no exaggeration or humor in what he says: for Heilmann the speech is a straightforward statement of Tacitus' ethical and political credo.

[65] See R. Martin (1981: 63).

[66] Cf. *Ann.* 4.31.2: "nec occultum est, quando ex ueritate, quando adumbrata laetitia facta imperatorum celebrentur."

The fame of the poet as disputed by Aper and Maternus illustrates how the reader may size up the underlying strengths and weaknesses of an argument. Praise for a poet is weak and evanescent, Aper declares. Yet sitting beside him is proof to the contrary: Maternus, holding the manuscript of the offending *Cato* in his hands, and with *Thyestes* in the works. *Cato* has created such a stir that Aper at the end of his speech admits to anxiety about Maternus' well-being. On the other side of the political fence is the emperor himself, who has given 500,000 sesterces to the poet Bassus. Aper's attempt to explain this away is amusing and clever, but it is weak. A half-million sesterces is a lot of money, even in Aper's terms.[67]

Look now at Maternus' reply concerning the issue of fame. Would Aper like, Maternus asks, to measure Homer's renown against that of Demosthenes? Or that of Euripides and Sophocles against that of Lysias and Hyperides? On the Roman side, Maternus says he is willing to compare the fame of a single play by Ovid, the lost *Medea*, against anything by Asinius Pollio or Messala Corvinus. And there are more detractors of Cicero than there are of Virgil, he notes. Virgil, in fact, is the capstone of his *exempla*: a poet beloved, he says, by Augustus and by the people. Proof of the former is found in the extant correspondence of Augustus, of the latter in the incident in the theater, when the people rose to their feet when verses of Virgil were read out; when they realized that the poet himself was present, they venerated him as if he were Augustus. Maternus then has some remarks to make on Aper's choice of Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus as examples of successful orators. A repellent duo, he asserts (13.4). What do they have that anyone would want? Because they fear for themselves, or are feared by others? Because, even though bound by the shackles of flattery, they seem neither slavish enough to their masters nor free enough to us? They have no more independence than a freedman, he asserts.[68]

It is clear who has the stronger case on the issue of fame.[69] When a speaker argues by describing character types rather than real persons, such as Aper's account of the poet who gets no respect (or Maternus' of the mythical poet of yesteryear, for that matter), warning signals will be triggered in the mind of anyone versed in ancient rhetoric (however much he

[67] But contrast the five million sesterces given to Eprius Marcellus for his prosecution of Thrasea Paetus under Nero (*Ann.* 16.33.2).

[68] *Dial.* 13.4: "nam Crispus iste et Marcellus, ad quorum exempla me uocas, quid habent in hac sua fortuna concupiscendum: quod timent, an quod timentur? quos, cum cotidie aliquid rogentur, ii quibus praestant indignantur? quod alligati cum adulatione nec imperantibus umquam satis serui uidentur nec nobis satis liberi? quae haec summa eorum potentia est? tantum posse liberti solent."

[69] It is surely a mistake to say, as Hass-von Reitzenstein does (1970: 152, 194 n. 388), that Maternus' statement at 4.2 decides the question of the priority of oratory over poetry before the first pair of speeches even gets underway. I believe that both good and poor arguments are advanced on each side.

might applaud the cleverness and inventiveness of the speaker). On the other hand, when a speaker cites a series of specific examples, naming names, the listener will still be on his guard, but he will have something solid with which to make a judgment.

Conclusions

In one respect Häussler may have come closest to explaining what I believe is going on in the *Dialogus*, although not in the sense he meant nor for the reasons he gives. Häussler, as noted earlier, likens the characters in Tacitus to people swathed in a wrapping that must be removed before the real personalities come into view. But the wrapping has been put not so much around people as around the arguments that Tacitus assigns to them.

In fact, the concentration by scholars on the individuals in the *Dialogus* has created much needless confusion because of the twentieth-century assumption that, in order for each interlocutor to be consistently characterized, the arguments given to him must be consistent also.[70] The characters are indeed "consistent," but in ancient, not modern, terms. By training, habit, and volition the speakers aim to present the strongest case they can for a particular point of view. This results in what moderns perceive to be exaggeration and contradictions, but what the ancients would have regarded as a natural and obligatory result for any speaker worth his salt. Thus, when Maternus gives two quite dissimilar pictures of contemporary public life, the differences are due chiefly—probably wholly—to the different rhetorical aims of his two speeches. In the first he describes it as dangerous and bloody (*sanguinans*, 12.2) because he wants to justify his abandoning public life. In the second he wants to show that great oratory flourishes in times of political upheaval; hence he must describe his own age, in which great oratory no longer thrives, as secure and peaceful. Paradoxically put, Maternus is being consistent in his inconsistency.

There is an important additional point to be made, which many recent scholars have emphasized as well: in the *Dialogus* no speaker is satirized, no line of argument is without merit.[71] Tacitus has created the most effective cases he can for the several interlocutors; their speeches are ones that he might have declaimed himself had he agreed to defend the several points of view. It is wrong to claim, for example, that Tacitus' *chief* aim is to attack the views of Quintilian in the speech on education that he gives to Mes-

[70] See the acute comments on characterization in the *Dialogus* by Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 94, 113–16).

[71] See Häussler (1969: 46–67), Goodyear (1970b: 15–16), Williams (1978: 45), Murgia (1980: 111), R. Martin (1981: 65–66), Heldmann (1982: 271), Barnes (1986: 236).

sala,[72] or to make us mistrust Aper by characterizing him as brash, rude, and materialistic.

Despite Messala's one-sided picture of education both in the time of Cicero and in his own day, there is at bottom much truth in what he says: for example, students in earlier days did indeed learn more by observing eminent statesmen speaking about real-life political and civil questions than do their contemporary counterparts, and it is reasonable for the reader to consider this a symptom, if not a cause, of the decline of oratory. Messala's argument here is based on the premise that the political life of each age is a determining factor, and, as such, it complements Maternus' thesis about political conditions in his last speech. Yet there, because Maternus concentrates almost wholly on the contrast between peace and unrest, his account is one-sided and incomplete, and requires views like that of Messala to round it out.[73]

As for Aper, he is neither brash nor rude.[74] For one thing, Tacitus would scarcely so characterize his old teacher. For another, the dialogue is carried on in an atmosphere of urbane politeness, in which sensitivity to feelings of the others is paramount. Such behavior is, as Messala declares, "the rule by which discussions of this sort are conducted."[75] As for Aper's materialism, his claim that the successful orator will acquire wealth, reputation, and influence was both a fact and a goal of Roman upper-class life. He observes that the display of statues and portrait busts is among the lesser rewards of the successful public man (8.4); still, they are coveted as much as wealth and property, which, he says, you will find people more often denouncing than disdaining. Maternus in his reply concedes that somehow such busts and statues had gotten into his house "against my will" ("quae etiam me

[72] Brink (1989: 488–94) argues that for Messala there was no hope of reviving Ciceronianism and thereby improving modern education and oratory: for Messala it was an aetiology "of irretrievable decline" (p. 493); hence his speech is a trenchant critique of Quintilian. Williams (1978: 31), on the other hand, says: "His attitude is . . . optimistic, since all that is needed is educational reform." But nowhere does Messala argue or imply either alternative. His rhetorical agenda requires him to paint the education of Cicero's day in bright colors and of his own in dark colors. Whether improvement is possible does not come into consideration. It is Maternus in his last speech who argues that great oratory is no longer possible: if anyone in the *Dialogus* is to be regarded as rejecting Quintilian (and this for me is an open question) it would be, in my view, Maternus, not Messala.

[73] Klingner (1932: 153–54 = 1961: 492–93) well emphasizes the fact that Maternus measures political health according to the criteria of peace and quiet alone; other values are not brought into play.

[74] So Williams (1978: 28), speaking of Aper's "brashness and pragmatism and vulgar sense of values." Barnes (1986: 237) agrees; cf. Brink (1989: 495–96). The values by and large are those of the twentieth century, not first-century Rome.

[75] *Dial.* 27.2: ". . . cum sciatis hanc esse eius modi sermonum legem, iudicium animi citra damnum adfectus proferre." Compare also Aper's graceful compliments to his fellow speakers at 23.5–6.

nolente in domum meam inruperant," 11.3). Evidently he is not about to remove them.

If, as I have claimed, Tacitus is not satirizing any of the interlocutors, and if no line of argument is without merit, what are we to make of Aper's defense of modern oratory? Tacitus himself, after all, was convinced of the decline. Yet, although we may reject Aper's main thesis, his ideas on many matters are acute and credible. For example, his view of history and of historical development over the span of nearly a thousand years prompts him to speculate about the relative difference between "then" and "now," and how one can justify styling something as "old" (*antiquus*). This is not as easy as some assume: one's view of past time can be slippery and deceptive.[76] Nor is it unimportant; what Romans were willing to call *antiquus*, as well as the moral values that they attached to the word, colored much of their thinking.[77] Aper well argues that because something is old that does not mean it is better (a common assumption, but nowhere more common than at Rome).[78] In his remarks on "taste" (*iudicium*, *aures*) he asserts that standards of artistic excellence change over time, because they are the products of historical development. When he maintains that this evolution is one of ever-increasing improvement, we might be disinclined to follow him. Yet his basic point is telling: we all reflect to some extent the sensibilities of our own era, however much we might admire this or that earlier age or writer; this is yet another view that complements the main thesis of Maternus' last speech. Cicero had the same argument with his contemporaries that I am having with you, he says (22.1), and, for all of Cicero's greatness as a writer, there are many aspects of his style that to us seem old-fashioned, inept, and unsophisticated (22.3–23.1). Even the greatest admirers of the ancients, he observes, imitate them selectively.[79]

I have argued that the case Tacitus has created for each speaker is a good case, one that he might have written for himself if asked to defend a given point of view. His intention is not to satirize any of the interlocutors, since

[76] An example is Messala's confidently classing Asinius Pollio and Messala Corvinus among the ancients, ignoring the fact that both practiced declamation on unreal topics (discussed earlier) and that Pollio gave one of his most famous speeches before the centumviral court (38.2: Maternus supplies this fact).

[77] Barnes terms it silly and a quibble (1986: 237); Messala claims that it is merely a matter of terminology (25.1–2). Contrast R. Martin's comment (1981: 62): "His [Aper's] attempt to see the problem in an historical perspective is an important feature of the dialogue." Horace addressed the problem in much the same spirit as does Aper: *Ep.* 2.1.34–49.

[78] Cf. Tacitus' comments at *Ann.* 2.88.3, 3. 55.4–5. In the second passage (5) Tacitus says "nec omnia apud priores meliora, sed nostra quoque aetas multa laudis et artium imitanda posteris tulit." Contemporary literature has achieved much, therefore, and Syme (1958: 624 n. 3; cf. 339 and 565) with reason sees in the remark a "veiled and personal claim." I owe these references to Professor A. J. Woodman.

[79] *Dial.* 23.6: "nam et te, Messala, uideo laetissima quaeque antiquorum imitantem."

each has some important truths to impart, however one-sided their speeches may be. But might he not have "stacked the deck," so to speak, by giving here and there an interlocutor weak or specious arguments in order to satirize or undermine a certain person or point of view? I am inclined to think not, or at least to think that, if such was his intention, he did so with a light touch. Take, for example, Aper's selection of Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus as exemplars of the successful orator. We can be sure that Tacitus did not admire these men, both because of the unfavorable opinion he expresses in his historical works of *delatores* as a class and of Marcellus and Crispus as individuals.[80] In the *Dialogus* Maternus echoes these views by excoriating both the *delatores* as a group (12.2; cf. 13.5) and Marcellus and Crispus (13.4). It would thus seem that Tacitus has given to Aper examples that are weak and undermine his case. But this is true only when judged at the second level of reading that I outlined earlier—at the level of recognizing the real strengths and weaknesses that underlie a case. At the first level of reading, that of appreciating the rhetorical expertise of a clever speaker, the choice of Marcellus and Crispus is splendid. Aper selects them not only because they were undeniably among the most prominent speakers in Rome circa A.D. 75, but also because they lent themselves to being presented as what might be called "worst-case examples." By this I mean that the most striking example an orator could cite to prove that one activity was superior to another was a person who, despite a whole series of disadvantages, surmounted them by means of that activity alone, and succeeded because of it. Aper is therefore bent on giving as negative a picture of Marcellus and Crispus as he can. They came from "the outermost parts of the world," he says ("in extremis partibus terrarum," 8.1)—to wit, Capua and Vercellae. The families into which they were born in these remote backwaters were lowly and impoverished. What is more, both are men of bad character ("neuter moribus egregius," 8.1), while one of them suffers from a repellent physical deformity. Oratorical talent alone, he argues, has raised them to the pinnacle of success in Roman political life. When viewed from this perspective, Marcellus and Crispus are impressive examples indeed of the power of oratory.[81]

Another element of the *Dialogus* deserves emphasis: its humor. Aper and Maternus are its chief vehicles, Aper's robust and freewheeling sense of fun contrasting with the subtler wit of Maternus. Aper is in his element when attacking the case of his opponents; he (which is to say, Tacitus) enjoys himself greatly, when, for example, he mocks the harried poet or

[80] See *Ann.* 1.74.1–2; 16.29, 33.2; *Hist.* 2.10.1; 4.4–8, 41–44. Cf. Winterbottom (1964).

[81] Tacitus has chosen the two examples "impartially," for his readers would know that one of them, Marcellus, was soon to fall from power and commit suicide (Dio 65.16.3–4), but that Crispus would continue on, enjoying a long life of delation and honors, dying in old age late in the reign of Domitian.

criticizes the faults of earlier orators, particularly Cicero. Maternus' wit comes most to the fore in the intervals between speeches: his sly comments on Aper's performance are particularly delicious (11.1, 15.3, 24.1–2). He also shows a sense of humor when arguing certain aspects of his own case. After describing the utopian world of the early poet, he says mischievously, "uel si haec fabulosa nimis et composita uidentur, illud certe mihi concedes, Aper . . ." (12.5). This is a partly tongue-in-cheek riposte to Aper's preference, stated earlier (8.1), for modern, up-to-date examples: "libentius enim nouis et recentibus quam remotis et oblitteratis exemplis utor." Messala in his earnestness is a foil to Aper and Maternus; the latter at one point even twits him gently for his seriousness (27.1).

Earlier I argued that the reader appraises an ancient speech, at least in the Roman period, on two levels: as a connoisseur who appreciates rhetorical expertise and ingenuity, and as a critic who is able to size up the underlying strengths and weaknesses of a case. A continuous sorting process goes on in the mind of the reader as he moves through the text, therefore, the sorting being triggered by a complex set of catalysts: cultural, psychological, rhetorical, intellectual. Since the case that each speaker argues is blinkered and one-sided, the reader selects the arguments of the several speakers that convince him and, in effect, creates in his mind a composite case of his own.[82] Let me stress that there is nothing novel or unusual in this double reading or in this sorting process. It is part of the cultural matrix of the age, a mirror of how they spoke and how they thought. It also seems to me to be a mirror of Tacitus himself in his other works: in style, thought, and narrative method.

A striking feature of the *Dialogus*, especially when one compares it with its chief Ciceronian model, the *De oratore*, is the self-effacement of the author.[83] Cicero in that work is ever-present, both in his lengthy addresses to Quintus in the prefaces to each of the three books, and in the open admission that Crassus is his spokesman. But Tacitus in the *Dialogus* is present only in the first two chapters, first to respond to Iustus' question and second to introduce his two teachers, Aper and Secundus. From the moment they enter Maternus' bedroom ("intrauimus . . . deprehendimus" at 3.1) to the penultimate word, his presence is not felt. The last sentence reads, "cum adrississent, discessimus": "*They* laughed. *We* left."

Tacitus gives us in his own person only one clue about the nature of the argumentation and how we should view it. This comes at the beginning in a single clause (1.3), "cum singuli diuersas quidem sed probabiles causas

[82] R. Martin (1981: 64) well observes: "The reader is left to piece together his own conclusions from the arguments he has heard."

[83] Well stressed by Hass-von Reitzenstein (1970: 18, 33–34, 96–100), who notes that Cicero's role in the *De natura deorum* is close to that of Tacitus in the *Dialogus*. Cicero at *Att.* 13.19.3–5 describes his methods of using interlocutors in his dialogues.

adferrent"[84] ("They individually advanced differing points of view, but ones that are *probabiles*"). *Probabiles* might mean two things: either "having the appearance of truth," which would appeal to those reading on the first level, or "diverse points of view that should cause one to say *probo*—'I approve,'" which answers more to the second level.[85] Or perhaps *probabiles* signifies both. In any case, the modern reader has the same challenging task as did the ancient listener: following along on two levels (enjoying it along the way) and conducting the sorting process. At the end, readers decide for themselves.

[84] Reading *quidem* of V rather the meaningless *vel easdem* of most of the other manuscripts. See Murgia (1978: 172).

[85] See Güngerich (1980: 8–9). Hass-von Reitzenstein's discussion (1970: 25–31, 117) is not convincing (among other things, she believes Aper cannot be included among the *singuli*).

THREE

SPEECH AND NARRATIVE IN *HISTORIES* 4

Elizabeth Keitel

DESPITE its interesting subject matter, the beginning of the Flavian regime and the Gallic revolt, Book 4 of the *Histories* has attracted little scholarly attention. One can only speculate on the reasons for this lack of interest. Perhaps the large amount of space devoted to events in the provinces holds less appeal for scholars eager to fathom Tacitus' views on *res internae*; others may be discouraged by the dearth of comparative material, which makes a close study of Books 1–3 so fascinating.

The study of speeches has gone the way of the book as a whole. Ironically, Martin, who has made the only substantial analysis of any speech in the book, dismisses at least half of the rest as "little more than rhetorical exercises."[1] And although Aubrion takes pains to demonstrate that Tacitean rhetoric is not incompatible with a concern for historical fidelity, he devotes little space to detailed analysis of individual speeches.[2] In this chapter I consider why Tacitus includes so much speech in Book 4. I contend that far from being rhetorical set pieces the speeches in *Histories* 4 are integral to its narrative and forge a firm thematic link between foreign and domestic narrative within this book and between Book 4 and the preceding three.[3]

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[1] R. Martin (1981: 98). But see R. Martin (1967), a thoughtful analysis of Curtius Montanus' speech at Tac. *Hist.* 4.42.

[2] Aubrion (1985).

[3] Pliny the Elder's history *a fine Aufidii Bassi* is generally believed to have been Tacitus' major source for Book 4. On Pliny in Tacitus' *Histories*, see Fabia (1893: 169–209). For Tacitus' use of the *acta senatus* in *Histories* 4, see Syme (1958: 187–88). Briessmann (1955: 84–105) argued that Tacitus supplemented Pliny with non-Flavian sources. On the other hand, Walser (1951) believed that Tacitus, out of pro-Flavian bias, seriously misrepresented the nature of the Batavian revolt and that the Gauls and Germans did not dream of independence or the establishment of a separate empire. Brunt (1960) effectively refutes this argument. See also Chilver (1985: 8–13).

Whereas we have the comparative evidence of Suetonius and Plutarch, who used the same source as Tacitus, for much of the narrative of A.D. 69, Tacitus' is the only substantial extant

TACITUS AND THE TACITEAN TRADITION

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