

TACITUS

Germany

GERMANIA



With an Introduction, Translation and Commentary by

Herbert W. Benario

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For my wife Janice

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Preface

Tacitus' *Germania* has been, for decades, almost exclusively the province of German-speaking scholars. Their interest requires no explanation, since no other people has been able to evoke an ancient piece of literature as such an integral part of their modern history as have the Germans. In similar manner, Tacitus' monograph on his father-in-law, *Agricola*, in which he devotes much space to the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain, has continually engaged the interest of British scholars and antiquarians.

In the most recent surveys of Tacitean scholarship, there are very few entries dealing with the *Germania* in English. The latest commentary in our language is that of J. G. C. Anderson, published in 1938. Harold Mattingly's translation, in the Penguin series, first appeared in 1948 and attracted many readers. The Loeb Classical Library issued revisions of the original (1914) translations of Tacitus' three minor works in 1970. The translation of the *Germania*, the work of M. Hutton, was revised by E. H. Warmington.

In the years since the Second World War, there have appeared many important works on the *Germania*, including significant commentaries, with much archaeological labor contributing to an increased understanding of Tacitus' narrative. In preparation of my commentary, I have consulted four editions above all, those of Anderson, Forni & Gallo, Lund, and Perl, particularly the latter two, recent and magisterial. In addition, those of Robinson and Much, the latter in its third edition, have often been useful. Lund and Perl have produced massive and learned editions which complement each other rather than overlap.

Nonetheless, the Commentary is meant to reveal my own understanding and interpretation of Tacitus' work. I have attempted always to keep in mind what an English-speaking reader might wish to know. Similarly, there are numerous notes on Latin usage and style which help in untangling and appreciating Tacitus' often difficult and obtuse style.

There are many friends and colleagues from whose works and conversation I have profited over the years. Above all towers the late Sir Ronald Syme, whose great book of more than forty years ago remains the finest yet written on the historian. I am grateful to the editor of this series, Professor Malcolm Willcock, and my friend of many years, Dr. Harry C. Rutledge, Professor Emeritus of Classics, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for their perusal of the manuscript and their advice, suggestions, and amendments.

H. W. B.

Atlanta, Georgia, March 1999

Introduction

1. TACITUS' LIFE AND WRITINGS

Publius Cornelius Tacitus, Rome's greatest historian, was born about 55 A.D., perhaps in Gallia Belgica, where his father was serving as the *procurator's* financial officer (Pliny, *NH* 7.76), perhaps in northern Italy or southern France. His birth thus coincides approximately with the accession of Nero as emperor; the deposition and subsequent suicide of the latter brought about the first great crisis of succession in the empire, which was to be settled by civil war. The year 69, almost the last for the state, as the historian himself put it in *Histories* 1.11.3, impressed itself vividly upon the mind of the young Tacitus; neither Rome nor the provinces were spared the cataclysmic consequences of that upheaval.

The ultimate triumph of Vespasian ushered in a new era; Tacitus entered upon a public career in the capital. The details of his advancement are known. He held minor offices under Vespasian, attained the quaestorship in the early eighties and the double distinction of a praetorship and a priesthood in 88, when Domitian was in the eighth year of his reign. The ancient republican colleges of priests retained their prestige under the principate, and his designation as *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, a member of the board of fifteen charged with the supervision of certain religious ceremonies, was a particular honor in this year, when the emperor celebrated the secular games, the *ludi saeculares*, for which, on another occasion, several generations earlier, Horace had composed a splendid hymn.

The years 89-93 were spent away from Rome, either in service as a legionary commander or as governor of a minor province; both were likely stages in a promising senatorial career. These were years when it was good to be away from Rome; Domitian's autocratic nature hardened after a challenge to his position in 89, and the dark days of a reign of terror, with the extinction of many of the best of the senatorial class, ensued.

Upon his return to Rome, Tacitus shared the brooding despondency of his peers until a new dawn arose in 96 with the assassination of Domitian. An elderly senator, Marcus Cocceius Nerva, succeeded, but his position was insecure because of the grumblings of the praetorian guard over the murder of Domitian and because of his lack of prestige with the armies on the frontiers. In October 97, Nerva adopted as his colleague and destined successor the outstanding general of Rome's armies, then governor along the Rhine. The choice of Marcus Ulpius Traianus, known to posterity as Trajan, was singularly felicitous; it was the key event in the chain of events responsible for the era of the five good emperors, the happiest period of man's history, as Gibbon noted (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* chap. 3).

It seems quite certain that Nerva's decision to adopt Trajan resulted from political pressure which might well have exploded into a civil war comparable to that of almost thirty years before. It is intriguing to speculate upon the role played by the consuls, particularly because Tacitus was one of the *suffect* consuls late in the year. (Under the principate, the consuls who held office at the beginning of the year were known as *ordinarii*; their names designated the year. They were normally succeeded by *consules suffecti*. There was no specified length of time any of the consuls held office, but four months was a popular term.)

Tacitus had a variety of official posts open to him as an ex-consul, but we do not know whether he held any office for the next fifteen years. In 100 he was appointed counsel, together with Pliny the Younger, for the people of the province of Africa, in a suit for extortion and general malfeasance against their former governor, Marius Priscus. Pliny began for the prosecution and spoke for five hours without a break. Tacitus summed up the case; his address was most eloquent and marked with the majesty characteristic of his manner of speech. They won their case; the consul designate, who was the first to express his opinion in the senate, added that counsel had performed their duty well, in a manner worthy of the charge laid upon them. Tacitus was now at the height of his power and renown as an orator, yet he seems never to have delivered another speech. For the rest of his life, he devoted himself to historiography, interrupted only by his tenure of the governorship of the province of Asia in 112-113. Asia and Africa were the two senatorial provinces which only men of consular rank could govern. We do not know when Tacitus died; it seems certain that he survived Trajan. The date of his death is given as early as 117 or as late as 130.

The career of Tacitus the statesman cannot, and should not, be separated from the historian's writings. In antiquity, the writing of history is generally the sphere of a man who has participated in the making of it, for only thus could he gain insight into the interrelationships of events and the workings of men's minds. So it was with Thucydides, Polybius, Cato, Caesar, and Sallust. Tacitus, among the Romans, is certainly the supreme example of the effect of personal experience upon historical outlook. One must not forget that he was a senator before he became an historian.

Thanks to the correspondence of his friend Pliny the Younger, we have an impression of Tacitus as a person. Pliny was some half-dozen years Tacitus' junior and looked up to him with admiration and a certain awe. Pliny's last public office was as imperial legate of the province of Bithynia, perhaps in the very years during which Tacitus governed Asia.

Pliny addressed numerous letters to Tacitus and spoke of him in others (1.6, 1.20, 2.1, 2.11, 4.13, 4.15, 6.9, 6.16, 6.20, 7.20, 7.33, 8.7, 9.10, 9.14, 9.23). The most important historically are 6.16 and 6.20, in which Pliny related the activities of his uncle during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 and how he and his mother survived the disaster. Two letters enable us to appreciate the historian's character and reputation. In 9.23, Pliny delights in telling his correspondent an anecdote which

Tacitus had related to him. Tacitus was sitting in the circus when a stranger nearby asked whether he came from Italy or a province. Tacitus replied that the man should know him from his writings; he then asked, *Tacitus es an Plinius?*, "Are you Tacitus or Pliny?" In 4.15, Pliny speaks of his friend with the words *scis, quem virum*, "you know what kind of man he is."

Tacitus was the author of five works; three are brief, independent monographs, two long and detailed narratives. The first of the three is the *Agricola*, a eulogistic biography of his father-in-law, which appeared early in 98. The conquest of Britain is an important parallel theme. Second is the *Germany*, which followed in the same year. The *Dialogue on Orators* is the third and most controversial of his works, since his name is absent from it in manuscript and its style is so different from the other works that Tacitean authorship is denied or an early date conjectured. The first decade of the principate of Trajan seems, however, to best suit the characters and arguments of the essay.

When Tacitus published the *Dialogue*, he was already working on the *Histories*, which covered the years 69-96. After its completion, he turned to the *Annals*, in which he went back to the death of Augustus and wrote the history of Tiberius, Gaius (better known as Caligula), Claudius, and Nero, the years 14-68.

2. THE GERMANY

The *Germany* is best understood as an ethnographical treatise. Whether Tacitus had an ulterior motive in writing this work is a question that cannot be answered with any certainty. Some think that it contains veiled advice, or even a warning, for the new emperor, Trajan, who was then resident along the Rhine frontier, by underscoring the great threat to Rome from the Germans and suggesting that they were Rome's greatest potential danger. Coincidentally, he could deny Domitian's claim to have pacified Germany. Yet Trajan preferred to retain the *status quo* in Germany and even echo Domitian's boast in his first minting, by issuing coins with the legend *Germania pacata*, "Germany pacified." The emperor thought that his military operations and aspirations should be directed against Dacia to stabilize the Danube frontier, and then, less than a decade later, against Parthia in the east, a campaign from which he did not return.

It seems unlikely, however, that a mere senator, and one whose career embraced civilian rather than military enterprises, would undertake to offer such advice to the masterful general. Nor does it appear probable that the monograph was a preliminary effort to gather material about Germany to be used in graphic detail and vividness in the large works which were to follow. For whatever reason, Tacitus was evidently intrigued by this "noble" people to such a degree that he decided to pass on the results of his researches to the educated aristocracy of Rome.

There is no evidence that Tacitus ever saw Germany himself, but it is certainly possible. He may well have held a legionary command there in the years 89-93, when he was absent from Rome. His prime sources, however, were literary, above

all Pliny the Elder's history of the wars in Germany, in which the latter participated. Information obtained from merchants and travelers who had visited the North also proved valuable. The writing of the ethnography of a country or people had a lengthy tradition, and Tacitus tried his hand at it in this work.

The monograph is quite short, some twenty-seven pages in a scholarly edition, a total of about 750 lines. Its structure is simple. The work falls naturally into two halves of comparable length. The first considers, in general, the land and its people, their customs and practices in chapters 1 through 27; the second is concerned with the descriptions of the individual tribes, in chapters 28 through 46. But each of these main divisions consists of several smaller units.

The general treatment devotes the first five chapters to geographical description of the land and to the origin of the people; the next ten chapters deal with public institutions, the following twelve with those of private life. The public and private sections are of almost precisely the same length.

Tacitus' presentation of the individual tribes is not random. Chapters 28 through 37 describe the tribes of the west and northwest, generally following the line of the Rhine from south to north. The remainder of the work covers the Suebic tribes of the east and north, essentially following the course of the Danube from west to east before he jumps, as he must, to the almost fairy-tale lands of the far east and north. Again, both parts are treated at almost the same length, although the amount of detail that he can present gradually diminishes as he moves farther away from the parts of Germany well known to the Romans through warfare and commerce.

Tacitus had many predecessors in the composition of an ethnological study in which the writer undertook to explain the culture and characteristics of people generally unknown to his audience. Among ancient writers Herodotus is the best known, for his long descriptions of Egypt and Scythia, a region now part of southern Russia. Of Tacitus' Roman antecedents, the most important whose works survive are Caesar and Sallust, the former with his discussions of the Gauls and Germans in the *Gallic War*, the latter with his treatment of the Numidians in his monograph on their prince Jugurtha.

Whatever Tacitus' purpose in writing his work, one of its most striking aspects is the respect shown for the Germans, whose lives and characters are described as purer and simpler than those of his Roman contemporaries. The theme of the noble savage, whose simplicity is shown to be superior to Rome's higher civilization, is a commonplace in ancient writing. Civilization has many advantages, to be sure, but it tends to corrupt *mores*, the basic sense of what is right and proper.

3. ROME'S RELATIONS WITH THE GERMANS UP TO THE TIME OF TACITUS

Rome's first contact with Germanic tribes was in southern lands, not in their homeland. Late in the second century B.C., the Cimbri and Teutons moved into

Gaul and then into the Roman province of Narbonensis and on to northern Italy. They destroyed five consular armies and caused panic in Rome, but Caius Marius, elected consul for five consecutive years to put matters right (104-100) ultimately did so, with decisive victories. The threat from these northern barbarians had now been removed, but Roman respect for their prowess remained for centuries.

Julius Caesar was the first Roman commander to penetrate into German territory, when, during the course of his Gallic campaigns and having earlier defeated the German chieftain Ariovistus, he built a bridge across the Rhine River and briefly showed Roman arms in barbarian lands. This thrust accomplished nothing tangible; it conquered no territory, it defeated no enemy. Yet the psychological impact was significant. Roman power had now penetrated beyond the Rhine, and Germanic fear and respect had been implanted.

More than forty years passed until Rome's attention again turned eastward. The death of Caesar and the ultimate triumph of his adoptive son, Octavian, intervened, until, with his primacy long established and accepted, the Emperor Augustus, as Octavian was known after 27 B.C., pursued a policy which seems to have intended to bring all Germany as far as the river Elbe within the bounds of the empire. From 15 to 7 B.C., his stepsons Drusus and Tiberius waged almost continuous campaigns. When Tiberius departed from Germany, the land was considered settled. Crises in Pannonia then followed; Germany was no longer foremost in the emperor's mind. Not until Publius Quinctilius Varus was appointed governor in 6 A.D. was an attempt made to transform the conquered territory into a province.

Within three years, Varus was dead, the Romans had suffered one of their worst military defeats, and the lands east of the Rhine had been lost. In the year 9, Varus was ambushed by the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius, who had served Rome as an officer in the auxiliaries. The defeat was devastating; it transformed Rome's policy to one which accepted the Rhine as the eastern boundary of Rome's dominion in northern Europe. In spite of the campaigns of Germanicus at the end of Augustus' reign and in the beginning of Tiberius', there were no lasting gains, and Tiberius, when he recalled Germanicus in the year 16, essentially abandoned Germany, judging that the various tribes could be left to their own internecine strife.

This situation remained policy, with minor exceptions. The Emperor Gaius undertook to gain a military reputation by waging war against the Germans, but reality was very different. His campaign was essentially a charade, with slaves dressed as barbarians and then paraded in triumph. In 47, the great general Corbulo, who had penetrated beyond the river frontier, was recalled by the Emperor Claudius. Corbulo's comment, when he received the order, recapitulated Roman policy of retrenchment, now that Claudius had invaded Britain and added a substantial part of that island to Rome's empire. Corbulo said no more than *beatos quondam duces Romanos*, "happy the Roman generals of old," and gave the signal for withdrawal (*Ann.* 11.20.1).

The civil war which followed upon the suicide of Nero in the year 68 was in the north transformed into a foreign war, with large numbers of Gallic and German tribes united to destroy Rome's power and to gain freedom and dominion for themselves. The most important chieftain was Civilis, of the Batavi, who, after initially supporting Vespasian, became a formidable enemy. Yet his efforts ultimately failed, and after his defeat and death there was a general return to the ways of life which had existed before. Some of the German tribes, above all the Chatti, remained recalcitrant and dangerous, and the Emperor Domitian waged war in person against them for several years in the 80s. He claimed conquest, a claim that is surely hyperbolic. But he left tangible evidence of his policy, the construction of a fortified line of defenses to protect Roman territory and control the movement of the barbarians beyond. This was the *limes*, a word which originally meant a road for ease of movement.

The *limes* decisively extended Roman control beyond the natural boundaries of the rivers Rhine and Danube by establishing a continuous defensive line protected by auxiliary forts and watchtowers. At the western end, it began at Rheinbrohl, north of Koblenz, and ran through the Wetterau north of Wiesbaden and Frankfurt before turning sharply south and following the course of the rivers Main and Neckar. At K6ngen, it joined the Raetian *limes*, which ran eastward until it met the Danube at Eining. After the principate of Trajan, although there some changes in the alignment of the German *limes* and the Raetian was reconstructed in stone, the defensive line of fortifications marked the boundary between civilization and barbarism.

4. THE GERMANY'S AFTERLIFE

The story begins with the discovery of Tacitus' *Germania*, the existence of which was known in the decade of the 1420s. The great manuscript-hunter Poggio Bracciolini tried mightily to have it brought from the German monastery of Fulda to Italy, but was repeatedly disappointed. He had been informed that a manuscript which lay there contained three *opera minora* of Tacitus as well as some works of Suetonius. This manuscript, known as the *Hersfeldensis*, was at last brought to Rome in 1455 by Enoch of Ascoli and soon came into the hands (we know not how) of Cardinal Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who not long thereafter became Pope Pius II.

In 1457, the chancellor of the Bishop of Mainz, Martin Mair, wrote Piccolomini a letter in which he lamented the miserable state of the Holy Roman Empire, caused by the Roman Church's harsh imposition of taxes. Mair compared the present with the more glorious past of the Middle Ages.

Piccolomini replied early in the following year with an essay entitled *De ritu, situ, moribus et condicione Germaniae descriptio*, based upon Tacitus' *Germania*. He chose a different basis of comparison, namely the present opposed to the Germany of antiquity. Tacitus here proves invaluable, for Piccolomini is able to

show that it is the church which has brought the Germans from barbarism to their present level of culture.

This essay, which was not published for almost two score years, was nonetheless a revelation, for it invoked the authority of an ancient author in a current dispute, which was as much between Italy and Germany, between north and south, as it was about the proper relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with its adherents outside the Papal States. Piccolomini had employed a Latin treasure which would soon have enormous impact upon the lives of Europe and the Church.

In his reading of the text and his excerpting of those Tacitean comments which denigrated the ancient Germans, he must surely have noted that there were many more which spoke of their bravery and martial qualities. It was these aspects of Tacitus' narrative which were next invoked. In 1471, the Pope's nephew, Giovannantonio Campano, spent several months in Regensburg as the Holy See's representative to the Diet. Since the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, the Roman Pontiffs had endeavored to persuade German cities and princes and, above all, the Holy Roman Emperor, to undertake a crusade against the infidel. The response was marked by a singular lack of enthusiasm, for reasons political, financial, and military. Campano attempted to win over the Germans for this enterprise by painting a splendid picture of the ancient Germans' military prowess and glory, invoking the *Germany*. Like his uncle, Campano compared past and present, but he showed the similarities rather than the differences. Yet he had no more success than his predecessors at such gatherings had had.

The *editio princeps* of the *Germany* appeared in Venice in 1470; the first German printing followed in Nürnberg three years later. In 1496, Piccolomini's essay was published, and it was this event which gave an enormous impetus to enthusiasm for, and study of, Tacitus' monograph. Numerous editions and books concerned with Germany, its peoples, and its history rapidly followed.

In the year 1492, Conrad Celtis had delivered an inaugural address when he was appointed to the faculty of the University of Ingolstadt. This *oratio*, based upon the *Germany*, invoked the warlike character of the ancient Germans in support of the Empire against the Papacy. Eight years later he presented the first series of lectures on the *Germany* when he had moved to Vienna. The first of the German humanists, he represents a substantial body of men who concerned themselves with the Germans, not only in literature but also as revealed in history and tangible remains. They began the idealization of the Germans as well as research on them.

The German people (at least the educated among them) began to appreciate that they had a past, that there was a common link joining the multitude of states and principalities, and that these ancestors, so different from the ancient Romans, were like them. Unlike Gaul, ancient Germany had never been conquered by Rome. In the present day, as many thought, why should the German peoples be subordinate, even inferior, to the Latin races of Italy and France?

Following hard upon Celtis' lectures and early writings were the great works of Jakob Wimpfeling, which were accessible to a relatively wide public. He employed Tacitus' *Germania* in his work of similar title (1501) to argue against the French and their supporters that the Rhine was not the eastern boundary of France. Tacitus was the source of the information that, in antiquity, tribes whom the historian called German occupied territories west of the river. And, in his *Epithoma* of German history published four years later, long stretches of the Tacitean text are cited.

The year 1515 saw the *editio princeps* of Tacitus' *Annales 1-6*, wherein the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius plays a significant role in the first two books, both as the greatest and most successful of Rome's enemies and as a foil for the Roman people's favorite, Germanicus. At the end of the second book, in the course of his obituary of Arminius, Tacitus calls him *liberator haud dubie Germaniae*, "unquestionably the liberator of Germany," and a man unbeaten in war. At last Germans of modern times had an historical hero, who had maintained the freedom of the Germans (as naively interpreted) against the rapacious Italians of the south. The ancient struggle between Roman and German, between south and north, served as a paradigm for the present day.

Two years later, one of the most significant events in the history of the western world occurred in Wittenberg, when Martin Luther posted on the door of the Schlosskirche his ninety-five theses challenging the sale of indulgences. The religious revolution which ensued, the Protestant Reformation, attracted a substantial number of the leading intelligentsia in German-speaking lands and exacerbated the political and emotional split with a theological cause. Hatred and distrust between Germany and Italy, with integrity on one side and corruption on the other, became ever more bitter, culminating, perhaps, in the terrible sack of Rome in 1527 by the armies of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.

That event preceded by two years the publication of the literary work which established Arminius as the great German hero in the German mind. This was Ulrich von Hutten's *Arminius*, written in 1519 or 1520 and published posthumously. Its full title is *Arminius. Dialogus Huttenicus quo homo patriae amantissimus patriae laudem celebravit*. The emphasis upon the word *patria* is worth noting; the hero Arminius is the means of the glorification of the Germans and the lands of the various states. In modern terms, Hutten was a rabid nationalist.

From this time on, the development of the Arminius legend and the impact of the *Germany* jointly supported the view among many Germans that they were a people unlike others and superior to them. Invocation of several passages from Tacitus' essay led to political, intellectual, and military decisions which had devastating consequences over centuries in Europe and the world. No other people could claim that a literary masterpiece from antiquity had noted their uniqueness and their prowess. The ancient Germans, after all, unlike the Gauls, had crushed Rome's attempt to conquer them. Arminius was a victorious hero, while Vercingetorix, so highly honored by the French in the nineteenth century, had merely been a noble

loser. Many in the Nazi regime admired the *Germania* as a holy text, and it became a bible of their racist philosophy. Tacitus, the historian of individual liberty and the proper relationship of ruler and ruled, would hardly have approved.

5. LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Tacitus' language and style follow in the tradition of Cato and Sallust. Quintilian spoke admiringly of Sallust's *immortalis velocitas*, his "immortal swiftness," and also commented upon his *brevitas*, the ability to say things briefly (*Inst. Orat.* 10.1.102, 10.1.32). These qualities of style are similarly characteristic of Tacitus, yet not uniformly; contrary to common belief, many of his sentences are long and involved, with appendages to the main body of the sentence which appear when its conclusion had already been anticipated. His language is particularly marked by the quality of which Pliny spoke, *σεμνότης*, "majesty" or "dignity" (2.11.17), which raises the entire narrative above the commonplace. Loftiness is also a characteristic of Tacitus' work in both theme and vocabulary. He is interested neither in the colloquial nor the routine, and often employs periphrases to avoid mentioning them.

Yet Tacitus was, one might almost say, an anachronism in his own age; at the same time, he was a forerunner or what was to come. Quintilian, who held the first paid chair of Latin rhetoric at Rome under Vespasian, preached a clarity of style which was best exemplified by the language of Cicero. In this Quintilian went against the contemporary trend; Seneca, as Tacitus himself remarks, was able to please the majority and to mold and satisfy, with his rhetorical and seemingly artificial style, the taste of the day (*Ann.* 13.3.1). Yet this style did not appeal to Tacitus and, although no one could have forecast what was to come, it was to lose favor under the emperor Hadrian, who preferred archaism and the old.

Tacitus' own style, however, did not remain unchanged throughout his life. There is development which can be discerned not only from work to work but also within works, from one part to another, particularly in the *Annals*. Several stylistic features call for attention. His narrative is marked by *variatio* to an extraordinary degree; this desire for variation is particularly exemplified by lack of parallelism in syntax and vocabulary. There is the deliberate choice of words which have an archaic flavor. There is a poetic quality, both in vocabulary and syntax, which recalls favorite practices of Vergil and Lucan. When synonyms exist, Tacitus tends, as he becomes more mature, to prefer the less common word. These stylistic characteristics have shock value. They are essential for a brilliant and cutting style in which appear many phrases and sentences which can be plucked from context. These *sententiae* often have more than immediate validity and in their judgments become universal in application to the human condition.

The style further is a "pointed" one. That means that there is a certain tension which stems not only from choice of words but also from their position, contrasting or supplementing. The effect is powerful and striking. Frequently Tacitus attaches ablatives, particularly absolutes, to what appears to be a complete thought, so that

the sentence seems to reel onward with an interdependent subordinate construction long after the reader expected that the whole would conclude. These appendages often have great psychological power since they furnish a kind of inevitability to the future. Again, Tacitus often speaks in different places and in different tones about events still in the offing. In the earlier instances he is imprecise about what will happen, yet it gradually appears that what did ultimately occur was the only possible outcome. As one looks back, one discerns that the actual event was indeed forecast.

It is impossible to separate Tacitus' narrative into distinct entities of language, style, and subject matter. These elements are interwoven. One could reasonably say that the style is the man, with subject and language part of it. There is unity among the three; without one, the others would not be as they are.

Tacitus wrote in an age when the bulk of his output was quite remarkable. His chief rival in literature, as far as we can tell from what survives, was Pliny the Younger, whose model was Cicero. Pliny tried to match his idol both in letters and in rhetoric and, although one will hardly say that he succeeded, nonetheless the effort deserves praise. Tacitus rivaled predecessors equally early but no longer as popular; herein is his great innovation, that he made powerful and effective a style and method of the writing of history which had not, it seems, been used for several generations.

Tacitus has often been complimented, or abused, for his psychological approach. Perhaps above all others, he is a virtuoso in his treatment of the psychology of characters and of mood of narrative. His subject is, on the whole, a somber one, perhaps described for the entire corpus of his work by his statement at the beginning of the *Histories* (1.2.1), *Opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saevom*, "I am entering upon a work rich in disasters, terrible in its battles, at war with itself through seditions, savage even in peace itself." Yet even beyond that he is able in his narrative to guide the mood of his readers by subtle choice of potent words and by their presentation. The *Germany* stands at the beginning of the mature Tacitean style and approach; together with the *Agricola*, it forecasts the incisive historian who was to develop over the next score of years.

6. SELECT GRAMMATICAL AND RHETORICAL TERMS

- alliteration*: the use of two or more words in close proximity that begin with the same letter or sound.
- anaphora*: the repetition of a word at the beginning of two or more clauses.
- assonance*: the repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds.
- asyndeton*: the omission of connectives in a series.
- asymmetry*: unbalanced structure.
- chiasmus*: the reversing of the order of words from one phrase to a second, such as noun, adjective, adjective, noun, or

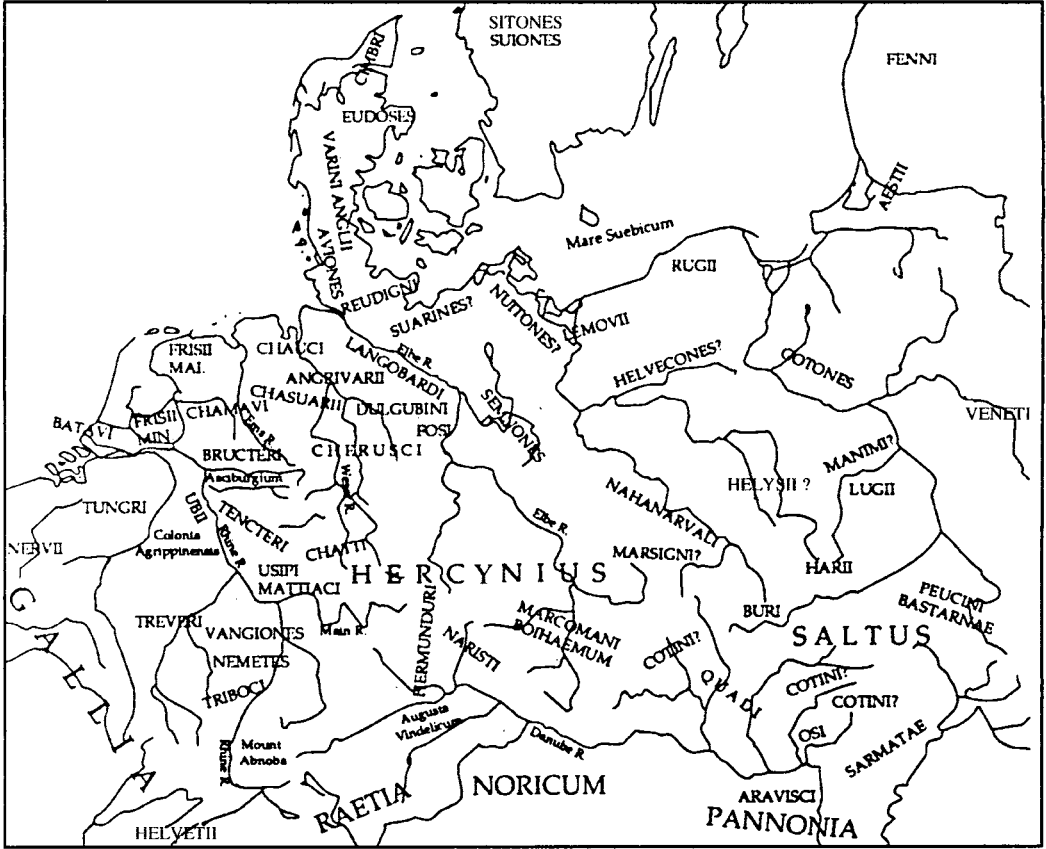
- nominative, accusative, accusative, nominative. The order is *a, b, b, a*.
- ellipsis*: the omission of a word or words, the sense of which is nonetheless understood.
- hendiadys*: the expression of an idea through two coordinated nouns rather than by one noun limited either by an adjective or by another noun in a different case.
- inconcinnity*: the avoidance of parallel constructions.
- juxtaposition*: the proximity of words, often for comparison or contrast.
- periphrasis*: circumlocution, which avoids the necessity of saying something directly.
- pleonasm*: redundancy of expression.
- synchysis*: interlocked word order, with similar parts of speech or parallel cases or ideas appearing in the order *a, b, a, b*.
- tricolon*: three closely linked words or expressions in the same construction.
- zeugma*: the use of a word with two or more others, with only one of which it has a precise relationship.

7. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The text of the *Germania* depends upon one manuscript, the *Hersfeldensis*, probably datable to the tenth century, which was brought to Rome by Enoch of Ascoli in 1455. It subsequently disappeared; the *editio princeps* was published in Venice in 1470. The extant manuscripts were produced soon thereafter; they form the basis of the modern text.

M. Winterbottom's text in the Oxford Classical Text series, *Cornelii Taciti opera minora*, forms the basis of the present text. It is used by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford, to which I express my gratitude. I have, however, diverged from this text in several places: 18.3, 21.2, 26.2, 28.2, 30.3, 37.5, 38.2, 39.1, 45.2 (twice), 45.5.

The translation largely reproduces that which I published in *Tacitus' Agricola, Germany, and Dialogue on Orators* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1991²), with a number of changes. I am grateful to the University of Oklahoma Press for its permission. Part of the introductory material also draws upon that edition.



Germany in the Time of Tacitus

TACITUS
GERMANY
GERMANIA

Germany

Chapters 1-5. Geographical description and origin of the people

1. *Germany's boundaries.*

1 Germany as a whole is separated from the Gauls and the Raetians and Pannonians by the Rhine and Danube rivers, from the Sarmatians and the Dacians by mutual fear or mountains; the ocean bounds the rest, embracing broad peninsulas and islands of huge size, with certain tribes and kings, whom war revealed, becoming known only in recent times. **2** The Rhine, rising in an inaccessible and precipitous height of the Raetian Alps, makes a gentle sweep to the west and empties into the northern ocean. The Danube, springing from a sloping and gently rising ridge of Mount Abnoba, passes among a larger number of peoples, until it bursts into the Pontic Sea in six channels; a seventh mouth is lost in swamps.

2. *The people are indigenous. Tradition about their origin varies; the name "Germany" is not ancient.*

1 I should believe that the Germans themselves are indigenous and have hardly been affected by the immigration of other peoples and intercourse with them, since in time past those who wished to change their living places did not travel by land but by sea, and the ocean, immense beyond and, so to speak, hostile, is rarely visited by ships from our world. Besides, not to speak of the danger of a terrible and unknown sea, who would have left Asia or Africa or Italy and sought Germany, which is rough in terrain, bitter in climate, gloomy to live in and to see, unless it be one's native land?

2 They relate in ancient songs, which is the only kind of historical tradition among them, that the god Tuisto was born from earth. They assign him a son Mannus, the source and founder of the race, and to Mannus three sons, from whose names those nearest the ocean are called Ingaevones, those in the center Hermiones, the rest Istaevones. Certain sources claim, as customarily happens with the license of antiquity, that the god had more offspring and that there were more designations of the people, Marsi, Gambrii, Suebi, Vandilii, and that these are the real and ancient names. **3** But the name of Germany is recent and lately introduced, since those who were the first to cross the Rhine and drive out the Gauls and are now called

the Tungri were then called the Germani: so gradually the name of a tribe, not of a people, prevailed, with the result that all the people, at first called Germani by the victorious tribe in order to inject fear in the Gauls, soon gave themselves the same name after it had been invented.

3. *Hercules and Ulysses are said to have visited Germany. The importance among the Germans of the war cry.*

1 There is the report that Hercules, too, spent time among them and, when ready to go into battle, they sing of him as the bravest of all brave men. They also have songs of this kind, by the recitation of which (they call it *barritus*, or war cry) they rouse their courage, and they forecast the outcome of the coming fight from the sound alone; for they cause terror or are themselves afraid, depending upon the shout of the battle line, and the sounds seem not so much voices as a chorus of bravery. Harshness and the intermittent roar of sound are particularly aimed at by putting their shields to their mouths, so that a richer and deeper tone may swell from the echo.

2 But, to continue, certain authorities think that Ulysses too, in that long and fabled wandering of his, was carried into this ocean and came to the lands of Germany, and that Asciburgium, which is located on the bank of the Rhine and inhabited even today, was founded by him and called Askipurgium: they claim further that an altar, dedicated by Ulysses with his father Laertes' name added, was once found in the same place, and that monuments and certain mounds, with Greek inscriptions upon them, still exist on the boundary of Germany and Raetia. 3 It is not my intent to support these statements with proofs or to refute them: let each person believe or disbelieve according to his inclination.

4. *The Germans are a unique race, unpolluted by intermarriages.*

I personally incline to the views of those who think that the peoples of Germany have not been polluted by any marriages with other tribes and that they have existed as a particular people, pure and only like themselves. As a result, all have the same bodily appearance, as far as is possible in so large a number of men: fiery blue eyes, red hair, large bodies which are strong only for violent exertion. There is no comparable endurance of hardship and labors and they do not endure thirst and heat at all, but they have become accustomed to cold and hunger from their climate and soil.

5. *Characteristics of the land. The Germans' unconcern for precious metals.*

1 Although the land is somewhat varied in appearance, nonetheless on the whole it is gloomy with forests or unwholesome with swamps, damper where it faces the Gauls, windier where it faces Noricum and Pannonia; it is fertile for grain crops, does not bear fruit trees, and is rich in livestock, but the animals are generally small. Not even the cattle have their natural beauty or pride of brow: the Germans delight in number, and these are their only form of wealth, as well as being highly prized. 2 I do not know whether the gods in their kindness or anger have denied them silver and gold. Yet I would not claim that no vein of Germany produces silver or gold: for who has searched? 3 They are not influenced by the possession and use of the precious metals as much as one might expect. For one can see among them that silver vessels, given as gifts to their ambassadors and chieftains, are considered no more valuable than those made out of clay; nonetheless, those nearest our border value gold and silver for commercial purposes and recognize and prefer certain types of our money: those farther away from us make use of barter in a simpler and more ancient manner. They like money that is old and long known, notched silver coins and coins stamped with a two-horse chariot. They favor silver more than gold, not from any predilection, but because the number of silver coins is easier to use for those who trade in common and cheap items.

Chapters 6–15. Public institutions.

6. *Weapons and mode of fighting.*

1 Not even iron is found in abundance, as is inferred from the character of their weapons. Very few use swords or lances of great size: they wield spears or, as they call them, *frameae*, with a narrow and short iron point, but so sharp and easy to use that they fight with the same weapon either at close range or at a distance, as circumstance requires. And the horseman, indeed, is satisfied with a shield and a *framea*; the foot soldiers also hurl light weapons, each individual more than one, and they throw them a great distance, naked or lightly garbed with a cloak. There is no show in their appearance; they only decorate their shields with the choicest colors. Few have breastplates, scarcely one or two have helmets made of metal or of leather. 2 Their horses are not outstanding either in appearance or in speed. But they are also not trained to vary wheeling maneuvers after our fashion:

the Germans drive their horses straight ahead or with a single sweep to the right, with the line so well disciplined that no one falls behind. **3** When one considers them on the whole, they have greater strength in their infantry; and for this reason they fight in battle with mixed forces, with the running speed of the infantry appropriate and suitable for a cavalry encounter; these infantrymen, chosen from all the young men, they station before the battle line. And their number is precisely defined: there are one hundred from each canton, and this is their very name, the "Hundredmen", among their own people, and what was at first a number is now a title and an honor. **4** The battle line is disposed in wedge-shaped units. They consider retreat a mark of prudence rather than of terror, provided you press on again. They recover the bodies of their own even in battles where success is doubtful. To have abandoned one's shield is the greatest crime, nor is it right for one so disgraced to be present at religious ceremonies or to enter the council, and many who have survived wars ended their disgrace by hanging themselves.

7. The power of kings, generals, and priests. The importance of families and clans.

1 They pick their kings on the basis of noble birth, their generals on the basis of bravery. Nor do their kings have limitless or arbitrary power, and the generals win public favor by the example they set if they are energetic, if they are distinguished, if they fight before the battle line, rather than by the power they wield. But no one except the priests is allowed to inflict punishment with death, chains, or even flogging, and the priests act not, as it were, to penalize nor at the command of the general, but, so to speak, at the order of the god, who they believe is at hand when they are waging war. **2** And so they bear into battle certain images and emblems that have been removed from sacred groves; and, what is a particular incitement to bravery, neither chance nor a miscellaneous grouping brings about the cavalry or infantry formation, but families and clans; and close by are their dear ones, whence are heard the wailings of women and the crying of children. These are each man's most sacred witnesses, these are his greatest supporters: it is to their mothers and to their wives that they bring their wounds; and the women do not quake to count or examine their gashes, and they furnish sustenance and encouragement to the fighters.

8. The impact and influence of women.

1 It is recorded that some battle lines, when already broken and giving way, were restored by the women, by persistent prayers and showing their

breasts and pointing to the nearness of captivity, which the Germans fear much more violently for the sake of their women, to such a degree that the spirits of states are more effectively kept under control when the latter are ordered to include girls of high birth among hostages. **2** They even think that there is a sacred and prophetic quality in women, and so they neither reject their advice nor scorn their forecasts. We saw that, under the deified Vespasian, Veleda was for a long time considered a divinity by many; but in time past they also worshipped Aurinia and several others, not because of fawning nor as if to make them goddesses.

9. *The chief gods and the manner of worship.*

1 Of the gods they worship Mercury above all, whom they consider it right on specific days to propitiate with human as well as other sacrifices. They win the favor of Hercules and Mars with animals suitable for the purpose. Some of the Suebi sacrifice also to Isis: I have been unable to find out whence the cause and origin of a foreign rite came, except that the symbol itself, fashioned in the shape of a ship, tells of a religion that was imported. **2** But, in keeping with the greatness of divinities, they think it proper neither to confine their gods within walls nor to give them any likeness of human appearance: they consecrate groves and glades and call by the names of gods that intangible quality they see with the eye of reverence alone.

10. *The importance of prophecy; the varied means of ascertaining the future.*

1 They have as much regard as anyone for auspices and the taking of lots. Their method of casting lots is unvaried. They slice a branch cut from a fruit tree into slips and throw these, distinguished by certain marks, completely at random onto a white cloth. Then the priest of the state, if it is a public consultation, or the head of the family, if it is private, first having prayed to the gods and gazing up at the sky, picks up three, one at a time, and interprets them in accordance with the mark that had been inscribed before. If the lots have forbidden anything, there is no consultation about the same subject on the same day; but if permission has been won, the support of the auspices is still required. **2** And the following indeed is known even here, to make inquiry of the sounds and flights of birds; it is a distinctive characteristic of the race also to make trial of the forebodings and warnings of horses. The horses are raised at public expense in the same glades and groves, all white and unpolluted by any work for man; when they have been

yoked to a sacred chariot, the priest and the king or the chief of the state accompany them and observe their neighings and snortings. And greater credence is given to no other method of prophecy, and not only among the common people but also among the aristocracy and among the priests; for the latter consider that they are servants of the gods while the horses are privy to the gods' thoughts. **3** There is also another method for taking auspices, whereby they forecast the outcome of serious wars. They match a man of that tribe with which they are at war, captured in some way or other, with a champion of their own people, each with his own arms: the victory of the one or the other is looked upon as a precedent.

11. *The conduct of public business.*

1 The nobles make decisions about lesser matters, all freemen about things of greater significance, with this proviso, nonetheless, that those subjects of which ultimate judgment is in the hands of the mass of people receive preliminary consideration among the nobles. They hold meetings on specified days, unless something has occurred unexpectedly and suddenly, either at the new or full moon; they consider this the most auspicious beginning for carrying on business. Nor do they count the number of days, as we do, but the number of nights. So they fix and settle their appointments: the night seems to lead on the day. The following is a fault that springs from their liberty, the fact that they do not assemble at the same time nor as if under orders, but two or three days are wasted by the delay of those who are coming together. **2** When the crowd thinks it opportune, they sit down fully armed. Silence is demanded by the priests, who then also have the right of compulsion. Soon the king or the chieftains are heard, in accordance with the age, nobility, glory in war, and eloquence of each, with the influence of persuasion being greater than the power to command. If a proposal has displeased them, they show their displeasure with a roar; but if it has won favor, they bang their *frameae* together: the most prestigious kind of approval is praise with arms.

12. *Punishment of crime; the various penalties.*

1 It is also permitted to make an accusation before the council and to bring a capital charge. There is a variety of penalties in accordance with the crime: traitors and deserters they hang from trees, cowards and the unwarlike and those who have perverted their persons they plunge in the mire of a swamp, with a basket put over them. The distinction in punishment shows their belief that violent crimes should be displayed while

they are being punished, but disgraceful acts should be concealed. **2** But there is punishment also for less significant wrongdoings in accordance with equity: those convicted are fined a number of horses or cattle. Part of the fine is paid to the king or the state, part to the individual who is being compensated or to his relatives. **3** Chieftains who pronounce justice throughout the cantons and villages are also selected in the same councils; each has one hundred associates from the people who serve as an advisory council and as a source of authority.

13. *Bearing arms is the mark of maturity. The importance of the retinue.*

1 In fact, they carry on no business of a public or private nature except in arms. But it is not the custom for anyone to assume arms before the community has obtained evidence that he will be worthy of them. Then, in the council itself, either one of the chieftains or the father or relatives present the young man with shield and *framea*: among the Germans these are the equivalent of the toga, this is the first honor of young manhood; before this, they seem part of the household, thereafter part of the state. **2** Particularly eminent birth or the great achievements of their fathers win the rank of chieftain even for very young men; they attach themselves to other more mature men who have reputations of long standing, and it is not a matter of shame to be seen in their entourage. Nay, the entourage itself has ranks, in accordance with the judgment of him whom they are following; and thus there is great rivalry among a man's followers, who has the leading position with their chief, and among the chieftains, who has the largest number of followers and the fiercest. **3** This constitutes their honor and strength, always to be surrounded by a great band of chosen young men; this is prestige in peace and protection in war. And each one has this renown and glory, not only in his own tribe but also among neighboring states, if he excels by reason of the size and bravery of his entourage; for the chieftains are sought out by embassies and honored with gifts and frequently bring wars to an end by their very reputation.

14. *Honor in battle; love of war and dislike of peace.*

1 When they have come into battle, it is shameful for the chieftain to be excelled in valor, shameful for the entourage not to match the valor of the chieftain. Furthermore, it is shocking and disgraceful for all of one's life to have survived one's chieftain and left the battle: the prime obligation of the entourage's allegiance is to protect and guard him and to credit their own brave deeds to his glory: the chieftains fight for victory, the entourage for

the chieftain. **2** If the state in which they were born should be drowsing in long peace and leisure, many noble young men of their own accord seek those tribes which are then waging some war, since quiet is displeasing to the race and they become famous more easily in the midst of dangers, and one would not maintain a large retinue except by violence and war. For they claim from the generosity of their chieftain that glorious war horse, that renowned *framea* which will be bloodied and victorious; banquets and provisions, not luxurious yet abundant, serve as pay. **3** The wherewithal for generosity is obtained through wars and plunder, nor would one as easily persuade them to plow the earth or await the yearly crop as to challenge the enemy and earn wounds; nay, on the contrary, it seems slothful and lazy to gain by sweat what one could win by blood.

15. *Their surprising devotion to inactivity.*

1 Whenever they are not involved in wars, they devote little time to hunting, much more to leisure, with attention focused on sleep and food, all the bravest and most warlike men doing nothing, with the care of the home and household and fields assigned to the women and the old men and the most feeble of the family: they themselves lounge around, by an extraordinary contradiction of nature, since the same men so love inactivity and hate peace. **2** It is the custom for states to bring to the chieftains, voluntarily and by individual contribution, offerings of cattle and crops, which, accepted as a token of honor, even support their requirements. The chieftains gain particular satisfaction from the gifts of neighboring tribes, which are sent not only by individuals but on behalf of the entire people – choice horses, magnificent weapons, decorations and neck chains; now we have taught them even to accept money.

Chapters 16–27. Private life.

16. *The absence of cities; the German dwellings.*

1 It is common knowledge that the peoples of the Germans do not live in cities, and they do not even like their homes to be joined together. They live separated and scattered, as a spring or a field or a grove has attracted them. They do not plan their villages in our manner with buildings joined together and next to one another: each one has an open area around his home, whether as a protection against the disasters of fire or because of a lack of skill in building. **2** They make no use at all of stones or tiles: they

use unshaped timber for everything without regard to appearance or aesthetic pleasure. Certain parts they coat with greater care with an earth so pure and gleaming that it looks like painting and colored drawings. **3** They are also accustomed to dig underground chambers and they cover them with much dung; these serve as a retreat against winter and a storage area for crops, since places of this kind lessen the bitterness of the cold and, if ever an enemy comes, he lays waste the open places while the hidden and buried ones are unknown or escape attention for the very reason that they have to be searched for.

17. *Clothing and the way it is worn.*

1. The clothing common to all consists of a cloak held together with a pin or, if there is none, a thorn: wearing no other clothing, they pass whole days next to the hearth and fire. The wealthiest men are distinguished by a garment that is not flowing like that of the Sarmatians and Parthians but tight and displaying every limb. They also wear animal skins, those nearest the riverbanks with no concern for style, those farther inland with more elegance, since they get no finery through trade. They select the wild animals and decorate their hides with spots from the skins of beasts which the farther Ocean and the unknown sea produce. **2** And the women have the same garb as the men except that the women are more often dressed in linen clothes and embroider them with purple, and do not fashion part of the upper garment into sleeves, but the whole arm is bare; and the adjacent part of the breast is also exposed.

18. *The sanctity of marriage and the relationship of husband and wife.*

1 In spite of this, marriages there are strict, and one would praise no other aspect of their civilization more. For almost alone of the barbarians they are content with one wife apiece with only a very few exceptions, who are the objects of many offers of marriages not because of their own lust but on account of their high rank. **2** The wife does not bring a dowry to the husband, but rather the reverse occurs. Parents and relatives are present and pass judgment upon the gifts, gifts not suited to womanly pleasure nor with which the new bride may deck herself out, but cattle and a bridled horse and a shield with *framea* and sword. In return for these gifts a wife is obtained, and she in turn brings the man some weapon: they consider this exchange of gifts their greatest bond, these their sacred rites, these their marriage divinities. **3** So that the woman may not think herself beyond the contemplation of brave acts and unaffected by the disasters of wars, she is

reminded by the very first ceremonies with which her marriage begins that she comes as a partner in labors and dangers, who will suffer and dare the same thing as her husband in peace, the same thing in war: this the yoked oxen, this the caparisoned horse, this the gift of arms declare. So must she live and die, with the understanding that she is receiving things she is to hand on to her children, unimpaired and in worthy state, which her daughters-in-law may receive and which may be handed on again to grandchildren.

19. *The punishment for adultery.*

1 As a result, they live with chastity secured, corrupted by no attractions of games, by no seductions of banquets. Men and women are alike ignorant of secret correspondence. Although their population is so great, there are very few cases of adultery, the punishment for which is immediate and left to the husbands: in the presence of her relatives, the husband drives her naked from the home, with her hair cut off, and whips her through the whole village. Indeed, there is no pardon for the loss of chastity; such a woman would not find a husband regardless of her beauty, youth, or wealth. There no one laughs at vices, and corruption and being corrupted are not excused by invoking the "times". 2 Indeed, those states are still better in which only virgins marry and the hope and prayer of a wife are accomplished once and for all. Thus they receive one husband as they have received one body and one life, that there may be no further thought on the matter, no continuing desire, that they may esteem not their husbands, so to speak, but the state of marriage. It is considered a crime to limit the number of children or to put to death any of the children born after the first, and there good customs have greater influence than good laws elsewhere.

20. *The upbringing of the young and their late marriages. Inheritance.*

1 In every home the young, naked and dirty, grow to possess these limbs, these bodies, which we admire. His own mother nurses each one, and the children are not handed over to servants or nursemaids. You would not distinguish master and slave by any niceties of upbringing: they live amidst the same animals and on the same ground until age sets the freeborn apart and valor recognizes them as her own. 2 The young men experience love late, and for this reason their strength is not exhausted. Nor are the girls hurried into marriage; they have the same youthful vigor and similar stature: they are well matched in age and strength when they enter upon marriage, and the children reproduce the strength of their parents. 3 The sons of

sisters have as much honor with their uncle as with their father. Certain individuals think that this bond of blood is holier and closer and insist upon it more in receiving hostages, with the reasoning that they control the emotions more firmly and the family more widely. Nonetheless, each person's own children are his heirs and successors, and there is no will. If there are no children, the next priority in inheritance is held by brothers, paternal uncles, and maternal uncles. The more blood relatives and marriage relations there are, the more agreeable is one's old age; and there are no rewards for childlessness.

21. *Feuds and friendships continue. The Germans' generosity in hospitality.*

1 There is an obligation to undertake the personal feuds as well as the friendships of one's father or blood relative, but the feuds do not continue without possibility of settlement, for even murder is atoned for by a specific number of cattle and sheep and the entire family accepts the settlement, with advantage to the community, since feuds are the more dangerous when joined with freedom.

2 No other people indulge more freely in feasts and hospitality. It is considered a sin to drive any human being from one's house; each one offers a banquet as generous as his fortune permits. When this has run out, he who had just been the host becomes the guide and companion to more hospitality; they go to the next home uninvited. Nor does that make any difference: they are received with comparable welcome. No one makes any distinction between a person known and unknown as far as the right of hospitality is involved. It is customary to give the guest whatever he has asked for on his departure; and there is the same frankness in asking for something in return. They delight in gifts, but neither attach any conditions to what they have given nor feel bound by what they have received.

22. *The daily routine; the importance of banquets.*

1 Immediately upon arising from sleep, which they generally extend into the day, they wash, mostly with warm water, as is to be expected among a people where winter rules a great part of the year. After washing they take food: each person has his individual seat and his own table. Then they proceed, under arms, to their tasks and, no less often, to banquets. It is not disgraceful for anyone to pass day and night in drinking. As is common among drunken men, frequent quarrels occur, which are rarely settled just by insults but more often by murder and wounds. 2 Yet they generally take counsel in banquets about reconciling enemies with each other, about

entering upon marriage relationships, and about choosing chieftains, finally about peace and war, with the belief that at no other time does the mind lie more open to honest thoughts or grow more enthusiastic for great ones. **3** The race, without natural or acquired cunning, even reveals its innermost contemplations in the freedom of the occasion; therefore every person's thought is laid bare and exposed. The matter is reconsidered on the following day, and they have due respect for both occasions: they deliberate while they know not how to act falsely, they decide while they are unable to make a mistake.

23. *Food and drink. The Germans' drunkenness.*

They have a beverage made from barley or wheat, fermented into something like wine; those nearest the frontier also purchase wine. Their foods are simple, wild fruits, fresh game, or curdled milk: they satisfy their hunger without fancy preparation and without seasonings. They do not have the same moderation regarding thirst. If one would indulge their intoxication by furnishing as much drink as they long for, they will be conquered no less easily by their vices than by arms.

24. *Their chief entertainments.*

1 There is one and the same kind of entertainment in every gathering: young men, stripped, who practice the sport, leap among swords and *frameae* pointed at them. Practice has produced skill, skill in turn grace, but not for profit or reward: the pleasure of the spectators is the only reward for this daredevil sport, however bold it may be. **2** While sober they play dice as one of their serious pursuits, which one would wonder at, with such great recklessness in winning or losing that, when all else has been exhausted, they put their liberty and persons up as the stake on the very last throw. The loser enters voluntary slavery: though he may be younger and stronger, he allows himself to be bound and sold. There is a stubbornness in this perverse business: they themselves call it honor. They sell slaves of this category, so that the winners may also free themselves from the shame of their win.

25. *Slaves and freedmen.*

1 They do not make use of the other slaves as we do, with functions assigned throughout the household: each slave is master of his own residence and his own home. The master imposes an amount of grain or cattle or cloth upon him as upon a tenant farmer, and the slave's obedience

extends to this point: the master's wife and children accomplish the remaining tasks of the home. It is a rare thing to whip a slave and to punish him with chains and hard labor: they are accustomed to kill them, not for sternness of discipline, but in an outburst of anger, as with a personal enemy, except that when dealing with a slave there is no fear of punishment. **2** The status of freedmen is only a little above that of slaves, rarely with any influence in the home and never any in the state, with the exception only of those tribes that are under the rule of kings. For there they rise even above freeborn men and above those of noble birth: among others, the inferiority of freedmen is a proof of liberty.

26. *Interest on money is unknown. Land distribution and agriculture.*

1 To put capital to work and to increase it by lending at interest is unknown; and for this reason it is more effectively avoided than if it had been prohibited. **2** Cultivable lands are occupied by all in common, proportionate to the number of cultivators, and they then divide these among themselves according to rank (the great extent of the fields renders the division easy). **3** They change their ploughlands year by year, and there is land left over. For, with land so fertile and abundant, they do not strive with their labor to plant orchards and set aside meadows and irrigate gardens: corn is the only crop required of the earth. **4** As a result they do not even divide the year itself into as many seasons as we do: winter and spring and summer are known and have names, the name and products alike of autumn are unknown.

27. *Burials and funerals.*

1 There is no pomp in their funerals: their only observance is that the bodies of famous men are cremated with specific kinds of wood. They do not heap the pile of the pyre with clothing and perfumes: the deceased's weapons are put on the fire, as well as his horse in the case of certain individuals. A raised mound of earth serves as the tomb: they disdain the lofty and extravagant distinction of monuments because they are heavy upon the dead. They quickly put aside their lamentations and tears, their grief and sadness slowly. It is honorable for women to mourn, for men to remember.

2 This much we have learned in general concerning the origin and customs of all the Germans; now I shall explain how the institutions and practices of individual tribes differ from each other and what peoples have migrated from Germany into the Gallic provinces.

Chapters 28–37. The tribes of the west and northwest, following the line of the Rhine from south to north.

28. *The difficulty of distinguishing Germans from Gauls and other peoples.*

1 The Deified Julius, the most authoritative of writers, reports that the power of the Gauls was greater in times past; and for this reason one can believe that the Gauls even migrated into Germany. For how small an obstacle was a river to keep each tribe, whenever it had become powerful, from seizing and changing sites that were still common and not divided among powerful kingdoms! 2 Thus the Helvetii occupied the area between the Hercynian Forest and the rivers Rhine and Main, and the Boii the territory beyond; both are Gallic tribes. There still remains the name of Bohemia and it records the ancient tradition of the place although the inhabitants are different. 3 But whether the Aravisci crossed from the Osi, a Germanic people, into Pannonia, or the Osi into Germany from the Aravisci, since they still use the same language, institutions, and customs, is impossible to determine, because the advantages and disadvantages of both banks of the river were the same, when in time past there were the same poverty and the same liberty. 4 The Treveri and Nervii are especially desirous of claiming Germanic origin, as if by this glory of blood they would be freed from resemblance to the unwarlike indolence of the Gauls. Peoples who are unquestionably German occupy the bank of the Rhine, the Vangiones, Triboci, Nemetes. Not even the Ubii, although they have earned their status as a Roman colony and more willingly call themselves Agrippinenses from the name of their founder, blush at their origin; they once crossed over and were settled above the river bank after their reliability had been put to the test, to keep others from crossing, not themselves to be kept under guard.

29. *The special status of the Batavians and the Mattiaci. The problem of the agri decumates.*

1 The Batavians, who of all these tribes excel in bravery, inhabit a small stretch on the bank, but chiefly an island of the Rhine river; they were once a people of the Chatti who moved to this region as a result of internal faction, where they were destined to become a part of the Roman Empire. The privilege that is a token of their ancient alliance remains; for they are not insulted by tributes nor does the tax collector wear them down: they are

exempt from burdensome duties and from special contributions and, kept on the sidelines only for use in battle, just like weapons and armor, are reserved for wars. **2** The tribe of the Mattiaci has the same allegiance toward us; for the greatness of the Roman people extended respect for the empire beyond the Rhine and, in consequence, beyond its ancient boundaries. Thus they live, in geographical terms, on their own side, in spirit and inclination they are with us, like the Batavians in other respects, except that, in addition, they have greater energy because of the very soil and climate of their land.

3 I would not reckon those who work the *agri Decumates* among the peoples of Germany, although they have settled beyond the Rhine and Danube: the most inconsequential of the Gauls, made bold by their want, have occupied land that was insecurely held; then, when a frontier road had been laid and garrisons had been stationed in forward positions, they were considered a corner of empire and part of the province.

30. *The Chatti, their territory and characteristics.*

1 Beyond these are the Chatti, whose territory begins at the Hercynian Forest, where the country is not as flat and swampy as that of the other states that Germany embraces in its extent, since the hills extend through their territory and only gradually become less frequent, and the Hercynian Forest accompanies its Chatti to its limits and sets them down. **2** The tribe is distinguished by hardier bodies, sinewy limbs, a threatening countenance, and greater liveliness of mind. Inasmuch as they are Germans, they have considerable judgment and skill: they choose their commanders and obey them, know how to keep their ranks, recognize opportunities, delay their attacks, map out the day, entrench themselves at night, consider fortune doubtful but bravery sure, and, a thing that is a very rare trait and one not granted except to Roman discipline, they place more confidence in the general than in the army. **3** All their strength is in the infantry, whom they load down with tools and provisions in addition to their arms: you would see others go off to battle; the Chatti, however, go off to war. Sallies and a chance fight are rare occurrences. Indeed it is the particular assignment of a cavalry force to win victory quickly and to withdraw quickly: speed displayed by the infantry is akin to terror, deliberateness is closer to resolute courage.

31. *Their unusual customs.*

1 The following custom, rarely practiced by the other German peoples and dependent upon the personal daring of each individual, is general among

the Chatti, namely to let their hair and beard grow long as soon as they have reached maturity and not to cut off the face's garb, which is vowed and owed to bravery, unless they have slain an enemy. They uncover their brows while standing over his bloody, despoiled corpse and claim that they have at last paid back the debt of their birth and have thus shown themselves worthy of country and parents. That shaggy filth remains for the cowardly and unwarlike. **2** In addition, all the bravest men wear an iron ring (which is a mark of disgrace for the race) as a bond until they may release themselves from it by the slaughter of an enemy. This fashion pleases very many of the Chatti, and they grow old marked out in this way, conspicuous both to the enemy and their own people. **3** The beginning of all battles rests with them; they are always the first line of battle and furnish a startling view; for not even in peace do they relax their mode of life. No one has a home or field or any occupation at all: they are given food by whatever person they have come to visit, extravagant with another's property, scornful of their own, until feeble old age renders them unequal to such hardy bravery.

32. *The Usipi and Tencteri.*

Next to the Chatti, the Usipi and Tencteri live along the Rhine, which now has a definite channel and is thus adequate to serve as a boundary. Besides the usual distinction in war, the Tencteri excel in skill of horsemanship, and the infantry has no greater prestige among the Chatti than the cavalry does for the Tencteri. This their ancestors established, this the descendants copy. These are the pastimes of children and the rivalry of young men: the old men continue to practice them. Horses are bequeathed with the slaves and home and the rights of inheritance: a son is the recipient, yet not the oldest, as with the rest of the property, but the one who stands out by his ferocity and superiority in war.

33. *The extirpation of the Bructeri, as a favor to Rome from the gods.*

1 The Bructeri once lived next to the Tencteri; now it is reported that the Chamavi and Angrivarii entered their territory, drove out the Bructeri, and completely wiped them out, with the support of neighboring tribes, whether because of hatred of their haughtiness or the attraction of booty or a certain kindness of the gods toward us; for they even provided us the spectacle of a battle. More than sixty thousand fell, not by the arms and weapons of the Romans, but, more magnificent still, to delight our eyes. **2** Let there continue and endure, I pray, among foreign peoples, if not

affection for us, at least hatred for one another, since, as the destiny of empire drives us on, fortune can furnish us nothing greater than the discord of the enemy.

34. *Tribes farther north. Rome's experience with the ocean there.*

1 The Dulgubini and Chasuarii and other tribes even less worthy of record bound the Angrivarii and Chamavi on the east; the Frisii meet them in the west. The greater and lesser Frisii get their names on the basis of their respective power. Both tribes are bordered by the Rhine all the way to the ocean and have besides within their territory huge lakes that have been navigated even by Roman fleets. 2 Nay, we have even tried the ocean itself there: and legend has reported that there still exist columns of Hercules, either because Hercules did come there or we have agreed to assign to his greatness whatever is anywhere remarkable. Nor did Drusus Germanicus lack daring, but the ocean blocked his exploration of itself as well as of the achievements of Hercules. Then no one made the attempt, and it seemed more pious and reverent to believe in the deeds of the gods than to get to know them.

35. *The nobility and power of the Chauci.*

1 So much we know of Germany to the west; it continues to the north with a great sweep. And first off, the tribe of the Chauci, although it begins from the Frisii and occupies part of the coast, borders all the tribes I have mentioned, until it makes a bend all the way to the Chatti. Not only do the Chauci possess so great an extent of land but they also fill it; they are the noblest people among the Germans and of such character that they prefer to protect their greatness with fair play. 2 Without greed, without violent passion, peaceful and isolated, they cause no wars, lay no one waste by rapine or robbery. This is particular proof of their high character and strength, that they do not gain their superiority through aggression; nonetheless, all have their arms at hand, and, if a situation demands it, there is an army, very powerful in men and horses; and they have the same renown when they are at peace.

36. *The once-powerful Cherusci have now become weak.*

1 On the flank of the Chauci and the Chatti, the Cherusci, since they were unprovoked, fostered an excessive and enervating peace for a long time; and this furnished greater satisfaction than safety, since it is foolish to be peaceable among violent and strong peoples: where might is the basis of

action, moderation and honorable behavior are attributes of the more powerful. Thus the Cherusci, who were once "good and righteous," are now called lazy and stupid; good luck was considered wisdom for the victorious Chatti. **2** And the Fosi, a neighboring tribe, were involved in the ruin of the Cherusci and shared equally in disaster, although they had been junior partners in prosperity.

37. *A sketch of Rome's dealings with the Germans over a period of more than two centuries, with domination not yet gained.*

1 Nearest the ocean, the Cimbri, a state now small but great in glory, occupy the same peninsula of Germany. And there remain widely scattered traces of their ancient renown, camps of great size on both sides of the Rhine, by the extent of which one may measure even now the power and numbers of the tribe and the credibility of so great a migration. **2** Our city was in its 640th year when the arms of the Cimbri were first heard of, in the consulship of Caecilius Metellus and Papirius Carbo. If we should count from that year to the second consulship of the Emperor Trajan, the sum is about 210 years: for so long a time has the conquest of Germany been in progress. **3** In the course of so extended a period there have been many disasters on both sides. Not the Samnites, not the Carthaginians, not Spain or Gaul, not even the Parthians have more often given us warning: for the liberty of the Germans is a greater threat than the kingdom of Arsaces. For with what else could the East mock us except the death of Crassus, and it itself was crushed under Ventidius with the loss of Pacorus? **4** But the Germans robbed the Roman people of five consular armies one after another, with Carbo and Cassius and Aurelius Scaurus and Servilius Caepio and Mallius Maximus routed or captured, and even stripped Augustus of Varus and his three legions; and not without loss did Gaius Marius defeat them in Italy, the Deified Julius in Gaul, Drusus and Nero and Germanicus in their own territories; soon the great threats of Gaius Caesar were turned to mockery. **5** Then there was peace, until, when opportunity had been offered by our internal strife and civil wars, they stormed the winter quarters of legions and even aimed at the Gallic provinces; and when they had again been beaten, thereafter, in recent times, they appeared in triumphal processions rather than being actually conquered.

Chapters 38–43. The Suebic tribes of the east and north, following the line of the Danube from west to east.

38. *The Suebi and their chief characteristics.*

1 Now we must speak about the Suebi, of whom there is no single nation, as there is of the Chatti or Tencteri; for they possess the greater part of Germany and are besides divided into separate tribes with individual names, although they are called Suebi generically. 2 It is a characteristic of the people to pull their hair back to the side and to tie it in a knot: this is how the Suebi are distinguished from the rest of the Germans and their freeborn from their slaves. This characteristic is occasionally found among other tribes, whether stemming from some relationship with the Suebi or, as often happens, from imitation, and only within the period of youth; among the Suebi it remains until they are gray-headed; they pull their bristling hair back and often tie it on the very top of the head; the chieftains have it even more intricately arranged. Herein is their care for their personal appearance, but it is harmless: for they do not do it to love or to be loved, but they adorn themselves for the eyes of the enemy when they go to war, with their hair arranged to increase their height and thus strike terror.

39. *The Semnones and their religious practice.*

1 Tradition has it that the Semnones are the most ancient and noble of the Suebi; credibility in their antiquity is confirmed by a religious practice. At an appointed time, people of the same name and of the same blood, represented by embassies, come together into a forest hallowed by the auguries of their ancestors and by ancient awe and, with the slaying of a human being in public sacrifice, they celebrate the dread beginnings of barbarian ritual. 2 There is another display of reverence for the grove: no one enters it unless he has been bound by a cord, as a token of his inferiority and a display of the divinity's power. If he has by chance stumbled, it is not permitted for him to raise himself and get up: he rolls out on the ground. And the whole superstition rests upon the view that from there spring the tribe's origins, there dwells the god who rules over all, to whom all else is subordinate and inferior. 3 The prosperity of the Semnones also lends them prestige: they live in a hundred cantons, and because of their great number they consider themselves the chief of the Suebi.

40. *The Langobardi and other tribes. The worship of the goddess Nerthus.*

1 On the other hand, their small number gives the Langobardi renown: though surrounded by very many and very powerful tribes, they are safe not through submission but by taking risks in battle. 2 Next to them, the Reudigni, Aviones, Anglii, Varini, Eudoses, Suarines, and Nuitones are protected by rivers or by forests. Nor is there anything remarkable in the individual tribes, save that they worship Nerthus, that is, Mother Earth, in common and think that she participates in the affairs of men and is carried in procession among the peoples. 3 On an island of Ocean there is a sacred grove, and in it a consecrated wagon, covered by a cloth; only one priest is permitted to touch it. He perceives that the goddess is present in the shrine and follows her with great reverence as she is drawn along by cows. Then days are joyous, and whichever places she deems worthy of her visit as a guest are festive. They do not enter upon wars, they do not take up arms; all iron is locked up; only at this time are peace and quiet known and only at this time loved, until the same priest restores the goddess to her holy place when she has had enough association with mortals. 4 Soon the carriage and the garments and, if you should wish to believe it, the divinity herself are bathed in an isolated lake. Slaves assist, whom the lake at once swallows up. From this stems the mystic dread and the holy ignorance of what that divinity is which they see only on the verge of death.

41. *The special position of the Hermunduri.*

1 And, in fact, this part of the Suebi extends to the more remote areas of Germany: the state of the Hermunduri, which is loyal to the Romans, is nearer to us, to follow the course of the Danube now as a little before I followed that of the Rhine; for this reason they are the only ones of the Germans who have commercial relations not merely on the riverbank, but well inside the frontier and even in the very magnificent colony of the province of Raetia. They cross over everywhere and without control; and, while we display to other tribes only our arms and camps, to these we have opened up our homes and villas since they do not covet them. 2 The Elbe rises in the territory of the Hermunduri, a river that was once famous and known; now it is only a name.

42. *The Marcomani and the Quadi are supported by the Romans.*

1 Next to the Hermunduri dwell the Naristi and then the Marcomani and Quadi. The prestige and strength of the Marcomani are especially high, and their very home was won by bravery, when they drove out the Boii long

ago. Nor do the Naristi or Quadi fall short of them. And these tribes are, so to speak, the frontier of Germany, as far as it is bordered by the Danube. **2** Up to our own day the Marcomani and Quadi had kings chosen from their own race, the noble stock of Maroboduus and Tudrus; now they also put up with foreigners, but the kings' coercive and personal authority rests upon Roman backing. They are rarely supported by our arms, more frequently by money, and they are no less powerful for that.

43. *Eastern Suebic tribes and the special features of some.*

1 On the north, the Marsigni, Cotini, Osi, and Buri border the rear of the Marcomani and Quadi. Of these, the Marsigni and Buri are like the Suebi in language and way of life; a Gallic language argues strongly that the Cotini are not Germans, as does a Pannonian language for the Osi, as well as the fact that they tolerate tributes. The Sarmatians impose part of the tribute upon them as being of foreign birth, the Quadi impose the rest; the Cotini, to make their shame greater, even mine iron. **2** All these peoples have settled upon a few stretches of level country, but mainly groves and the heights of mountains. For a continuous ridge of mountains divides and bisects Suebia, beyond which live very many tribes; of these the nation of the Lugii, spread over many states, has the widest extent. It will be sufficient to name the strongest: Harii, Helvecones, Manimi, Helysii, Nahanarvali. **3** Among the Nahanarvali there is shown a grove of an ancient rite. A priest in woman's attire officiates, but people relate that the gods are equivalent to the Roman Castor and Pollux. That is the character of the divinity, the name is Alci. There are no images, no trace of foreign belief; nevertheless, they worship them as brothers, as young men. **4** But to continue, the Harii, besides their strength, in which they excel the peoples mentioned a little above, are a fierce people who enhance their natural savageness by art and the choice of time. Their shields are black, their bodies are painted black; they choose black nights for battles and produce terror by the mere appearance, terrifying and shadowy, of a ghostly army. No enemy can withstand a vision that is strange and, so to speak, diabolical; for in all battles the eyes are overcome first.

Chapters 44–46. The almost fairy-tale lands of the north.44. *The Suiones and their culture.*

1 Beyond the Lugii are the Gotones, who are ruled by kings, a little more strictly than the other tribes of the Germans, but not yet, nonetheless, to the point of suppression of liberty. Then, right along the ocean are the Rugii and Lemovii; characteristic of all these tribes are round shields, short swords, and obedience to their kings.

2 Next, the states of the Suiones, in the Ocean itself, are powerful in fleets as well as men and arms. The shape of their ships is different in this, that a prow at each end presents a front always ready for landing. They neither guide them with sails nor attach oars to the sides in regular order: the oars are loose, as is the case on certain rivers, and the rowing can be changed from one direction to the other, as circumstance requires. **3** Wealth also has honor among them, and one man rules on this basis, here with no restrictions, with no uncertain right to obedience. Nor does every man keep his weapons, as among the rest of the Germans, but they are kept locked up under guard, and the guard is a slave, since the Ocean prevents sudden attacks of the enemy, and further the idle hands of armed men easily follow their fancy: for it is to the king's advantage to put neither a noble nor a freeborn man nor even a freedman in charge of the arms.

45. *The sea to the extreme north. The tribe of the Aestii and their civilization.*

1 Beyond the Suiones is another sea, sluggish and almost unmoved; there is belief that the earth is surrounded and enclosed by it for this reason, because the last glow of the already setting sun lasts till the dawn so brightly that it dims the stars; further, there is added the popular conviction that the sound of the rising sun is heard and the shapes of the sun's horses and the rays of his head are seen. **2** Only so far does the world extend – and the report of it is true. Now then, the tribes of the Aestii, who have the customs and appearance of the Suebi, a language closer to the British, are located on the right shore of the Suebic sea. They worship the mother of the gods. They wear amulets in the shape of boars as a mark of their belief: it renders the worshipper of the goddess safe even among enemies, in place of weapons and as a protection against all things. **3** There is rare use of iron, frequent use of clubs. They cultivate grains and other crops of the earth with greater perseverance than expected, given the customary laziness of the Germans. **4** But they also search out the sea, and they are the only ones to

gather amber, which they call *glesum*, amidst the shoals and on the shore itself. Nor has it been investigated or ascertained what its nature is or what process produces it, since they are barbarians; nay even, for a long time it lay neglected among other things cast up by the sea, until our luxury gave it reputation. They have no use for it themselves: it is gathered in natural form, is transported shapeless, and they are amazed that they receive a price. **5** Nevertheless, you would think that it was the sap of trees, since certain crawling and even winged animals are often visible in it, which, stuck in the liquid, are then held fast as the material hardens. I should therefore believe that, just as in distant parts of the East where incense and balsam are exuded, so there are unusually rich groves and woods in islands and lands of the West, the substances of which, drawn forth by the rays of the nearby sun and in liquid form, flow into the nearest sea and are washed up onto opposing shores by the force of storms. If you should test the nature of amber by bringing fire to it, it lights like a torch and produces a rich and smelly flame; soon it becomes viscous like pitch or resin.

6 The tribes of the Sitones join onto the Suiones. Like the latter in other respects, they are different in one thing, namely, that a woman rules: so much have they declined not only from freedom but also from slavery.

46. Tribes beyond civilization to the north and east, with reports like fairy tales.

1 This is the furthest extent of Suebia. I am uncertain whether I should assign the tribes of the Peucini and Veneti and Fenni to the Germans or the Sarmatians. And yet the Peucini, whom certain sources call the Bastarnae, are just like the Germans in language, manner of life, and in their fixed dwellings. Filth is common to all and sloth to their leading men. By mixed marriages they are getting to look like the Sarmatians in their coarse appearance. **2** The Veneti have drawn much from the character of the Sarmatians; for in their plundering forays they wander through the whole stretch of forests and mountains that rise between the Peucini and the Fenni. These people, nevertheless, are rather to be recorded among the Germans, since they establish fixed homes and carry shields and get pleasure from traveling on foot and with speed: all these things are different from the practice of the Sarmatians, who live in the wagon and on horseback. **3** The Fenni have astonishing savagery and squalid poverty: there are no arms, no horses, no household; herbs serve as their food, hides as their clothing, the ground as their bed; their only hopes are in their arrows, which they point with bones in the absence of iron. And the same hunt feeds men and women

alike; for the latter accompany the men everywhere and claim their part in catching the spoil. The children have no other protection against wild animals and rains than being placed under some intertwined branches: to this hut the young men return, this is their refuge when they are old. But they think it a happier state than to groan over the working of fields, to struggle at home-building, to deal with their own fortunes and those of others with hope and fear: without concern in their relations with men as well as with gods, they have attained a most difficult thing, not to have the need even to express a wish.

4 The rest is now in the realm of fable, that the Hellusii and Oxiones have the faces and visages of men, the bodies and limbs of wild beasts: I shall leave this in abeyance as unproven.

Commentary

Chapter 1

1 **Germany as a whole:** Whether the first words of the monograph, *Germania omnis*, were meant to recall the beginning of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, *Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*, "all Gaul is divided into three parts," or were part of customary ethnographical vocabulary is unknown. Certainly a sensitive reader would have been immediately struck by Tacitus' link to his predecessor. The reference is to "free" Germany, excluding those Germans under Roman domination, largely those living west of the Rhine.

Gauls: The Gauls, who occupied the general area of modern France, were probably the best known of all Rome's subjects, since their land was so near Italy, they had been an essentially peaceful part of the empire for a century and a half as Tacitus was writing, and they had been linked forever, in conflict and literature, with Caesar.

Raetians and Pannonians: The Raeti lived in the region of southeastern Germany which today approximates Bavaria and parts of Austria and Switzerland. The province of Noricum, to the east of Raetia, is not mentioned here by Tacitus. The Pannonians continued eastward toward Budapest, covering the general area of the former Yugoslavia and Hungary.

Rhine and Danube rivers: The rivers represent physical barriers between the Romans and the Germans which are more precise and determinable than what is next mentioned for the Sarmatae and Daci. But in Tacitus' time the rivers no longer formed the boundaries between Rome's territories and the barbarians beyond, as he himself mentions in 29.3.

Sarmatians and the Dacians: The former had migrated from the area of central Russia, from the vicinity of the Don River, to the area north of the Danube, where they occupied much of what is now Poland. The latter occupied a large part of the land which is now Romania and had fought with considerable success against Domitian.

mutual fear or mountains: The internal feeling, mutual fear, *mutuus metus*, is linked with tangible mountains, whose precision in separating people is less than that of rivers. The two words and *montes* are alliterative and an example of Tacitus' inconcinnity of style, with the first pair of peoples separated from Germany by one thing, *flumina*, the second pair by two.

ocean: Here Tacitus refers to the northern seas, the North and Baltic Seas. In 45.2, Tacitus calls this body of water the *Suebicum mare*.

broad peninsulas and islands: The reference in the first instance is to Jutland, the modern Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein of Germany, in the second above all to Scandinavia, which, since its full extent was unknown, was considered an island.

certain tribes and kings: These refer to peoples and their kings of the northern parts of Germany, although specific identification is not given. This part of the country was unknown until the campaigns of Tiberius in the years 5 A.D. and following and those of Germanicus in the middle teens. "In recent times" is therefore suggestive rather than precise.

2 Rhine: The Rhine rises in eastern Switzerland, flows into and through the Bodensee, continues west toward Basel, and then turns north until the vicinity of Frankfurt and Mainz. After a brief westerly flow as far as the Bingen gap, it veers sharply northward until it reaches the North Sea through the Netherlands.

Danube: The Danube begins in the center of the small town of Donaueschingen in southwestern Germany and enters the Black Sea after a course of 2,840 kilometers. Mount Abnoba is in the Black Forest. Seneca (*NQ* 6.7.1) had before Tacitus emphasized the importance of these rivers as borders: *hinc, qui medius inter pacata et hostilia fluit, Danuvius ac Rhenus, alter Sarmaticos impetus cohibens et Europam Asiamque disterminans, alter Germanos, avidam belli gentem, repellens*, “here, which flow between peaceful and hostile lands, the Danube and the Rhine, the former restraining the onslaughts of the Sarmatians and serving as the boundary between Europe and Asia, the latter keeping the Germans away, a people keen on war.”

larger number of peoples: Tacitus recalls the comment of Pliny the Elder, *NH* 4.79, *per innumeras lapsus gentes*, “having flowed through countless peoples.”

Pontic Sea: The Black Sea, called Pontic from the ancient kingdom of Pontus in Asia Minor.

Chapter 2

1 I should believe: The use of the subjunctive indicates a supposition, not a firm statement. Tacitus goes further in 4 and boldly affirms that the Germans are indigenous.

themselves: The word *Ipsos* at the beginning of the chapter emphasizes a change of subject, from the land to those living in it.

indigenous: This implies that they had been born in the territory of Germany and were the original inhabitants. The fact that most Germans looked essentially the same, in complexion, hair color, and strong physique, led to the belief in antiquity that there had been no mingling with other peoples and that racially they remained pure. This was a vast contrast with the general experience of Mediterranean people, particularly in the Italy of the first century A.D., which had long since become the center of the “civilized” world, with slavery, immigration and trade the prime factors. Racial purity had been compromised centuries before. The Romans had been aware that Germans crossed over into Gaul, but they did not know of tribal movement in the opposite direction.

immigration. . .and intercourse: In early times, so it was believed, there had been no movement of tribes from the east, from the Russian steppes and beyond, into northern and central Europe. Those peoples who lived in this region lived in isolation, with even intercourse among tribes often very limited. The word *adventibus* refers to enemies, *hospitiis* to friends. Also suggested by *hospitiis* is intermarriage, *coniubia*.

land: One must understand a verb such as *adveniebant* with *terra*, drawn by zeugma from *advehebantur*. The subjects of these two verbs (expressed and understood) are contrasted with the *indigenae*.

ocean, immense. . .hostile: The North and Baltic Seas, for which see note to 1.1. Its extent was unknown in antiquity, its violence dreaded and avoided whenever possible. Only in the last generations before Tacitus’ day was much learned about it.

rarely: The adjective *raris* is equivalent to the adverb *raro*.

our world: Here is evident the prejudice of the southern European, who, familiar with the glories of the Mediterranean world and the relative ease of sea communication, save in winter months, cannot imagine any one willingly leaving to live in the northern wilds.

rough. . .bitter. . .gloomy: This terse and rhetorical description of the terrain and climate of ancient Germany is essentially true, with its surface largely covered by vast forests and broken by significant mountains, the weather in winter particularly harsh, and the general mood and aspect bitter and unappealing, without the evidence of civilization, such as great buildings and the decoration of the finer arts. The Latin words form a well-balanced tricolon, with the last member, as is common, slightly expanded. *nisi si* is emphatic for the simple *nisi*. The variation in the verbs, *peteret* and *sit*, shows that we do not have a contrary-to-fact condition, but a potential clause with the former and a statement of fact with the latter.

2 **ancient songs:** These are the Germans' equivalent of the early epic verse common among both Greeks and Romans, best exemplified by the Homeric poems. These songs, mythic, heroic, or hymnal in character, have not survived at all. In *Ann* 2.88.3, Tacitus comments that, in his own time, Arminius is still commemorated in song, *caniturque adhuc barbaras apud gentes*.

Tuisto: The name has the root represented by the modern German *zwei*, which perhaps represents double birth, from heaven and from earth. Another, seemingly more likely, view is that Tuisto was a hermaphrodite, and so born only from earth, which means his offspring are autochthonous.

Mannus: The name represents a human being, and hence the founder of the race.

Ingaevones. . .Hermiones. . .Istaevones: Tacitus does not relate the names of Mannus' three sons, which were probably drawn from the names of the tribes in order to produce eponymous heroes for each.

license of antiquity: When probing the earliest records of a people, there is no absolute truth. Different observers reach different conclusions. *quidam* refers to Greek and Roman authors.

the god: Tuisto rather than Mannus, some think, since the former is designated *deum* a few lines above. But Mannus is the father of sons who give their names to tribes. The point here made is that Mannus may have had more sons than the three already indirectly mentioned, through the tribes whose names stemmed from their own.

Marsi: They lived in the area between the rivers Ruhr and Lippe, and had been extirpated by Drusus around 10 B.C.

Gambrivii: The Gambrivii are not securely identifiable. They probably lived in central Germany.

Suebi: They were a large and powerful tribe, located between the Elbe and the Oder, treated at great length in 38.

Vandilii: This is a collective term, embracing many eastern tribes who lived as far off as the Vistula River.

real and ancient names: Unlike *Germani*, which is an artificial construct. The contrast is underscored by the word *ceterum*, which begins the next clause. "This is one of the most disputed sentences in Latin literature." So the judgment of Anderson in his commentary (42). Many attempts have been made to clarify the meaning by emending the text. Yet Tacitus' meaning is discernible even though the latter part of the sentence is contorted because of its very concision.

3 recent and lately introduced: Here Tacitus leaves the realm of tradition, the origin of which is unknown, and comes to the relatively recent historical past. We cannot know precisely when the name *Germani* became common for all the people, but it must have been well before the Romans faced the invasions of Cimbri and Teutons in the late second century B.C. (see 37).

Tungri: The Tungri were not the only tribe to cross from the eastern side of the Rhine into Gallic territory, but they were in later times the most important.

tribe. . . people: *natio*, “tribe,” is a part of a *gens*, “people.” A *gens* consisted of many *nationes*.

victorious tribe: The *Germani*, after they crossed the Rhine and defeated their immediate enemy, claimed that all the other tribes remaining east of the river were also *Germani*, with the result that their own prowess and ferocity were extended to all others and the Gauls were terrified. The words *ob metum* refer to the fear which the Germans caused, not to any which they themselves felt. Other German tribes, having seen the effect of the name upon the Gauls, then also changed their names and took up the “generic” name of *Germani*. The bibliography on this passage, styled “der Namensatz” in German, is vast. The richest treatment is Norden’s.

invented: Tacitus emphasizes the novelty and artificiality of the new name by placing the ablative absolute precisely in the center of the final clause; *a se ipsis* and *Germani*, on either side of the absolute, are the same people, and the prepositional phrase can be construed with both verb forms, *invento* and *vocarentur*.

Chapter 3

1 There is the report: Who are the subject of *memorant*? It cannot be the Germans, because then the prepositional phrase would have to read *apud se* rather than *apud eos*. Therefore it must be unknown Roman authorities, since it was common knowledge at Rome that Hercules had traveled everywhere and visited many barbarian peoples. Seneca, *Apocol.* 5.3, describes Hercules as one who *totum orbem terrarum pererraverat et nosse videbatur omnes nationes*, “had wandered through the whole world and seemed to know all tribes.”

Hercules: Mention of the famed Greek hero who traveled the world links German prehistory, discussed in the previous chapter, with classical mythology. Considering Tacitus’ arguments against foreign penetration, invocation of Hercules and Ulysses (see below) seems odd. Yet we may have an instance of conflating a German hero with the best known of Greco-Roman heroes by *interpretatio Romana*, whereby the Roman equivalent of a foreign figure or concept is employed to produce understanding in the reader.

when ready to go into battle: Tacitus shifts grammatical subjects, from the unexpressed people implied in *memorant* to the Germans themselves, who are the *eos* mentioned earlier.

They also have: Here begins a digression, which continues through the word “echo.” This is a standard feature of ethnographic writing.

barritus: The form of the Latin word is disputed. Common to the various versions is the root *bar-*, which may represent the tonal harshness of the war cry. Some link it with the trumpeting of an elephant. Ammianus Marcellinus (26.7.17) links it with the word

frenitus, Vegetius (3.18) with *clamor*. Although both authors are considerably later than Tacitus, they clearly follow in the same tradition.

sound alone: This is a form of prophecy unknown to the Romans, who, as the Etruscans before them, interpreted objects or events, such as entrails of animals, flights of birds, and flashes of lightning. The Germans were interested only in the sound and its volume, not in any words. Yet the Latin text, *haec quoque carmina*, implies that the Romans were familiar with prophetic songs.

chorus of bravery: The whole is much greater than the sum of its parts; the mood of the entire army is thereby a public event.

intermittent roar: Probably a syncopated sound. How this reverberation could be produced from Germanic shields, which were not made of metal and were not half-cylindrical, is difficult to imagine.

2 **But:** *ceterum* takes up the argument of the chapter's beginning following the digression. Consequently, mention of Hercules and Ulysses comes close together.

certain authorities: These Greek and Roman sources are not identified.

Ulysses: The Greek Odysseus, the main figure of Homer's *Odyssey*, of whom it is here stated that his ten year wanderings to return to Ithaca from Troy included a long detour to Germany. No ancient author who deals with Odysseus includes such an episode. Use of the adjective *fabuloso* shows that Tacitus does not believe such a story.

Asciburgium: This town is mentioned by Tacitus in *Hist.* 4.33.1. It is probably the modern Asberg, now some two kilometers removed from the Rhine, near Duisburg.

by Ulysses: The dative *Ulixi* is one of agent. It would have represented the furthest point of his travels.

Laertes: Mention of the name of Odysseus' (Ulysses') father is intended to prove that the dedicator was the Homeric hero.

monuments and certain mounds: These are tombs with inscriptions upon them, which have been found in both Raetia and Noricum in modern times.

3 **It is not my intent:** Tacitus here admits that he is merely passing on report. It fills out his anthropological material and enriches the picture of German prehistory, but clearly he does not believe any of these tales.

Chapter 4

I personally incline: Here Tacitus states more strongly the view he expressed at the beginning of 2 and contrasts himself with the *quisque* at the end of the preceding chapter.

not been polluted: The first sentence of this chapter has perhaps had more effect upon the history of a modern people than any other from classical literature. Since the rediscovery of the *Germania* in the fifteenth century, it has been the basis of the view that the German "race" differs from all others in Europe. The belief that the "Aryan" was better than other people and that the Germans were a "master race" ultimately led to the actions of the Nazis. The verb *infectos* possesses a negative tone, with clear implication that any mixture with other peoples would have polluted the Germans. *Conubiis* recalls and emphasizes the word *hospitiis* of 2.1.

other tribes: *aliae nationes* are contrasted with *Germani* in *Ann.* 4.72.2.

particular people, pure and only like themselves: These words, *propriam et sinceram et tantum sui similem gentem*, not only expand upon what has just been stated,

but produce a powerful tricolon, the effect of which is heightened by the alliteration of the three words beginning with *s*. This chapter is one of Tacitus' most significant anthropological treatments. The observation probably does represent his own judgment, even though such a claim is a standard feature of ancient ethnography, because it recapitulates what he has already stated at considerable length in the previous chapters. In *Hist.* 4.64.3, he speaks of a German tribe as *sincerus et integer*. . . *populus*, "a people pure and uncorrupted."

fiery blue eyes, red hair: The satirist Juvenal, a contemporary of Tacitus, writes similarly, although changing hair color, in 13.164-5,

Caerula quis stupuit Germani lumina, flavam
caesariem. . . ?

"who has been surprised at the blue eyes and blond hair of a German?"

strong only for violent exertion: This is a "truism" which had earlier been assigned to the Gauls by Livy (10.28.3-4). It led to the tactical confidence of Roman armies that, if they could withstand the Germans' initial onslaught, they would then inevitably wear them down.

no comparable endurance: The campaigns of Arminius against the Romans in the years following 9 A.D. showed that this was not uniformly true. It was the sense of impending defeat which often caused the Germans, as well as other barbarian tribes, to break off, since it was not considered dishonorable to run away in order to fight another day.

thirst and heat: This would hardly be expected from a northern people. During the civil war of 69-70, Vitellius' German troops were worn out by the heat of Rome, *aestus impatientia labefecit* (*Hist.* 2.93.1).

cold and hunger: The land does not produce much, so they live from little. Necessity molds civilization. In the Latin text, *frigora* relates to *caelo*, *inediam* to *solo*.

Chapter 5

1 land: *terra* is a synonym of *solum*, mentioned at the end of the previous chapter. Tacitus now speaks in detail of the land, which he only briefly mentioned in 2.

varied in appearance: The modern appearance of Germany largely confirms the ancient, with the extensive mix of rivers and their valleys, forests in the southwest and the north, and mountains in the south. Tacitus constantly emphasizes the unappealing aspects of the land.

gloomy with forests or unwholesome with swamps: This is above all the case in the west and northwest, where the Roman invasion routes were, essentially starting from Mainz heading toward the Taunus mountains or from Vetera going eastward toward the Teutoburg Forest. Swamps were an essential part of Arminius' strategy in destroying the Romans. The difficulties of combat under such circumstances are vividly detailed in *Ann.* 1.63-68. The Hercynian Forest stretched from the middle Rhine as far east as the Vistula in Russia.

damp: To the west, including particularly the area of the modern Netherlands, where the Rhine produces a wide delta as it flows into the North Sea in numerous channels. This was the ancient land of the Frisii. Fog from the sea was an additional factor. The plural *Gallias* refers to the several Gallic provinces. The provinces *Germania inferior*

and *Germania superior* were established on what was originally Gallic territory west of the Rhine, but Tacitus chooses to ignore them.

windier: This is the region in the south and east, much affected by the Alps and the blasts which arise there.

grain crops: The word *satis*, from *sata*, is probably an ablative. The following tripartite division, crops, trees, livestock, is traditional, going back to Vergil, whose first three books of the *Georgics* treat these subjects.

fruit trees: These were common in southern lands. But wild apples do grow (23) in Germany and the milder climate of the Rhine and Moselle valleys permitted viticulture.

rich in livestock: Particularly horses and cattle.

cattle: The cattle are small and shriveled, so to speak, compared with the fat kine of the Mediterranean lands. The word *inprocera* is very rare. Tacitus may have chosen this unusual word to underscore the novelty of this statement, since generally everything in Germany is large.

pride of brow: Horns.

only form of wealth: Tacitus describes a primitive economic society, where tangible and visible possessions constitute wealth. There was no Germanic coinage; hence any commerce involved barter. The word *opes* also includes here the sense of "status."

- 2 **the gods in their kindness or anger:** This is an interesting and unusual philosophic comment on an historical fact by the author. Is a simple and primitive people better off than a highly sophisticated one such as Rome because it lacks the source of wealth, the precious metals, which have led to such bitter internal struggles among the upper classes at Rome and to external wars?

Yet I would not claim: This too is an interesting comment. With all that was known in the historian's own time about the Germans and their land, the existence of the precious metals had never been shown, save in one place. In *Ann.* 11.20.3, he speaks of the silver mining *in agro Mattiaco*, the region of modern Wiesbaden. But this was right across the Rhine from Mainz. There had not been opportunity for systematic investigation and subsequent exploitation, since the largest part of the land had never come under Roman domination. In *Agr.* 12.6, Tacitus speaks of Britain's riches in this regard, *fert Britannia aurum et argentum et alia metalla, pretium victoriae*, "Britain possesses gold and silver and other metals; these are the reward of conquest."

- 3 **They are not influenced:** This is a surprising statement. The precious metals being largely unknown to the Germans, they would not have placed much value upon them. For ordinary use, clay served better than silver or gold.

one can see: A Greek construction. The infinitive is the subject of *est*.

silver vessels: Many of these have been excavated. A particularly spectacular example of such a hoard is the Hildesheim treasure.

ambassadors and chieftains: Chapter 11 discusses the *principes* at length. Tacitus uses these terms by *interpretatio Romana* (43.3). German embassies arrived in Rome with some frequency; see *Ann.* 11.16, 12.29, 13.54.

those nearest our border: The reference is to both Danube and Rhine, particularly to the province of Raetia (41.1).

those farther away: Those living in the interior of the German lands, extending well to the north into Scandinavia and eastward into modern Poland. But Roman traders reached far into barbarian territory. Archaeological discoveries of coins and pottery

have occurred in Scandinavia, the Baltic lands, and Russia. This statement is an intrusion into the discussion of “those nearest,” which continues in the following sentence.

money that is old and long known: These were republican *denarii*. A currency reform under Nero reduced the silver content of the coins, so the old, pure coinage was even more preferable than before.

silver more than gold: Silver is a harder metal than gold and therefore has advantages for ordinary use, as well as being much more common.

Chapter 6

1 **iron:** The word *ferrum* introduces a subtle transition from the previous chapter, with its discussion of mining and the precious metals. From iron to military weapons and practices is a common progression. In 43.1, the Cotini are said to mine iron. Archaeology has shown that iron is far more common than Tacitus states, but his purpose is to continue the description of the Germans’ simple, primitive ways.

swords: This is incorrect, since in the first century A.D. a short, double-edged sword was in common use, particularly in northern Germany. *Gladii* are mentioned in 18.2, 24.1, and 44.1.

lances of great size: These are comparable to the Gallic *gaesa*, which have a long, wide point and a long shaft. In *Ann.* 1.64.2, Tacitus calls them *hastae ingentes ad vulnera facienda quamvis procul*, “huge spears for inflicting wounds, even at a distance,” and in 2.14.2 *enormes hastas*.

frameae: As in 3 with *barritus*, Tacitus here presents the Latin equivalent of a native word. Many specimens have been found. Tacitus is precise in his description.

so sharp and easy to use: The description of the point is easily transferred to the weapon itself.

at close range or at a distance: The *framea* can be used either as a thrusting weapon, like the Roman *gladius*, or as a spear, like the Roman *pilum*.

horseman: The word *eques* is used collectively.

a shield and a framea: The Roman cavalryman, in contrast, was equipped with a shield, a sword, and a spear.

light weapons: Small lances.

naked or lightly garbed: This statement is confirmed by reliefs of the first and early second centuries. Germans and other barbarians are shown wearing trousers (on the *Gemma Augustea* of about 10 A.D. in Vienna and on the Column of Trajan in Rome). Seneca, *Epist.* 1.7.3, speaks similarly of Roman gladiators, *nihil habent quo tegantur*.

There is no show: This must refer to the common soldiers, since Tacitus speaks in 15.2 of the chieftains’ delight in *magnifica arma, phalerae torquesque*.

decorate their shields: Different tribes tended to favor different colors, the Harii, for example, black (43.4), the Cimbri white (Plutarch, *Marius* 25.7).

breastplates. . . helmets: Again, Tacitus’ statement is supported by the absence of archaeological finds. The *cassis* was made of metal, the *galea* of leather.

2 **Their horses:** Caesar mentions that the horses ridden by Germans were unsuitable for his kind of warfare, *BG* 7.65.5, *quod minus idoneis equis utebantur*.

vary wheeling maneuvers after our fashion: In any direction that might be required.

single sweep to the right: This description of German equestrianism has occasioned much controversy among modern scholars. Some have thought it impossible that cavalry maneuvers should be limited to a sweep in one direction only; the insertion of the words *vel sinistros* after *dextros* has been proposed. That, however, makes little sense. We must picture the cavalry approaching the enemy in a straight line, side by side, and then, pivoting upon the rider at the extreme right, turning clockwise while maintaining their own positions relative to each other. The enemy consequently saw the Germans protected by a continuous row of shields. They then swept past the enemy line, with a bend to the right, protected by their shields and able to hurl their *frameae*. Vergil, *Aen.* 10.885, describes Mezentius riding around Aeneas,

ter circum astantem laevos equitavit in orbis.

He rides in a circle, counterclockwise, in order always to keep his shield toward Aeneas and be able to hurl his weapons with his right arm.

3 **When one considers them on the whole:** A dative of the person judging. Tacitus had used the expression in *Agr.* 11.3.

greater strength in their infantry: Generally the case, particularly for the Chatti (30.3), *omne robur in pedite*, but not for the Tencteri (32), *super solitum bellorum decus equestris disciplinae arte praecellunt*.

mixed forces: Caesar describes this in reference to Ariovistus' army (*BG* 1.48.5), *pedites velocissimi ac fortissimi, quos ex omni copia singuli (sc. equites) singulos suae salutis causa delegerant*, "the foot-soldiers were the fastest and the bravest, whom the individual cavalryman had chosen, one apiece, from the entire muster for his own safety."

running speed of the infantry: The infantrymen are thereby enabled to run with the horses. Each protects the other.

the "Hundredmen": The Latin distributive numeral *centeni* may well be the equivalent to the German term *huntari*. The Roman reader would also have been reminded of the original units of the Roman army, the *centuriae*.

a title and an honor: They were distinguished from the rest of the army by this title. The two words essentially form one idea through hendiadys.

4 **wedge-shaped units:** Tacitus describes this tactic more fully in *Hist.* 4.20.3, *illi veteres militiae in cuneos congregantur, densi undique et frontem tergaque ac latus tuti*, "they, veteran troops, formed into wedges, a dense array on all sides and protected in the front, rear, and flanks." The width of the unit increased along with its depth, so that the enemy saw a seemingly expanding group opposite.

retreat: A "strategic withdrawal," mentioned scornfully by Germanicus in *Ann.* 2.14.3, *sine pudore flagitii, sine cura ducum abire fugere*, . . ., "they go away and flee without shame of doing wrong and without regard for their leaders."

a mark of prudence rather than of terror: The genitives are qualitative.

To have abandoned one's shield: This is a common theme in ancient literature. Horace, *Carm.* 2.7.10, writes that he fled battle *relicta non bene parmula*, "with his shield shamefully abandoned."

to be present. . .to enter: A warrior who has survived battle in this way loses his "civil rights," his status as a member of his tribe, and can not therefore participate in political activities or religious rites. Tacitus discusses the *concilium* at length in 11-13.1.

who have survived: *superstites* can be construed with either a genitive or a dative.

ended their disgrace: Hanging was a dishonorable form of death.

Chapter 7

1 kings on the basis of noble birth: Since the king requires only noble birth, without consideration of his qualities as a leader or fighter, he may well be less significant than either the great warriors or the priest, whose authority stems from achievement or specialized knowledge.

generals on the basis of bravery: Battle proves the best. On the relatively rare occasions when two or more tribes joined forces against Rome, the commander was chosen on the basis of military reputation, such as Arminius in 9 A.D. and Civilis in 69–70.

limitless or arbitrary power: The king can summon councils, but can take very little action on his own. The agreement of his chieftains is essential, and in matters of war or rite he must yield to those with greater authority and prestige. Limited royal power is particularly cited for the Gotones (44.1) and Frisii (*Ann.* 13.54.2), in *quantum Germani regnantur*. Use of the words *potestas* and *imperium* represent *interpretatio Romana*. The words *infinita ac libera* are essentially synonymous.

the example they set: Generals rise by their exploits and can also fall by them, i.e. if they are found wanting in any regard in any conflict. Tacitus emphasizes the qualities which the great leaders display by an extended tricolon, with *si* used three times consecutively, adjectives in the first two parts, a clause in the third, with a triple alliteration of the letter *a*, continued by the following word *admiratione*. This tricolon explains the words *exemplo* and *admiratione*.

But: The word *ceterum* introduces a strong contrast. What follows explains in part limitations upon the king's *potestas* and general's *imperium*.

no one except the priests: The priests constitute a special caste, with lifelong power and influence, who were often able to promote and accomplish policy at the highest level. Yet we do not know of a priesthood among the Germans comparable to the Druids of the Celts, whom both Caesar and Tacitus describe at some length. The tricolon of infinitives presents punishments in descending order of severity. For more on the priests' power, see 11.2.

at the order of the god: This is either the god Tiu, their god of war, equivalent to the Roman Mars, or Wodan, who is matched with Mercury (see 9.1). But other gods may, in particular circumstances, come into play.

2 certain images and emblems: These are their military standards. The *effigies* represent animals sacred to divinities, such as the wolf to Wodan and the ram to Tiu. The *signa* refer to weapons linked with the gods, as Wodan's spear and Tiu's sword.

sacred groves: Forests and groves often breathe religious awe. Since the Germans had no temples, they served as the repository of sacred items. Tacitus mentions, in *Hist.* 4.22.2, *depromptae silvis lucisque ferarum imagines, ut cuique genti inire proelium mos est*, "the representations of animals were taken from the forests and groves, as is customary for each people when entering battle."

a particular incitement to bravery: There is consequently a blood link among those in a formation, as shown in the previous chapter with the "Hundredmen," chosen from each canton. In *Agr.* 32.2, Tacitus speaks of *omnia victoriae incitamenta*.

families and clans: Among the Germans and Celts, not just the men went off to war on all occasions. Sometimes entire households accompanied the army, the women and children, wagons and animals. In case of disaster, as occurred to Boudica and her followers in Britain in 60 A.D. (*Ann.* 14.34.2), the result was essentially extirpation.

their dear ones: Their families and relatives.

are heard: The infinitive *audiri* is historical.

wailings of women and the crying of children: The Latin words, *feminarum ululatus*. . . *vagitus infantium*, produce a chiasmus.

most sacred witnesses: Each man knows that he is fighting not just for victory but for the survival of all that he holds dearest.

sustenance and encouragement: The words *cibos* and *hortamina* share the verb in a zeugma; the former is tangible, the latter intangible.

Chapter 8

1 some battle lines: From the mention of the importance of women at the end of the previous chapter it is an easy transition to further discussion of their significance in society, both in warfare and in peace. Plutarch, *Marius* 19.7 and 27.2, gives examples of such intervention by women in losing battles.

captivity: Captivity generally meant death or enslavement, but women had violation to anticipate as well. Since purity of body and a single marriage (18-20) are the norm among the Germans, such a prospect was terrifying to both man and woman. In the famous statue from Pergamum of the Dying Gaul, now in the Vatican Museum, the warrior stands over his wife whom he has just slain as he prepares to kill himself. Caesar, *BG* 1.51.3, described the women with Ariovistus as follows: *quae ad proelium proficiscentes milites passis manibus flentes implorabant, ne se in servitatem Romanis traderent*, “who begged the soldiers hastening to battle, with outstretched hands and in tears, not to hand them over to the Romans and slavery.”

spirits of states: The taking of hostages was meant to ensure that the defeated tribe would adhere to the terms which had been imposed. But this proved to be uncertain if the hostages consisted only of men.

girls of high birth: Only nobles had value as hostages. Tacitus mentions female hostages in *Hist.* 4.79.1, *Agrippinenses offerebant uxorem ac sororem Civilis et filiam Classici, relicta sibi pignora societatis*, “the Agrippinenses offered the wife and sister of Civilis and the daughter of Classicus, who had been left with them as pledges of alliance.”

2 sacred and prophetic quality: The Roman reader may well have recalled the Sibyl at Cumae and the priestess at Delphi.

We saw: The subject is general, meaning “we Romans.”

under the deified Vespasian: During the civil war of 69-70 and subsequently. The word “deified” shows that the emperor, after his death, was considered to have ruled well and “constitutionally,” and thereby has entered the Roman pantheon of divinities.

Veleda: Her role is emphasized in the *Hist.* She was a member of the Bructeran tribe, called *virgo*, who ruled widely and had great *auctoritas*, *nam prosperas Germanis res et excidium legionum praedixerat* (4.61.2), “for she had forecast success for the Germans and the destruction of the legions.” She was captured during the campaigns of 77-78, as reported by Statius, *Silv.* 1.4.90, *captivaeque preces Veledae*.

Aurinia and several others: Nothing is known of Aurinia other than her name. Veleda's successor among the Bructeri, Ganna, was at Domitian's court (Dio Cassius 67.12.5.3). The Romans surely learned something from her about Germanic customs and practices.

fawning. . .to make them goddesses: The special qualities of these women are used for the benefit of the entire tribe. They are political and religious figures, recognized as human. The Latin word *adulatio* suggests falsity and insincerity. Nor did the Germans deify their own, unlike the Romans. The contrast between the customs of the two peoples is underscored by the proximity of the words *divo* with Vespasian and *deas* here. And yet Veleda was considered a goddess (*Hist.* 4.61.2), *vetere apud Germanos more, quo plerasque feminarum fatidicas et augescente superstitione arbitrantur deas*, "by the ancient custom of the Germans, by which they consider some of their women prophetesses and, with the increase of superstition, goddesses." Tacitus may also intend a comparison, unfavorable to the Romans, who occasionally deified females, such as Nero's infant daughter (*Ann.* 15.23.3), who, dying at the age of four months, received *honorem divae et pulvinar aedemque et sacerdotem*, "the honor of divinity and a sacred couch and a temple and a priest."

Chapter 9

1 Of the gods: The previous chapter concluded with the word *deas* (goddesses), this one begins with the word *deorum* (gods). The transition is marked.

Mercury: Once again Tacitus designates a Germanic deity by a Roman name. Caesar, *BG* 6.17.1, had used almost precisely the same expression: *deum maxime Mercurium colunt*. The native god was Wodan; Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardum* 1.9, offers confirmation: *Wodan sane. . . ipse est, qui apud Romanos Mercurius dicitur*, "Wodan is certainly the one who is called Mercury among the Romans."

specific days: These are festive days of their calendar, based upon the cycle of the seasons. Tacitus uses the same words in 11.1: *certis diebus, cum aut incohatur luna aut impletur*. The same connection of occasion and sacrifice is presented in 39.1: *stato tempore. . . coeunt caesoque publice homine celebrant barbari ritus horrenda primordia*. But victories were also occasionally celebrated in this way (see next note).

sacrifices: Human sacrifice was not uncommon among the Germans. Enemies captured in battle were prime offerings. A particularly gruesome narrative occurs in *Ann.* 1.61, when Germanicus and his army come upon the site of the Roman disaster in the Teutoburg Forest: *lucis propinquis barbarae arae, apud quas tribunos ac primorum ordinum centuriones mactaverant* (61.3), "in nearby groves stood barbarian altars, at which they had butchered the tribunes and the ranking centurions."

Hercules and Mars: Hercules (see 3) represents the epitome of bravery, Mars is the god of war. The latter is called *praecipuus deorum* in *Hist.* 4.64.1. Both Mars and Mercury receive human sacrifice in *Ann.* 13.57.2: *sed bellum Hermunduribus prosperum, Chattis exitiosius fuit, quia victores diversam aciem Marti ac Mercurio sacravere, quo voto equi viri, cuncta viva occidioni dantur*, "but the war was favorable for the Hermunduri, more disastrous for the Chatti, since the victors dedicated the enemy to Mars and Mercury, at which offering horses and men and everything living are handed over to destruction."

animals suitable for the purpose: Animals such as rams and boars sacred to the gods were not employed, rather others like cattle and pigs. The fact that the meat could be eaten was important. Horses and dogs were often sacrificed as well, and were also killed and buried along with their masters.

Suebi: The Suebi are an important people, to whom Tacitus devotes an entire chapter, 38. They occupy large territories fronting the Baltic Sea, known as the *mare Suebicum*.

Isis: Yet, in 40.2, Tacitus reports that the northernmost Suebi worship the goddess Nerthus. It may, however, be that the two goddesses are to be identified. Isis is the fertility goddess from Egypt, whose symbol was a ship; she had by the Hellenistic age become the goddess of navigation.

However, in 1.2, Tacitus had written that there had been no foreign immigration into Germany. How then could the cult of Isis have penetrated into the land? Isis, like Nerthus, was a mother god who clearly represents a Suebic divinity.

whence. . . came: The absence of a verb in the indirect question is unusual in Tacitus.

- 2 **neither to confine. . . nor to give:** Not believing in anthropomorphism, the Germanic peoples neither built temples to house divinities nor represented them by statues. This was a commonplace among primitive peoples in ancient ethnography. When Tacitus speaks of a *templum* to Nerthus in 40.3, he evidently refers to the sacred precinct rather than a building.

consecrate groves and glades: Natural places such as groves, forests, and lakes are considered homes of the gods.

that intangible quality: The sense that nature is greater than human beings leads to religious awe. Solitude and quiet produce a kind of religious terror. Vespasian takes advantage of similar circumstances when he appears at Mount Carmelus (*Hist.* 2.78.3): *est Iudaeam inter Syriamque Carmelus: ita vocant montem deumque. nec simulacrum deo aut templum - sic tradidere maiores -: ara tantum et reverentia*. “Carmelus is located between Judaea and Syria: that’s what they call both the mountain and the god. The god has neither likeness nor temple - so ran the tradition: only an altar and religious awe.”

Chapter 10

- 1 **as anyone:** There is an ellipsis of a verb in the subordinate clause. *observant* is probably to be understood twice.

auspices and the taking of lots: The Romans themselves were far more accustomed to the taking of auspices than of lots. With the Germans, the reverse was true.

a fruit tree: Yet in 5.1 Tacitus had said that there were no fruit trees in Germany. The expression must include trees that produce nuts, such as the oak. Among the Romans, there were two categories of trees; *arbores felices* bore white or colored fruit, *arbores infelices* black fruit or berries which were dedicated to the gods of the underworld (Pliny, *NH* 16.108, Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.20.3).

distinguished by certain marks: The nature of these marks is unknown. They may be runes or a variety of signs or symbols, which in combination permit interpretation. Cicero, *de Div.* 2.41.85, may refer to the same kind of object: *sortes erupisse in robore insculptas priscaurum litterarum notis*, “lots suddenly appeared, carved in ancient characters on the oak.” But Cicero’s use of the word *litterarum* suggests that he refers to the Latin alphabet. Earlier in the chapter just cited, Cicero had spoken of the taking

of lots as an instance of chance and luck: *quibus in rebus temeritas et casus, non ratio nec consilium valet*. Tacitus may suggest that superstition rather than good sense prevailed among the Germans.

completely at random: The words *temere ac fortuito* form an hendiadys.

a white cloth: White was the color of purity.

the priest of the state: The *sacerdos civitatis* is balanced by the *princeps civitatis* later in this chapter and in the following.

the head of the family: Tacitus invariably prefers *pater familiae* to the more usual *pater familias*.

picks up three: The number three had a magical and ritual quality; compare Caesar, *BG* 1.53.7: *is se praesente de se ter sortibus consultum dicebat*, “he said that thrice in his presence the lots had been consulted about him.”

the support of the auspices: The greater importance of the auspices is thus made clear. The auspices were the various means of divination, such as the interpretation of the flight of birds or examination of entrails, conducted by magistrates or priests.

2 **is known even here:** In Germany, as well as in Rome.

the sounds and flights of birds: There is strong alliteration among the words *avium voces volatusque*.

a distinctive characteristic of the race: But the Germans were not unique in believing in the prophetic quality of horses. Homer, *Iliad* 19.405-24, had long ago recorded this.

the same glades and groves: As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the Germans’ holy places.

a sacred chariot: This is the animals’ first contact with labor of any sort, and is dedicated to sacred purposes.

among the common people: The three uses of *apud* produce a strong anaphora and the first two nouns are linked by alliteration. There is an ascending progression, from the lower classes to the leading men and the priests.

horses are privy: The priest can only interpret what the horses have revealed of the gods’ will.

3 **They match a man:** The expression *cum electo. . . committunt* is taken from the language of gladiatorial combat.

each with his own arms: These would not have differed very much from tribe to tribe, so that victory would generally fall to the stronger, likely the champion of the captors.

precedent: The preliminary duel gives a clue to the outcome of the larger struggle. But would the tribe responsible for this preliminary test have refrained from war if their champion had lost? In earlier single or group combats, such as that of the Horatii and Curiatii to decide the struggle between Rome and Alba (*Livy* 1.24-5), the outcome was final, not preliminary.

Chapter 11

1 **The nobles. . . all freemen:** This division of responsibility parallels that of Rome under the republic, where the senate deliberated about most matters but final decisions on major issues, such as questions of war and peace, were the responsibility of the popular assemblies. In 10.2, the *proceres* (= *principes*) are balanced against the *plebs* (= *omnes*).

with this proviso: The mass of people cannot consider any matter on their own. The nobles, so to speak, control the agenda and thereby surprises are impossible in public deliberations. In *Ann.* 1.55.2, it is clearly stated that the *plebs* cannot act without their leaders, *nihil ausuram plebem principibus amotis*.

those subjects: These include, as earlier in Rome, decisions on war and peace and selection of a new king or chieftain.

on specified days: See the note at 9.1.

the most auspicious beginning: It is considered so because the new moon is a growing body, which culminates at the full moon. Progress and enlargement boded well for human undertakings. Pliny, *NH* 18.322, offers a list of activities which are suitable at various stages of the moon. Caesar, *BG* 1.50.5, reports that the Germans refused to fight before a new moon: *non esse fas Germanos superare, si ante novam lunam proelio contendissent*, “that it was not heaven’s will that the Germans conquer if they joined battle before the new moon.”

for carrying on business: *agendis rebus* is a dative of purpose.

the number of nights: This is a consequence of the moon’s importance in their activities. Caesar, *BG* 6.18.2, describes the similar pattern of calculation among the Gauls: *spatia omnis temporis non numero dierum sed noctium finiunt; dies natales et mensium et annorum initia sic observant, ut noctem dies subsequatur*, “they measure the passage of all time not by the number of days but of nights; in this way they observe birthdays and the beginnings of months and years, so that day follows night.” The verb *computant* indicates that they counted on their fingers.

fault: Tacitus throughout the monograph paints a generally favorable picture of the Germans and their primitive purity and freedom. But faults there are as well, and he does not hesitate to note them. Here he implies that they have too much *libertas*, because the mood of the individual outweighs the needs of the community. This proved to be disastrous in the war of 70, when Petillius Cerialis arrived in the land of the Treviri to take up the struggle against the Germans. While his reinforcements were en route, Civilis had cause to despair, *nam Germanos, qui ab ipsis sperentur, non iuberi, non regi, sed cuncta ex libidine agere* (*Hist.* 4.76.2), “for the Germans, who were awaited by them, were not subject to orders or command, but did everything as they wished.” In 23, Tacitus speaks of the Germans’ excessive drinking, and styles that also a *vitium*. Further, he says, they may well be overcome by their failings, *vitiis*.

their liberty: The theme of Germanic *libertas* is one of the prime leitmotifs of the monograph.

2 **the crowd thinks it opportune:** It is not the nobles, but the mass of freemen, who determine when deliberations should begin. One can imagine the chaos in times of crisis, when time was of the essence.

fully armed: This is a standard characteristic of warrior peoples. Their weapons furnish protection in the event of unexpected attack. The verb *considunt* draws attention to a contrast with Roman practice, since the Romans stood during deliberations of their assemblies.

the right of compulsion: Here is a brief recapitulation of the material of 7.1, *ceterum neque animadvertere neque vincire, ne verberare quidem nisi sacerdotibus permissum*. Since such meetings normally were held in sacred places (*Hist.* 4.14.2, *Ann.* 2.12.1), the priest was the appropriate wielder of authority.

influence of persuasion: This statement restates what was said at the beginning of 7.

power to command: The words *auctoritate suadendi*. . .

iubendi potestate form a chiasmus. Further, emphasis is gained by the presence of two words which were extremely potent in Roman political vocabulary, *auctoritas* and *potestas*. The former represents personal prestige, the latter authority linked with a position.

a proposal: The word *sententia* reminds the reader of the motions made in the Roman senate.

they bang their *frameae*: These spears are described in 6.1. Tacitus reports such an occasion in *Hist.* 5.17.3: *sono armorum tripudiisque (ita illis mos) adprobata sunt dicta*, “their words were approved by the noise of weapons and rhythmic movements (as is their custom).”

praise with arms: This indicates that the assembled warriors support their decision with the willingness to go to war.

Chapter 12

1 **It is also permitted:** The council of all freemen serves as a judicial body as well as deciding upon issues of public policy. Although the subject matter of the preceding chapter concerns activities of the council, the word *concilium* does not appear until the beginning of this chapter.

a variety of penalties: This statement is explained in the following sentence. The first pair of offenders relates to public acts, the following trio to private, shameful actions.

traitors and deserters: The Latin words *proditores et transfugas* are stylistically balanced by *ignavos et inbelles*. The latter pair is extended by *infames* to constitute a tricolon, and the words beginning with *c* produce a strong alliteration. Similarly, the three words of the tricolon are linked by the weaker alliteration of the letter *i*.

those who have perverted their persons: The Batavians were thus corrupted by the Romans, as reported in *Hist.* 4.14.1: *impubes et forma conspicui (et est plerisque procera pueritia) ad stuprum trahebantur*, “the young and the handsome (for many of them become tall in childhood) were dragged off to perversion.”

mire of a swamp: The bodies of these criminals will be sunk out of sight. The words make an hendiadys.

with a basket put over them: The reason for the wicker basket was either to prevent the ghost of the deceased from escaping or, perhaps more practicably, to ensure that the corpse will not rise to view.

disgraceful acts: This last recalls to the Roman reader the ancient punishment of parricide, where the criminal was sewn up in a sack, along with a dog, a viper, an asp, and a cock, and thrown into the sea.

2 **less significant wrongdoings:** These include homicide but are essentially property disputes, such as injury to another’s cattle or theft.

3 **Chieftains who pronounce justice:** How many these were we do not know. They may well have traveled on a regular cycle among all the members of the tribe.

the cantons and villages: Tacitus states that the Germans did not live in large communities (16.1). The *pagi* embrace a number of *vici*, so that there is some redundancy in the expression.

one hundred associates: Once again the number “one hundred” plays an important role in the pattern of society (see 6.3). They represent all members of the tribe and are probably the older, more experienced men.

Chapter 13

1 except in arms: This statement expands upon that of 11.2, that the Germans “sit down fully armed.” The conjunction *autem* is connective, not adversative. Tacitus puts into the mouth of a German chieftain the comment that the people were born to bear arms, *viris ad arma natis* (*Hist.* 4.64.1). In 22.1, they appear armed even at pleasurable events. *tum ad negotia nec minus saepe ad convivia procedunt armati.*

it is not the custom: Clearly exceptions do occur when a young man will take up arms without the sanction of the community. Such an occurrence might well be sudden attack upon one’s family or tribe. Use of the predicate genitive *moris* substitutes for the more common *mos est*.

in the council itself: The emphatic position of the phrase underscores the public character of the ceremony.

one of the chieftains: The repeated use of the conjunction *vel* and the alliteration of *principum, pater, propinqui* hint at the solemnity of the occasion.

present the young man with shield and *framea*: On the *framea*, see 6.1. The shields used by the Germanic tribes were much inferior to Roman ones, which were made of iron and leather. Native shields were most often wicker-work, which could not offer much protection.

the equivalent of the toga: The assumption of the *toga virilis*, which marked the passage of a young Roman from childhood to manhood, was celebrated with the religious rites of the *Liberalia* on March 17 within the family circle, most commonly at the age of sixteen. It was a private ceremony of civilian character. The German equivalent, however, was public and martial.

part of the household: The receipt of weapons, authorized by the tribal or family heads, marks not only the transition to adulthood but also acceptance among the freemen of the tribe, who play such a great role in the public activities of the whole.

2 the rank of chieftain: The chieftain is a “noble,” who stands out from *omnes*. Tacitus here emphasizes that high birth or great achievements of one’s forebears can bestow this distinction on a young man. An individual can, of course, gain this prestige by his own exploits.

they attach themselves to other more mature men: This attachment makes up the “retinue,” one of the chief characteristics of Germanic social structure. The word in German is *Gefolgschaft*, a concept which has evoked enormous discussion over the centuries. The verb *adgregantur* has reflexive sense.

The most detailed recent discussion of the retinue is by Kristensen. She argues that, contrary to customary views, Tacitus’ description of the *comitatus* is not confined to chapters 13–14. The retinue was already introduced in 6 and 12. She concludes that the retinue belongs to the sphere of public law rather than to that of private law, since only the authority of the *concilium* entitles a *princeps* to assemble a *comitatus*, in order, among other things, to administer a *pagus*. The *comites* of 13 are identical with those mentioned at the end of 12.

a matter of shame: On the contrary, it is a source of honor, because it links the young man with a group of more experienced men from whom he can learn and among whom he can display his abilities. In the *Annales*, Tacitus speaks of *clientes* rather than *comites*, using a term common in Roman political and social life (1.57.3, 2.45.1, 12.30.2).

him whom they are following: The circumlocution *eius quem sectantur* stands for *principis*, and is probably used to cut down on the frequency with which that word appears.

great rivalry: Prestige follows both within the entourage and within the full tribe.

3 **protection in war:** It is unlikely that such a one will be the particular object of attack.

this renown and glory: Tacitus waxes enthusiastically about this Germanic custom. It is unlike anything existent in Rome. Frequent repetition of the concepts “honor,” “glory,” and “safety” suggest his approval, and the rhetoric of his language emphasizes his views. The alliteration of *primus apud principem . . . principum cui plurimi* (13.2) underscores rank and numbers in a chiasmic order. This is further emphasized by the words which closely follow, *dignitas* and *vires*, which more specifically repeat these ideas. The sentence concludes with a powerful *sententia*, perfectly balanced: *in pace decus, in bello praesidium*. Another feature of this passage is the frequent omission of verbs, which produces a staccato effect.

the chieftains are sought out: In 5.3, Tacitus spoke of silver vessels presented to ambassadors and chieftains. The words *expetuntur . . . ornantur* form a chiasmus.

bring wars to an end: They mediate disputes between tribes other than their own.

Chapter 14

1 **shameful. . .shameful:** This is a highly rhetorical sentence, with the alliteration of four words beginning with the letter *v*, and the perfect balance of the main clauses, with each *turpe* followed by a dative of reference and completed in sense by a subject infinitive at the end.

shocking and disgraceful: This appears to contradict the statement in 6.4 that retreat is often prudent, provided one presses on again. The two statements, however, are complementary. The former refers to a phase of fighting, the present one to the conclusion, when the outcome of the struggle has been determined. If the chieftain dies, his followers are expected to fight on till their deaths. So in *Ann.* 2.11.3, the Batavian chieftain Chariovalda dies along with many of his followers, *suffosso equo labitur, ac multi nobilium circa*, “he falls from his wounded horse, and many of the nobles around him.”

the prime obligation: Without the chieftain, there is no retinue, and, indeed, no further life for all. When the *comitatus* protects and safeguards him, they are accomplishing the same for themselves. The sentence gains power by the lack of connectives.

to protect and guard: The infinitives *defendere* and *tueri* are not synonymous. The former refers to protection against attack, the latter to warding off potential dangers.

to credit their own brave deeds: Yet any individual achievements will be registered by the chieftain and may well lead to advancement, since the *comitatus* has ranks (13.2).

the chieftains. . .the entourage: This is another rhetorical sentence. Of the seven Latin words, five begin with the letter *p*. A little before appears the word *praecipuum*, which furnishes a particular emphasis. Word order in each half is identical, a noun

followed by a prepositional phrase, with a verb at the end; *pugnant* is understood in the second half.

2 **drowsing in long peace and leisure:** This enervating circumstance could not have occurred very often. When it did, as among the Cherusci, it proved disastrous (36.1).

quiet is displeasing to the race: The Germans were a warlike race (see 13.1), who had no other active pursuits. Leisure time was spent in drink and dining - in Tacitus' view, complete dissolution.

maintain a large retinue except by violence and war: It is the booty taken from enemies which constitutes a large part of the wealth of the chieftain, without which maintenance of his followers is impossible. There is, therefore, economic urgency for steady warfare. This is emphasized a few lines later. The words "violence and war," *vi belloque*, are essentially synonyms. Tacitus describes such action in *Ann.* 2.52.1, discussing the Numidians, *vagos primum et atrocinius suetos ad praedam et raptus congregare*, "(he) first gathered together nomads accustomed to robbery for booty and rapine."

that glorious war horse, that renowned *framea*: These are the prime recognitions of valor, an *equus bellator* (a warrior horse) and the "bleeding" of the *framea* which each received when he was accepted into public life (13.1). However, other military equipment such as shields must have been distributed as well. The expression *bellator equus* was first used by Vergil, *Geor.* 2.145, and then twice in the *Aen.* 10.891 and 11.89.

banquets and provisions: This is routine maintenance, which furnishes no opportunity for glory and advancement.

3 **nor would one as easily persuade them:** The generalizing second person singular of the subjunctive *persuaseris* has the effect of making the reader envision what is presented and feel more personally involved. The infinitive with *persuadere* rather than a subjunctive clause is rare.

to plow the earth or await the yearly crop: These tasks are the responsibility of the women, the elderly, and the frail (15.1).

it seems slothful and lazy: Yet, in fact, such labor is hard and tedious, but the Germans are better suited to the violent action which promises immediate reward (see 4). The alliteration of *sudore* and *sanguine* emphasizes the contrast. This sentence serves as transition to the next chapter.

Chapter 15

1 **little time to hunting, much more to leisure:** This is a surprising revelation, since hunting is, so to speak, a mild form of warfare. In 23 *recens fera* is mentioned as part of their diet.

doing nothing: The anomaly of the contrast between the violent activity of warfare and complete inertia at other times continues. Tacitus' own amazement at this peculiarity shines through his narrative.

household: This includes all family members but not slaves.

by an extraordinary contradiction of nature: The adjective *mira* reveals the author's judgment.

love inactivity and hate peace: The five Latin words, from *ament* to *quietem*, are perfectly balanced. Further, the two verbs are strongly contradictory.

- 2 voluntarily and by individual contribution:** Compulsion on the tribe's part is absent. The gifts are the expression of respect on the part of individuals for great chieftains, both their own and of other tribes.
- offerings of cattle and crops:** The partitive genitives *armentorum* and *frugum* have no dependency; a word such as *aliquid* must be understood.
- accepted. . . even support:** These tokens of honor enable the chieftains to support their retainers.
- gifts of neighboring tribes:** This statement reveals that the great chieftains' renown extended beyond the boundaries of their own tribe. One wonders how widely their fame spread.
- choice horses, magnificent weapons:** These gifts would have been particularly pleasant because German horses were small (6.2) and their weapons simple (6.1).
- decorations and neck chains:** *Phalerae* and *torques* were some of the *dona militaria* with which Roman soldiers were honored. The former are decorations worn on the chest, the latter necklaces or collars.
- to accept money:** The end of 5 had spoken of money and the Germans' familiarity with different kinds and their preferences. Receipt of money was largely limited to those tribes which lived near the borders. Tacitus seems to imply here that the gifts of money were bribes, with which the Romans corrupted the Germans. In *Hist.* 4.76.2, he says as much, through the mouth of a Gallic chieftain: *Germanos . . . cuncta ex libidine agere; pecuniamque ac dona, quis solis corrumpantur, maiora apud Romanos*, "the Germans did everything on the basis of pleasure; the Romans had more money and gifts, with which alone they were corrupted."

Chapter 16

- 1 the peoples of the Germans:** *populis* is a dative of agent.
- do not live in cities:** With this chapter Tacitus moves from treatment of public institutions to consideration of private life. The beginning of the work considered the land and its characteristics. Here he relates how the inhabitants lived in this land. The Roman empire was based upon urban communities, each of which was, so to speak, "a little Rome," with similar amenities and governmental functions. German society was vastly different, with no large communities and seldom permanent ones. The basic unit of settlement was the *vicus* (12.3). When circumstances required, entire tribes moved. In *Hist.* 4.64.2, city walls are called *munimenta servitii*.
- homes to be joined together:** Each family lived alone, with empty space around each home. Joined homes characterize a city; cf. Cicero, *Sest.* 91: *domicilia coniuncta, quas urbes dicimus*.
- separated and scattered:** The words *discreti* and *diversi* are synonymous. The alliteration furnishes greater emphasis.
- as . . . or . . . or:** The Latin repeats the word *ut* three times; the triple anaphora emphasizes the appeal of each.
- as a spring or a field or a grove has attracted them:** The attractions of nature play a large part in site selection. The need for water, arable land, wood and a religious bent all would have been significant. Caesar, *BG* 6.30.3, says the same thing about the Gauls: *qui vitandi aestus causa plerumque silvarum ac fluminum petunt propinquitates*, "who, to avoid the heat, generally seek the neighborhoods of forests and rivers."

villages: The village was the largest community.

in our manner: The same expression, slightly varied, appears in 6.2.

a protection against. . .or because of: The word *remedium* is a nominative, in apposition to the preceding clause, while the ablative represents cause. The two expressions are asymmetrical.

a lack of skill in building: There is a supercilious tone in Tacitus' statement.

- 2 **stone or tiles:** The latter are not roof but wall tiles, which faced concrete. It is not surprising that the Germans did not use such building materials, since they did not know concrete and chose not to use stone for permanent settlements.

appearance or aesthetic pleasure: Yet this statement is immediately contradicted by the following one. The preposition *citra* serves as the equivalent of *sine* in Silver Latin authors.

an earth so pure and gleaming: This is a kind of stucco. The reference is to interior walls.

- 3 **underground chambers:** These underground chambers are a regular feature of German communities.

retreat against winter: The genitive *hiemis* is objective, producing a contrast with the dative of purpose *frugibus*.

comes: The verb *advenit* is perfect, in a generalizing clause; more common would be a present subjunctive.

hidden and buried ones: German incursions against other tribes were rather raids than organized invasions. The chief purposes were slaughter and booty. They would take what they could find and not spend much time hunting for what could not be seen. The participles *abdita* and *defossa* are also joined in *Hist.* 3.33.2.

Chapter 17

- 1 **cloak held together with a pin or. . .a thorn:** The cloak is the simplest and most basic of outer garments. It was a square of wool, long or short depending upon the season, and thrown over the shoulder. It was held together on the right shoulder, and occasionally at the front, by a *fibula*, a brooch, which differed in style from tribe to tribe, or by the more basic thorn, plucked from a bush.

wearing no other clothing: *cetera* is an accusative of respect.

they pass whole days: The beginning of 15 reported upon the inactivity and love of leisure of the warrior class. Since the climate in Germany is so dismal (2.1), they as well as other members of the household are compelled, perforce, to spend much time indoors seeking warmth.

The wealthiest men: The word *omnibus* at the beginning of the chapter includes the *locupletissimi*. The great mass of men are not contrasted with the wealthy. The cloak is common to all, only a few have another garment.

a garment that is not flowing: Here Tacitus invokes other barbarian people with whom the Romans were familiar to emphasize a contrast in foreign customs. The Sarmatians occupy the territory to the north and east of the Danube as it approaches Budapest. The Parthians were Rome's great enemy in the Middle East, discussed at some length in 37.3.

tight and displaying every limb: Tacitus thus describes sleeves and trousers. Romans scorned trousers, *bracae*, which were symbolic of the northern barbarians. In *Hist.*

2.20.1, they are called the barbarian costume: *bracas, barbarum tegumen*. Many of the scenes on the column of Marcus Aurelius show this costume.

animal skins: Yet only a few lines earlier Tacitus had said that few men had anything other than the cloak. Animal skins are obvious choices in cold climes. The subject of *gerunt* is *omnes*, not merely *locupletissimi*.

those nearest. . . those farther inland: Those tribes living near the borders of the Roman provinces along Rhine and Danube had access to many items through trade which did not reach the more distant tribes.

decorate their hides with spots: The words *maculis pellibusque* are an hendiadys, standing for *maculis pellium*. The singular verb *gignit* suggests that only one sea, the Baltic, is meant. The animals would include reindeer and seals.

2 **women have the same garb:** One of the themes of Tacitus' narrative about the Germans is the similarity of upbringing and customs of male and female.

dressed in linen clothes: German women considered linen the finest material, as reported by Pliny, *NH* 19.8, *vela texunt . . . et transrhenei hostes, nec pulchriorem aliam vestem eorum feminae novere*, "even the enemy beyond the Rhine weave sails, nor do their women know any cloth which is more beautiful." The purple color probably came from vegetables or minerals.

the whole arm is bare: The adjective *nudae*, construed with *feminae*, which appears more than two lines earlier, looks forward to the final clause. There is a physical progression, from forearm (*bracchia*) to upper arm (*lacertos*) to breast (*pectoris*). The first two are accusatives of respect.

the adjacent part of the breast: This would be impossible in Rome, where female private parts were always covered, save by prostitutes and actresses. Yet this does not in any way affect the morality of the Germans. The connectives *sed et* are not adversative but affirmative. The quadruple alliteration of the letter *p* in the last four words is rhetorically powerful.

Chapter 18

1 **In spite of this:** The first word, *quamquam*, is here a connective rather than a subordinating conjunction. It strongly denies the assumption that the reader might have made at the end of the previous chapter.

marriages there are strict: Absence of the verb increases the power of the remaining words, particularly since Tacitus places the adjective before the noun. The "sandwiched" position of the adverb *illic* underscores contrast between Germany and Rome, where marriages are anything but strict, with the prevalence of divorce, especially among the upper classes.

one would praise: The impersonal use of the subjunctive gives a universal sense (see 14.3).

almost alone of the barbarians: The Gauls and Iberians were probably in Tacitus' mind. Rome had had long contact with them.

very few exceptions: The most powerful men could confer status and power upon a family by marrying into it. By contracting several marriages, they could increase their own influence and greatly expand the number of their followers. Caesar (*BG* 1.53.4) reports that Ariovistus had two wives.

lust. . . their high rank: Tacitus' text exemplifies stylistic *variatio*, with an ablative matched with a prepositional phrase.

2 **dowry:** At Rome, brides required dowries. In Germany the bride is purchased, so to speak.

pass judgment upon the gifts: The gifts are those which will help establish a household and mark the family as a member of the warrior class. Repetition of the word *munera*, particularly so close together, underscores the contrast with Roman custom. The entire sentence is highly rhetorical, with triple alliteration of *parentes*, *propinqui*, and *probrant*. Mention of the sword surprises, since in 6.1 Tacitus had said that swords are rare.

this exchange of gifts: There is no marriage ceremony; when agreement is reached between the two families, the young man and woman become husband and wife. This was different from Rome, where a marriage ceremony was a formal occasion. The importance of the gift of the weapon by the woman to the man is underscored by the anaphora of *hoc, haec, hos*. This weapon may represent the transfer of authority over her from her father to her new husband.

3 **the woman may not think herself:** Everyone is affected in a warrior society, either sharing in the rewards of victory or suffering equally in defeat. The men often die in battle or are killed immediately afterward, while the women suffer indignity and live on in slavery. The two phrases beginning with *extra* are identical in construction, each preposition being followed by a genitive plural and an accusative plural.

she comes as a partner in labors and dangers: As already shown in 15.1, the woman is responsible for the household and fields, and is often involved in battle as well (7.2-8.1). In *Ann.* 12.5.3, Tacitus expressly *states* this, *coniugem, prosperis dubiisque sociam*, "a wife, a companion in prosperity and misfortune."

the same thing. . . in peace, the same thing in war: *Pax* is usually linked with *bellum*, but Tacitus prefers *proelium* here to produce a strong alliteration of three words beginning with *p*. Repetition of *idem* increases emphasis.

this the yoked oxen: The oxen stand for the activities of peace, the horse and the arms represent those of war. The yoke of oxen, *iuncti boves*, may well have suggested to the Roman reader the Latin word for marriage, *coniugium*.

hand on to her children: Sons are meant, for the daughters pass into another family. The word *quae* is both accusative and nominative; it is the object of *accipiant* and the subject of *referantur*.

Chapter 19

1 **As a result:** This chapter, like the preceding one, begins with a strong connecting word which closely links what is to come with what has just been said. From the last sentence of 17 to the end of 20, the subject is essentially the same: the pattern of marriage and married life and the controlled sexuality among the Germans. The word *vitam* must be understood as the object of *agunt*.

by no attractions of games, by no seductions of banquets: Tacitus must have been present at the dedication of the *amphitheatrum Flavium* in 80 with its one hundred days of games. Banquets and other large gatherings furnished opportunities for seduction. So Ovid, *Ars Amat.* 1.97-99:

Sic ruit in celebres cultissima femina ludos:

Copia iudicium saepe morata meumst.

Spectatum veniunt; veniunt, spectentur ut ipsae,

“In this way the most sophisticated woman rushes to the crowded games: their great number has often given pause to my decision. They come to see, but they also come in order to be seen.”

secret correspondence: Whether literacy and the ability to write was common, or even existent, among the Germans is dubious.

very few cases of adultery: Tacitus could surely not have known any details. This statement is part of the general tradition about the Germans.

pardon for loss of chastity: The verb *publicare* means to make something public property, a powerful sense.

such a woman would not find: The subject is understood from the preceding, one who has prostituted herself. The verb is a potential subjunctive.

There no one laughs at vices: This sentence ranks as one of Tacitus' most famous. It concludes with a *sententia* which passes harsh judgment upon Roman society. Repetition of the verb form, in active and passive infinitive forms, emphasizes the truism which he presents. He joins the same forms of the verb, with the order reversed, in *Ann.* 14.20.4.

2 they receive one husband: The tricolon *unum, unum, unamque* makes the husband as integral to the woman as her body and life. The powerful rhetoric of the sentence continues with the repetition of *ne*, the alliteration of *cogitatio* and *cupiditas*, the duplication of *tamquam*, and the close similarity of the words *maritum* and *matrimonium*. The correlatives *sic. . . quo* modo are unusual; the second member is normally *ut*. In a warrior society, where men fought so frequently, there must have been a large number of widows. It may be that the practices just described were intended to remove them as rivals of younger women for the men who were available for marriage. A man who lost his wife could, course, remarry.

considered a crime: The Roman upper classes tended to limit the size of their families.
there good customs: Tacitus concludes with another aphorism, with the contrast between *boni mores* and *bonae leges*. Innate character and behavior are more potent than laws; compelled behavior is unreliable. Later, in *Ann.* 3.27.3, he commented, *corruptissima re publica plurimae leges*, “the largest number of laws existed when the state was most corrupt.” The state is not effective in its attempts to transform society. He may have had in mind the Augustan legislation on marriage and proper behavior of 18 B.C. and 9 A.D.

Chapter 20

I the young: The previous chapter had concluded with discussion of the children of a marriage. The transition to the subject of this chapter is straightforward. So much so, in fact, that the grammatical subject of this sentence is taken from the word *liberorum* of the final sentence of 19. Tacitus' treatment of the children progresses chronologically, from earliest childhood to the age of marriage.

naked and dirty: This was customary for the young, as confirmed by Pomponius Mela 3.3.26, *nudi agunt antequam puberes sint. . . viri sagis velantur*, “they live naked before puberty; the men wear a cloak.” Adults also bathed, with hot water when available (22.1).

these limbs, these bodies: Tacitus recalls the huge bodies which the Romans believed that all Germans possessed. He had mentioned their *magna corpora* in 4. *Hos, haec* form an anaphora.

His own mother: This is a significant contrast with Roman custom, where, among the upper classes, the child was suckled by wet nurses and tended by servants. A Roman matron often considered her child an inconvenience. Later, in *Dial.* 28.2, Tacitus condemns *neglegentia parentum* as one of the causes of the decline of oratory, and then laments, in 29.1, *At nunc natus infans delegatur Graeculae alicui ancillae*, "But, as it is now, the child, while still unable to speak, is entrusted to some worthless Greek maid." The subject of *delegantur* is understood from the preceding *quemque*.

You would not distinguish: All children grow up together, in the same surroundings, with the same treatment.

they live amidst the same: The animals are not kept in stalls but wander through the house.

until age. . .and valor: The beginning of puberty was probably the point where the social classes were separated. Status as a warrior and as a member of a chieftain's retinue (see 13) depended upon the young man's abilities. The verbs *separet* and *agnoscat* are subjunctive; the sense is not only temporal but also expresses the idea of purpose.

2 **The young men:** Tacitus again presents a contrast with Rome, where the male's sexual urge had easy satisfaction.

Nor are the girls: Roman girls usually married between the ages of twelve and fourteen. The Germans were about twenty years old at marriage.

the same youthful vigor and similar stature: Late marriage enabled them to mature fully. The big-boned barbarian woman was a *topos* of Roman thought, perhaps best exemplified by the British warrior queen Boudica (*Ann.* 14.31-37).

they are well matched: The words *eadem*, *similis*, *pares*, and *referunt* underscore the similarity of the male and the female.

3 **The sons of sisters:** This arrangement enlarges the protective circle of a male child. It may well arise from an originally matriarchal society.

this bond of blood is holier: In 8, the preference of females among hostages is mentioned. This preference extends to the children of sisters.

each person's own children: Property descends in a direct line. This is different from the practice in Rome, where the deceased could leave his or her estate to anyone. Use of the word *liberi* rather than *fili* indicates that daughters were heirs along with sons.

there is no will: This is unnecessary when no possibilities for variations from the norm existed.

the more. . .the more: The comparative clauses, with the two subordinate ones almost identical in construction (*quanto* followed by a comparative and a genitive), emphasize the importance and value of family. The culmination of Tacitus' statement is *gratiosior senectus*.

there are no rewards for childlessness: This is quite the opposite from the circumstances in Rome, where the childless were courted for their legacies. Horace's *Sat.* 2.5 is an example of the extensive literary treatment of legacy hunting. The entire last sentence lacks a verb; the four sentence units are alternately three and four words long. The last is a memorable *sententia*. *Pretia* stands for *praemia*.

Chapter 21

1 **personal feuds as well as the friendships:** This chapter begins with a further statement about families and their responsibilities. The father's personal relationships, for good or ill, continue to the next generation.

blood relative: The word *propinquus* repeats the usage in the last sentence of the previous chapter.

without possibility of settlement: Nonetheless, the sons can establish their own *modus vivendi* with their family's enemies, by coming to an agreement for reparations. The verb is used again, in conjunction with *odium*, in 33.2. Recompense for a crime was mentioned in 12.2.

with advantage to the community: A society which is subject to violent private feuds risks tearing itself apart, with the expenditure of lives and resources internally rather than in relationships with other tribes. In 11.1, the failure of the Germans to assemble on schedule when summoned to a meeting is *ex libertate vitium*.

2 **feasts and hospitality:** *Convictibus* refers to life among the Germans themselves, *hospitiis* to relationships with strangers. The introduction of this subject poses a sharp contrast with the impact of *inimicitiae* which has just been mentioned. Caesar, *BG* 6.23.9, had already commented upon the place of hospitality in German society: *hospitem violare fas non putant; qui quacumque de causa ad eos venerunt, ab iniuria prohibent sanctosque habent, hisque omnium domus patent victusque communicatur*, "they consider it sacrilegious to harm a guest; whoever has come to them, for whatever reason, then they protect from injury and consider holy, and to them the homes of all lie open and sustenance is shared."

It is considered a sin: Refusal of hospitality could lead to the stranger's death. Hence such action is given a moral and religious tone. The word *mortalium*, used in place of *homo* or something similar, gives a more general, indeed loftier, sense to the expression.

offers a banquet: The phrase *apparatis epulis* may have been borrowed from Livy, 23.4.3.

they go to the next home uninvited: The houses would likely be at a considerable distance from each other, and the stranger would not know the way. Each host would realize that at some point he would be a stranger, dependent upon the good will of others.

No one makes any distinction: It is need, not an already existing personal relationship, that underlies this generous view of hospitality.

It is customary to give: The exchange of gifts confirms the guest-friendship which has been established. The guest and host are bound by a quasi religious obligation. The verb *est* is understood with *moris*, a predicate genitive.

They delight in gifts: Gifts represent a record of relationships and actions, which contribute to the status of an individual. The Latin which follows, *nec data inputant nec acceptis obligantur*, is the language of commercial transaction.

Chapter 22

1 **Immediately upon arising:** Their proclivity toward sleep was noted in 15.1.

they wash: The sentence gives equal emphasis to the Germans' custom of sleeping late and their subsequent ablutions; its main part consists of only four words, *Statim e somno lavantur*.

where winter rules: This recalls the grim comments about Germany's weather which appeared in 2.1, *asperam caelo*. Yet Caesar had said that they bathed in rivers: *BG* 4.1.10, *ut . . . laventur in fluminibus*, and 6.21.5, *in fluminibus perluuntur*.

they take food: The German custom of separate seats and tables contrasts with that of the Romans, who reclined on couches around a common table in the *triclinium*. Subsequent comments in this chapter refer to banquets and the activities connected with them. This subject is a progression from the discussion of hospitality in the previous chapter.

Then they proceed, under arms: This is the crucial fact of the narrative. Once again, after 11.2 and 13.1, the ubiquity of weapons in normal life is emphasized. The final position of the word *armati* underscores its significance, as it had in 11.2.

It is not disgraceful: *probrum* implies a moral judgment.

frequent quarrels occur: This is an artfully crafted sentence. The adjective and noun of the subject are separated by the phrase *ut inter vinolentos*, which explains why these actions occur. Then *raro* and *saepius* are balanced, as are the ablatives, all of which progresses in emphasis: *saepius* is the longer of the two adverbs, the first ablative is matched with two. Violence and its consequences are more severe than mere abuse. In *Hist.* 2.66.2, Tacitus links the two, *a conviciis ad caedem transiere*.

2 **Yet they generally take counsel in banquets:** This is a powerful sentence, with the anaphora of *de*, the alliteration of *de, de,* and *denique*, the balanced gerundive pairs, the last position for war and peace, and the alliteration of *conviviis consultant*.

at no other time does the mind: This part of the sentence, which is attached almost as an afterthought but which contains the most powerful statement, consists of two identical halves, the phrase *ad + verb*, with the subject *animus* between them.

3 **without natural or acquired cunning:** The adjectives evoke the image of "the noble savage."

The matter is reconsidered: The understood subject of *retractatur* is *res* or something similar.

they have due respect for both occasions: The first deliberations occur when they are drunk, the second when they are sober.

they deliberate. . . they decide: This is another carefully crafted conclusion, with the two halves in perfect symmetry: main verb, conjunction, infinitive, subordinate verb.

Chapter 23

They have a beverage: Beer. Tacitus' opinion of this beverage is shown by use of the verb *corruptus*. *Potui* is a dative of purpose.

those nearest the frontier: These Germans have already been discussed in connection with usage of Roman coins, as an accoutrement of civilization (5.3). The expression occurs also in 17.1.

wild fruits: Yet in 5.1 Germany was said to bear no fruit trees; see also 26.3. Reference here is to wild apples. Tacitus employs the expression again in *Ann.* 15.45.3. The curdled milk is not cheese, which, according to Pliny, *NH* 11.239, was unknown to or despised by barbarians. This sentence is skillfully constructed, in two halves. The foods eaten are presented in three units, without connection; the first two units constitute a chiasmus, noun, adjective, adjective, noun, the third unit embraces two elements in similar order. The second half begins with two prepositional phrases, with

anaphora of the preposition, followed by verb and object, which gains emphasis from its final position. The word *famem* contrasts with the various foods enumerated at the beginning.

the same moderation regarding thirst: Tacitus moves now to one of the Germans' less admirable qualities, which enables him to close the sentence with another powerful *sententia*.

indulge their intoxication: The word *indulseris* could be either future perfect indicative or perfect subjunctive. The former would produce a standard future more vivid condition, the latter would introduce a potential sense, which seems more appropriate in the context.

no less easily by their vices than by arms: The words *vitiis* and *armis* are paired; with the verb *vincentur*, alliteration furnishes emphasis at beginning and end of the *sententia*. The thought that the Germans can be overcome by their own failings, without the necessity of being conquered by arms, parallels the more potent presentation of that view in 33.2. See also *Ann.* 2.26.3, *posse et Cheruscos ceterasque rebellium gentes. . . internis discordiis relinqui*, "that the Cherusci and the other rebellious tribes could be left to their internal disputes."

Chapter 24

1 **kind of entertainment:** Hunting has been mentioned as a regular pastime, though less often than one might have expected from a warrior people (see 15.1)

who practice the sport: Clearly not all young men. Does anyone choose this pastime who wishes to pursue it or are certain individuals designated? This kind of ritual dance recalls some of the religious rites of early Rome, such as those of the *Salii*, who performed dances in honor of Mars while armed. The Latin sentence is rhetorical, with the word order of the nouns *exercitatio artem. . . ars decorem*, an example of synchysis. The word *ars* is repeated, separated only by the verb. The nakedness of the youths recalls the statement at the beginning of 20.

the pleasure of the spectators: The words *lasciviae pretium est voluptas spectantium* form a chiasmus. The two genitives, although syntactically different (the former an objective, the latter a possessive), are closely linked in sense. *Pretium* is the equivalent of *praemium*, as it had been at the end of 20.

2 **While sober they play dice:** Tacitus expresses surprise that they play a game which can have such awful consequences while sober, since they are such heavy drinkers and consult on major questions of personal and community life while drunk. This section continues the theme of the previous chapter.

which one would wonder at: To a Roman, dice is a trivial pursuit, without serious purpose. Augustus was extremely fond of it (Suetonius, *Aug.* 70.2).

they put their liberty and persons up: Tacitus emphasizes the nature of this final chance by careful choice of words. The adjectives *extremo ac novissimo*, although in agreement with *iactu*, cast an aura over *libertate* and *corpore*, the basic freedom of an individual. The second pair of words is an hendiadys.

voluntary slavery: The alliteration of *victus voluntariam* emphasizes the oddity of this result to the Roman mind. Among the Romans, voluntary slavery is disgraceful, as Seneca (*Epist.* 47.17) writes, *nulla servitus turpior est quam voluntaria*, although he may not have known this German practice.

bound and sold: The verb *venire* is the infinitive of *veneo*, not *venio*.

stubbornness. . .honor: The moral value of integrity in such a circumstance strikes Tacitus as absurd. The proximity of the words *prava* and *pervicacia* suggests that, even though the adjective modifies a different noun.

they sell slaves of this category: Men obtained as slaves in this way would be a constant reminder of fortune which could have easily gone against the winner. The new master therefore does not want them around.

the shame of their win: Victory does not normally induce shame. But here it did not represent skill and bravery in war.

Chapter 25

1 **the other slaves:** The last sentence of the previous chapter began with the word *servos*. The first noun of this chapter is *servis*, which shows the continuation of the subject. Those mentioned here are for the most part captives in war from other tribes, whose presence in the community caused no embarrassment. See *Ann.* 12.27.3, 13.56.3. Yet some people were sold into slavery to satisfy debt, *Ann.* 4.72.2, *postremo corpora coniugum aut liberorum servitio tradebant*.

each slave is master: The owner furnishes the slave a plot of land and a home, for which he is responsible. The triple alliteration of *s* emphasizes the slave's "independence," as do the repeated *suam* and *suos* and the verb *regit*. Tacitus uses the Roman word and concept, *penates*, the household gods, to dramatize this remarkable relationship of master and slave, so different from that at Rome.

The master imposes. . .the slave's obedience: The relationship is essentially feudal. The verb *paret* is the indicative of *pareo*.

the master's wife and children: See 15.1.

It is a rare thing: Punishment of a slave does not come into question. A disagreement between master and slave generally ends in violence and death.

in an outburst of anger: The words *impetu*, *ira*, *inimicum*, *inpune* are linked by alliteration and by the similarity in three words of the first syllable. The first two words form an hendiadys. German violent temper was well-known, as Tacitus reports (*Hist.* 4.29.3), *apud Germanos inconsulta ira*.

as with a personal enemy: See 21.1.

2 **The status of freedmen:** Freedmen and their influence are a theme dear to Tacitus' heart, exploited particularly in the *Annales*. Barbarians were astonished at the power which freedmen wielded among the Romans. In *Ann.* 14.39.2, when the freedman Polyclitus is sent to Britain after the revolt of Boudica, he provokes ridicule among the Britons.

rarely with any influence: The verb *est* is understood from the preceding *sunt*.

with the exception only: See 44.3. In *Ann.* 13.54.1, Tacitus writes of a tribe with two kings, *qui nationem eam regebant, in quantum Germani regnantur*, "who ruled that tribe, as much as Germans are ruled."

For there they rise. . .among others: Freedmen are accustomed to serve others because of their previous status as slaves. Freeborn men are less inclined to subordinate themselves to others. The juxtaposition of the words *libertini libertatis*, both with the same root, becomes a contrast because of the presence of the word *inpaes*. *libertini* is used as a synonym of *liberti*.

Chapter 26

- 1 **To put capital to work:** The change of subject, from slaves and freedmen to the use of money to make money, is boldly announced by the first word of the sentence. One may consider the statement a bit odd, since Tacitus has already reported that the Germans had no coinage of their own (5.3).
if it had been prohibited: The same idea, that good customs (or the absence of bad) are more effective than prohibition of actions, had been expressed in 19.2.
- 3 **They change their ploughlands:** There is alliteration in the words *arva*, *annos*, *ager*. *Arva* and *ager* begin and end the sentence; although not synonyms, the words mean much the same thing. The verb *superest*, used in the same sense as in 6.1, shows that occupation and cultivation affected only part of the available land.
they do not strive: This statement expands upon that of 14.3. *Terrae* is dative with the verb *imperatur*. Vergil had written *imperat arvis* in *Geor.* 1.99.
- 4 **the name and products alike of autumn are unknown:** Reference is particularly to *pomaria*; it is on the basis of fruits that Tacitus makes this judgment. Wine is also included among the products. The first clause of the chapter had *ignotum* as its verb, this last sentence concludes with *ignorantur*. Lack of familiarity with Roman practices and customs is a leitmotif of this chapter.

Chapter 27

- 1 **their funerals:** The previous chapter began with the word *Faenus*, a concept unknown to the Germans which, consequently, plays no role in their lives. Now Tacitus closes the general section on private life with brief comment upon death and funeral customs, beginning with the word *Funerum*, which were conducted with moderation.
specific kinds of wood: Beech and oak were commonly used.
They do not heap: This simplicity contrasts sharply with Roman custom, such as at the ceremonies for Germanicus (*Ann.* 3.2.2), *vestem odores aliaque funerum sollemnia cremabant*, “they burned clothing, perfumes, and the other offerings of funerals.”
weapons. . .horse: Archaeology has revealed numerous ancient burials with precisely these offerings.
A raised mound of earth: A mound of earth is a natural occurrence, which, with the passage of time, will lose all appearance of human activity. Funeral monuments, on the other hand, are artificial. The language of the text underscores this contrast, with *caespes* being matched with *arduum et operosum honorem*. The monument weighs upon the dead, yet on many Roman tombstones appear the letters *S T T L*, *sit tibi terra levis*, “May the earth be light upon you.”
They quickly put aside: This sentence is beautifully balanced, with two accusative pairs, each followed by an adverb, sharing a verb. At the beginning there is alliteration of *l*, at the end of *t*.
It is honorable for women: This final sentence also displays careful balance, with dative and subject infinitive of each half separated by the common predicate adjective and verb. Memory is the greatest honor that can be shown a deceased. So Tacitus concludes the biography of his father-in-law Agricola (46.4), *multos veterum velut inglorios et ignobiles oblivio obruet: Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit*, “oblivion will overwhelm many men of old as if they were without glory and of no rank: Agricola will survive, his story told and transmitted to posterity.”

- 2 **This much we have learned:** Tacitus thus concludes the general narrative, relating characteristics and traits of the Germans as a whole. *Origo* was the subject of chapters 2-4, *mores* of 6-27. Now he moves to consideration of the individual tribes, from *omnium* to *singularum*.

Chapter 28

- 1 **the most authoritative of writers:** This is high praise from Tacitus. He does not mention his sources by name very frequently. Sallust is called *rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor* (*Ann.* 3.30.2), “the most illustrious writer of Roman affairs,” Livy is complimented twice, *eloquentiae ac fidei praeclarus in primis* (*Ann.* 4.34.3), “particularly distinguished in eloquence and integrity,” and *Livius veterum, Fabius Rusticus recentium eloquentissimi auctores* (*Agr.* 10.3), “Livy, the most polished writer of the old days, and Fabius Rusticus, the most polished of recent times.” Nowhere else in the *Germania* does Tacitus identify a source. The reference is to *BG* 6.24.1.
- the Gauls even migrated:** Such a statement would cast doubt upon Tacitus' statement in 2, where he argued that the Germans are an indigenous people. No one, he says, would leave Asia, Africa, or Italy to come to Germany; but the Gauls were neighbors, who could easily have passed into lands little different from their own. The adverb *etiam* is construed closely with *Gallos*, to evoke a contrast with the migration of Germans into Gaul mentioned at the end of the previous chapter.
- For how small an obstacle:** The word *quantulum* has exclamatory effect.
- 2 **the Helvetii:** This Celtic tribe originally occupied a large part of southern Germany before they were pushed into what is now Switzerland. The most significant event in their recorded history was their encounter with Caesar (*BG* 1.2-30).
- the Hercynian Forest:** The Hercynian Forest is described in some detail in 30.1.
- the Boii:** Bohemia is now part of the Czech Republic. The emigration covered a long distance to the east, during the course of which they entered Italy in the early fourth century B.C. (*Livy* 5.35.2).
- although the inhabitants are different:** In Tacitus' time, Bohemia was occupied by the Marcomani.
- 3 **the Aravisci. . the Osi:** The Aravisci were located southwest of Budapest, the Osi to the northeast. In 43.1, the Osi are not considered Germans because they speak a Pannonian tongue. Yet they could originally have been Germanic, whose language changed over time.
- the same language, institutions, and customs:** The three nouns constitute a balanced tricolon, with trisyllabic words bracketing one of four syllables.
- advantages and disadvantages:** The words *bona malaque* produce a powerful ending to the sentence.
- 4 **The Treveri and Nervii:** The Treveri and Nervii were both Gallic tribes, the former living along the Moselle River, with Trier as their capital, the latter along the English Channel in Gallia Belgica. The Treveri had fought against Rome in the civil war of 69-70, the Nervii had been among Caesar's bitterest enemies.
- Peoples who are unquestionably German:** Surprisingly, Tacitus changes the geographical order of these tribes, who lived along the southern reaches of the Rhine, on the western side. From south to north, they are the Triboci (in the vicinity of Strasburg), Nemetes (near Speyer), and Vangiones (near Worms)

Not even the Ubii: They occupied the city of Colonia Agrippinensis which had the status of a *colonia* and was the capital of the province of *Germania inferior*. The city had been the birthplace of the younger Agrippina, who, when wife of Claudius, had the city's name changed to include her name (*Ann.* 12.27.1).

the name of their founder: Although he refers to a woman, Tacitus prefers the masculine noun *conditor*, since he generally avoids feminine nouns ending in *-trix*.

they once crossed over and were settled: This had occurred in 38 B.C., when Agrippa had permitted them to settle on the west bank of the Rhine (Cassius Dio 54.36).

to keep others from crossing: Their allegiance to Rome had remained unshaken even under the pressures of the recent civil war. They were a bulwark against the tribes to the east.

Chapter 29

1 **The Batavians:** The Batavians were one of the most favored people within the Roman empire. As early as the first century B.C., they furnished auxiliary troops renowned for their abilities to fight and to swim. They were able to cross rivers fully-armed while leading their horses, and were so employed by Agricola in his assault on the island of Mona. *lectissimos auxiliarium, quibus nota vada et patrius nandi usus quo simul seque et arma et equos regunt, (Agricola) ita repente inmisit.* . . . (*Agr.* 18.4), "Agricola launched picked auxiliaries, who knew how to find fords and who had native skill in swimming by which they control themselves, their arms, and horses simultaneously, into the water so suddenly. . . ." Although Tacitus does not name them in the *Agricola* passage, their identity is unquestionable. He uses similar terms to describe their special skills in *Hist.* 4.12.3. They also constituted the largest part of the emperor's private guard, the *Germani corporis custodes* (*Ann.* 1.24.2, 13.18.3, Suetonius, *Gaius* 43, *Galba* 12.2). Their allegiance to Rome had remained unbroken since the time of Caesar, save for the civil war of 69-70, when they followed one of their own, Civilis. By the date of the *Germania's* composition, they had returned to imperial favor. They were splendid cavalrymen as well. They dwelt on the left bank of the Rhine in what is now part of the Netherlands, but chiefly on the *insula Batavorum*. Because of changes in the river's course, the island can not be identified. Later, in *Hist.* 4.12.2, Tacitus furnished much greater detail: *Batavi, donec trans Rhenum agebant, pars Chattorum, seditione domestica pulsati extremae Gallicae orae vacua cultoribus simulque insulam iuxta sitam occupavere, quam mare Oceanus a fronte, Rhenus amnis tergum ac latera circumluit,* "the Batavians were a part of the Chatti as long as they lived across the Rhine, after they had been driven out by a domestic uprising, they occupied the furthest stretches of the Gallic shore which were unoccupied and the island located nearby, which the Ocean sea fronts and the river Rhine encircles in the rear and on the sides."

of all these tribes: Those mentioned in the previous chapter.

they were once a people of the Chatti: The Chatti lived in the Taunus region northeast of Frankfurt am Main. They are discussed at considerable length in the following two chapters. Nothing is known of the internal faction which caused the Batavi to leave the remainder of their tribe.

a part of the Roman empire: This clause expresses the novel view that the Batavians' movement was intended to bring about their incorporation within the empire. The subjunctive *fierent* is purpose. Their alliance with Rome goes back to 12 B.C., when

Drusus used their land as a base for his campaigns against the Germans beyond the Rhine.

The privilege. . . remains: The vocabulary of this sentence is very evocative, presenting first the good, then the bad, of being allied with, and being subject to, Rome. *Honos* and *insigne* represent the good, *contemnuntur* and *atterit* the bad. In the *Agricola*, the chieftain Calgacus reminds his followers what the conquered must endure (31.1-2). Mention of the *publicanus* is odd, since taxes were not collected by the *publicani* under the empire. It was the procurator's staff which undertook that task.

reserved for wars: They are in the fullest sense allies, with only a military obligation.

- 2 **The tribe of the Mattiaci:** The Mattiaci lived on the "other" side of the Rhine from Mainz, in the area of modern Wiesbaden, which in Roman times was called *aquae Mattiacae*. This began as an auxiliary establishment. It was one of the great spas of Roman Germany, the equivalent of Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) in Britannia. In the year 47, the Romans mined silver in their territory (*Ann.* 11.20.3).

for the greatness of the Roman people: Tacitus does not wish to mention Domitian by name and opts for this circumlocution. His statement here is high praise, for it reveals a significant expansion of Rome's territory. In *Ann.* 4.32.2, Tiberius will be rebuked for being a *princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus*, "an emperor uninterested in expanding the empire."

Thus they live: They are physically north of the Rhine but nonetheless Roman subjects. The sentence is nicely balanced, with two ablatives connected by *-que* at the beginning of each clause and *in sua ripa* corresponding to *nobiscum*.

they have greater energy: The Batavians live on an island in the midst of the Rhine delta, with the dreary climate of the North Sea. The Mattiaci occupy a more congenial part of Germany.

- 3 **I would not reckon:** The verb is a potential subjunctive.

the agri Decumates: The meaning of this name, found only here among classical texts, has been much debated. Perhaps the expression refers to "tithelands," the inhabitants of which paid for its use. This is the territory largely of modern Baden-Württemberg, which stretches northward from the vicinity of Basel toward the *limes*.

the most inconsequential of the Gauls: The Latin word *levissimus* is extremely pejorative. These Gauls were not fighters or otherwise significant. We do not know who they were nor how they occupied this land.

they were considered a corner of empire: The territory was crucial for direct communication between Gaul and the Danube provinces. It was a wedge extending into Roman domain, which was incorporated into the empire in the eighties.

part of the province: *Germania superior*. The sentence is marked by the alliteration of the letter *p*, *promotisque praesidiis. . . pars provinciae*.

Chapter 30

- 1 **Beyond these:** "These" refers to the Mattiaci, not the inhabitants of the *agri Decumates*. This last paragraph was an intrusion into Tacitus' planned description of the tribes from south to north.

whose territory begins: Tacitus' use of the two words *initium* and *incohant* is pleonastic.

the Hercynian Forest: The forest occupied a large part of southern Germany, starting with the Black Forest in the west and stretching eastward to Bohemia. The territory of the Chatti reached to the vicinity of Kassel. Tacitus had mentioned the forests in 5.1.

Forest accompanies its Chatti: The forest is personified, as if it intentionally protected the Chatti for the full extent of their large territory. The juxtaposition of *suos saltus* emphasizes this relationship. The use of the reflexive pronoun is striking.

- 2 **The tribe is distinguished:** Tacitus is struck by the similarity of the Chatti to the Romans in their way of life and approach to war. With this chapter begins a series of five dealing with warrior tribes (30-34), to be followed by three on peaceful tribes (35-37). The sentence is rapid and strong; there is no verb, there are four subjects. The first three consist of two words each and there are no connectives among them; the last is longer, three words, to emphasize its greater importance, and is preceded by *et*.

greater liveliness of mind: This is the quality which the Romans admired - and feared.

Inasmuch as they are Germans: Tacitus has already said that the Germans are a race "without natural or acquired cunning" (22.3).

considerable judgment and skill: The genitives *rationis ac sollertiae* are partitive. These qualities are explained by nine examples; the first seven are pairs of words, an infinitive with an accusative. The eighth is much extended, with two accusatives, each with a prepositional phrase. The ninth, giving the greatest praise, is by far the longest. The infinitives are historic, in apposition with, and explaining, *ratio* and *sollertia*.

a thing that is a very rare trait: This introduction to the ninth example shows its greatest importance. Only Roman *disciplina* displays such military practice. Tacitus could have paid the Chatti no higher compliment.

- 3 **All their strength is in the infantry:** There is a contrast between the Chatti, the subjects of chapters 30 and 31, who are infantry warriors, and the Tencteri of 32, whose prowess is in cavalry.

they load down: Again, this is very like Roman practice. A legionary carried some sixty to seventy pounds on the march. Late in the second century B.C., when Marius transformed the Roman army, the legionaries were dubbed "Marius' mules."

go off to battle. . . go off to war: This is very different from what had been said in 4 about the physical characteristics of the Germans, whose bodies "are strong only for violent exertion," without "comparable endurance of hardship and labors."

Indeed it is the particular assignment: The cavalry cannot maintain a lengthy battle, certainly not a war. Infantry, on the other hand, can claim durability and doggedness. The final noun in the sentence, *constantiae*, is closely linked to *rationis* and *disciplinae*, both in sense and in bracketing the development of Tacitus' argument. Alliteration emphasizes the relationship of *cunctatio* and *constantiae*.

Chapter 31

- 1 **The following custom:** Tacitus' sentence is extremely tight and contorted, with no obvious subject and mention of the Chatti delayed until late in the whole. *Germanorum* early speaks of the generality, *apud Chattos* of the particular. *populis* is a dative of agent. The actual subjects of the sentence are the infinitives *summittere* and *exuere*.

personal daring of each individual: Tacitus offers two contrasts here, between *privata* and *in consensum* and between *cuiusque* and *apud Chattos*.

the face's garb: This is a bold, almost poetic expression, which gains emphasis from its position at the end of the sentence.

vowed and owed to bravery: *votivum* and *virtuti* are linked by alliteration. The former word has religious connotation, *obligatum* legal and business ones.

bloody, despoiled corpse: The vividness of the expression is underscored by the alliteration of the sibilant *s*; the idea and the sound were anticipated by the ablative absolute just before, *hoste caeso*.

worthy of country and parents: The words *patria ac parentibus*, ablatives with *dignos*, contrast with *privata cuiusque* in the first sentence. Alliteration again contributes to the sense of dignity and weight.

the cowardly and unwarlike: These unfortunates are emphasized by the position of the words at the beginning of the sentence and by the alliteration. The same expression had been used in 12.1.

- 2 **a mark of disgrace:** The word *ignominiosum* had portentous meaning for a Roman reader, since *ignominia* involved a citizen's disgrace or diminution of legal rights. The distinction between *ignominia* and *infamia* is unclear.

as a bond: Once again alliteration gives emphasis to the phrase, *velut vinculum*. The ring figuratively makes the warriors slaves of the war god.

the slaughter of an enemy: The words *caede hostis* repeat *hoste caeso* just above.

This fashion: Reference is to the shaggy filth (*squalor*) rather than to the wearing of the iron ring. "Very many" must be an exaggeration.

conspicuous: *insignes* is the crucial word of the sentence. The beliefs and actions of these warriors gain them distinction, recognized by both friend and foe. The verb *canent* is from *cano*, not *cano*.

- 3 **rests with them:** The phrase *penes hos* loses some emphasis because it is bracketed by *omnium* and *initia*. But *omnium*, appearing first, shows the overriding influence of these warriors. They make up the first line of battle.

furnish a startling view: *visu* is a supine, an ablative of respect.

scornful of their own: If none of these warriors possesses home or field, as stated at the beginning of the sentence, what could they despise?

such hardy bravery: This conclusion of the sentence rounds off what was stated at the beginning of the chapter. *exsanguis senectus* balances *ut primum adoleverint*, *virtuti* repeats *virtuti*. With this fine tribute, Tacitus ends his description of the Chatti, which is far more extended than that which he devotes to any other tribe. The respect and fear which the Romans felt regarding the Chatti are evident. One must remember that the Romans fought the Chatti in one of Domitian's campaigns in the early 80s.

Chapter 32

Usipi and Tencteri: This chapter is surprisingly thin and un-descriptive, particularly after the detail of the discussion of the Chatti. The Usipi are named and then entirely ignored. The Tencteri are presented as the opposites of the Chatti in one regard only, namely their emphasis upon cavalry rather than infantry. The Chatti and Tencteri are joined in 38.1, without mention of the Usipi.

to serve as a boundary: The Rhine is the boundary of the province of Germania inferior, which begins opposite Rheinbrohl, on the east bank of the river north of Koblenz.

skill of horsemanship: In contrast to the Chatti.

among the Chatti: The prepositional phrase is balanced by the dative *Tencteris*. This is an example of Tacitus' inconcinnity of style.

This their ancestors established: The sentence is chiasmic, with the verbs bracketing the subjects. The verbs are further linked by alliteration.

pastimes. . .rivalry. . .continue to practice: The sentence is a tricolon in sense though not in absolute syntax. The first two members are parallel, the third changes construction. But there is a progression of time, from *infantium* to *iuvenum* to *senes*.

slaves and home and the rights of inheritance: Another tricolon, with the close relationship of the three members emphasized by the connectives.

a son is the recipient: The novelty of the eldest son not inheriting under the principle of primogeniture is underscored by the last words of the sentence, *ferox bello et melior*. Ability, not age, is crucial. Only the horses come into question here, not the remainder of the property. Whether primogeniture existed among the ancient Germans is by no means certain.

Chapter 33

1 **Bructeri:** This tribe lived along the valley of the River Lippe, which flows eastward from the Rhine in the vicinity of Xanten toward the Teutoburg Forest. It had been allied with Arminius in the destruction of Varus' army in 9 A.D. and had also been involved in the revolt of the Batavi in 70. This is perhaps the reason for Tacitus' expression of satisfaction in their destruction.

it is reported: The use of the impersonal passive *narratur* with accusative and infinitive is rare.

Chamavi and Angrivarii: The territory of the Chamavi was north of the Bructeri; the Angrivarii were north and east of the Chamavi.

wiped them out: This is clearly an event of recent times, the details of which Tacitus surely learned directly rather than through a literary source. The exact date is unknown.

whether. . .or. . .or: When Tacitus gives alternatives, the one he favors is usually the last.

the spectacle of a battle: The image of gladiatorial combat lurks behind this military description. Tacitus may have intended his readers to recall the dedication of the Flavian Amphitheater in the year 80. He may also have had in mind the delight that the legions stationed along the lower Rhine would have received from the extirpation of a hated enemy, yet they would certainly not have been able actually to see the event.

to delight our eyes: This recalls the military judgment of the ultimate success, when victory is obtained without any, or significant, loss of Roman life. Tacitus had spoken of this in the *Agricola*, when detailing the general's dispositions before the final battle in Scotland (35.2), *ingens victoriae decus citra Romanum sanguinem bellandi*, "since it would be a great glory of victory to have waged the war without shedding Roman blood."

2 **Let there continue:** This is one of the most debated sentences in the entire Tacitean corpus. Vergil twice joined the verb *urgeo* and the noun *fatum* (*Aen.* 2.653 and 11.587), and was followed by Livy (5.22.8, 5.36.6, 22.43.9) and Lucan (10.30). In these contexts, the sense is pessimistic, foreboding disaster; the second Vergilian instance adds the adjective *acerbum* to underscore this meaning. But, since the expression itself

is neutral and depends upon context for meaning and interpretation, an optimistic sense is also possible, which will recall Vergil's *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (*Aen.* 6.853), "to spare the humbled and to crush the proud," and exploit the general mood of confidence in the future of Rome at the accession of the emperor Trajan. This is the outlook which Tacitus himself presents in the early chapters of the *Agricola*.

From the early years of this century, the general view of the passage was optimistic. Both Müllenhoff and Reitzenstein argued strongly that a negative view would have been anachronistic, clashing with the general mood of both of Tacitus' other early works, the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, and with the atmosphere of the beginning of Trajan's principate. Heinze argued conversely for a sense of "gloom and doom," and, particularly since the end of the Second World War, debate has continued with strong advocates on both sides. Nonetheless, the optimistic view better fits both the author's imperialistic outlook and the events of the period.

Even though some of Tacitus' predecessors had used the verb *urgeo* to invoke doom and disaster, it does not necessarily follow that Tacitus used the verb and the larger expression in the same sense. He often changes and reinterprets literary antecedents; that is the case here. Tacitus is generally a staunch imperialist; consider the scorn for Tiberius suggested in the words *princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus* (*Ann.* 4.32.2), "an emperor uninterested in expanding the empire." Benario (1997) discusses current scholarly opinion. Lund (1991, second item) offers an extensive survey and discussion of the bibliography.

nothing greater: The Latin words *nihil...maius* do not suggest anything negative. Fortune makes Rome's imperialistic mission easier by keeping the enemy disunited. Tacitus would likely have used a word such as *melius* had he meant to imply that Rome was too weak to succeed without such assistance.

discord of the enemy: As earlier in Britain (*Agr.* 12.2), Rome's task of conquest is made easier by the failure of the various tribes to resist her in unison: *nec aliud adversus validissimas gentes pro nobis utilius quam quod in commune non consulunt. . . .ita singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur*, "Nor is anything more advantageous for us in dealing with very strong peoples than the fact that they do not confer for the common good. . . .thus they fight one by one and are all conquered."

Chapter 34

1 Dulgubini and Chasuarii: Tacitus mentions briefly, and almost at random, a number of tribes which played no role in Rome's contact with Germany. They are included so that he may continue his survey moving from south to north; almost nothing is known about them. Once he reaches the Frisii and the ocean, his interest is again aroused.

The greater and lesser Frisii: The Frisii occupied a huge territory, around Lake Flevo, an area which is now part of The Netherlands. They were conquered by Drusus in 12 B.C., revolted in 28 (*Ann.* 4.72.1), were defeated by Corbulo in 47 (*Ann.* 11.19.1), and joined Civilis in the great revolt of 69-70 (*Hist.* 4.15.2, 79.2). The Caninefates are ignored here by Tacitus, although their territory stretched along the North Sea, beyond that of the Frisii.

huge lakes that have been navigated: These lakes constituted part of the water route that Drusus constructed in 12 B.C. connecting the Rhine with the North Sea, known as

the *fossa Drusiana*. The fleets were those of Drusus, Tiberius (5 A.D.), and Germanicus (15-16).

- 2 **the ocean itself there:** Drusus made some investigations, Germanicus, his son, some more, but Germanicus is best known in this context for the disaster he suffered in war against Arminius, when his fleet was largely destroyed (*Ann.* 2.23-24).

columns of Hercules: For Hercules see 3.1 and 9.1.

the ocean blocked his exploration: This was during his campaign of 12 B.C., when he attempted to sail along the coast and reconnoiter the islands and did reach the end of the Jutland peninsula (Pliny, *NH* 2.167).

it seemed more pious and reverent: Tacitus concludes with a bitter statement, ending with the infinitives *credere* and *scire*. The comparatives *sanctiusque ac reverentius* lead the reader into the world of the unknown, and perhaps unknowable.

Chapter 35

- 1 **with a great sweep:** This is the coast from the Rhine delta to the Jutland peninsula, the home earlier of the Cimbri (37.1).

the tribe of the Chauci: This tribe evokes Tacitus' admiration, as had the Chatti a little before. Their power and size are emphasized here, in anticipation of the discussion of the Cherusci in the next chapter.

it makes a bend: The territory of the Chauci stretches southward from the coast, between the rivers Ems and Elbe, toward the Lahn and the Taunus region. They were divided by the river Weser into groupings known as *maiores* and *minores*. The former lived east of the river, the latter west (*Ann.* 11.19.2).

they also fill it: Velleius Paterculus (2.106.1) speaks of them as *omnis eorum iuventus infinita numero, immensa corporibus, situ locorum tutissima*, "their entire youth is infinite in number, huge in physique, most secure because of the geography of their territory."

they are the noblest people. . .and of such character: Chapters 30-34 treated warrior tribes. 35-36 discuss peaceful ones. As the first group began with the greatest among them, the Chatti, so here Tacitus also begins with the most significant. With the Chauci, peace is a choice, not a condition essentially imposed by others.

- 2 **Without greed:** The sentence begins with two prepositional phrases with anaphora of the preposition, continues with two nominative adjectives, and emphasizes their peaceful actions by denying the "normal" activities of the Germans with the repeated use of *nulla, nullis*. Further, the verbs are alliterative. Yet Tacitus reports in *Ann.* 13.55.1 that the Ampsivarii had been driven out of their territory by the Chauci and in 11.18.1 relates another act of aggression.

This is particular proof: The words *praecipuum, virtutis, virium* make a strong statement.

very powerful in men and horses: Their power embraces both infantry and cavalry, the strong points, separately, of the Chatti and Tencteri.

they have the same renown: The two final words sum up the Chauci's reputation, which remains the same whether *si res poscat* or *quiescentibus*. It almost seems that Tacitus has chosen to present this brief discussion of the Chauci, with their contrast with the Cherusci, merely to highlight the fate of the latter.

Chapter 36

1 **the Cherusci:** Tacitus places together the names of the three tribes with which he is chiefly concerned. The Chatti and Chauci have received extensive and favorable treatment. The Cherusci, the tribe of Arminius, once Rome's most formidable enemy, had become weak and leaderless by the midpoint of the first century A.D. Internecine strife had killed all their nobles, and they were reduced to requesting a king from the emperor Claudius, a young man named Iulicus who had grown up at Rome as a hostage. The outcome was not happy (*Ann.* 11.16-17). The parlous condition of the Cherusci continued until they succumbed to the Chatti.

since they were unprovoked: To be left in peace is what all states and tribes desire, but such a circumstance is advantageous only if the power to maintain it is available. The Chauci enjoyed peace because they were feared; with the Cherusci, peace depended upon the whim of others.

an excessive and enervating peace: The adjectives are revealing. Peace is not normally considered *nimia*, but it is bad when it destroys the martial character of the people. Tacitus had spoken of this state of affairs in *Agr.* 11.4, *plus tamen ferociae Britanni praeferunt, ut quos nondum longa pax emollierit*, “the Britons display more bravery, since they are a people whom extended peace has not yet weakened.”

among violent and strong peoples: The Cherusci live almost surrounded by those who are *inpotentes*; the Chauci are *sine inpotentia*.

moderation and honorable behavior: These are admirable qualities, but only when displayed by those strong enough to maintain them. The word *superioris* is crucial.

the victorious Chatti: The Chatti expelled the Cheruscan king about the year 90 and took part of their territory (Dio Cassius 67.5.1). The Cherusci did not lose their independence, but their power and reputation were significantly diminished.

2 **the Fosi:** They were a small and unimportant tribe, whose territory and fate were joined with those of the Cherusci. They are mentioned nowhere else.

equally in disaster. . . junior partners in prosperity: Tacitus emphasizes their unfortunate relationship with the words *ex aequo socii* and *minores*. The different length of the two clauses, giving greater emphasis to misfortune, parallels actuality.

Chapter 37

1 **Cimbri:** The Cimbri were one of the tribes which invaded Roman territory late in the second century B.C., penetrating into southern Gaul and northern Italy. It is surprising that Tacitus does not mention the Teutones, whose home was nearby and who also moved west and southward. Their name became symbolic of Roman dread of the Germans; *Teutonicus furor* represented a general view of the northern tribes. The entire tribe of the Cimbri had not migrated; their descendants were the people of whom Tacitus here speaks. Their home had been “discovered” by the Romans only in 5 A.D. by Tiberius’ fleet (Augustus, *RG* 26.4).

same peninsula: The reference is to the peninsula of modern Denmark, the northern part of which the Cimbri inhabited. The word “same” refers to the description of the coast at the beginning of 35.

camps of great size: *castra ac spatia* present the two words as parallel, rather than making one dependent upon the other. The words are the equivalent of *castrorum spatia* (*Hist.* 4.32.3).

power and numbers: The words *molem manusque* constitute an hendiadys. The former word incorporates the latter; *moles* includes all, men of all ages, women, and children, *manus* refers to the number of warriors. With *metiaris*, there is triple alliteration.

so great a migration: It is impossible to conjecture how large a movement it was when the Cimbri abandoned their homes, but it clearly was vast by any ancient standards. One may get a sense of the logistical enormity of such movements from Caesar's description of the migration of the Helvetii (*BG* 1.2-29). Use of the word *exitus* in the sense of "migration" is very rare. Having mentioned the Cimbri, Tacitus considers the entire subsequent relationship of Rome with the Germans.

2 **640th year:** The canonical date for the foundation of Rome, as determined by Varro in the first century B.C., was April 21, 753. C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius and Cn. Papirius Carbo were consuls in the year 113; Tacitus' dating is thus precise, since news of the invasion came in early spring.

count from that year: Trajan's second consulship was in the year 98. Once again, Tacitus' figure is correct.

has the conquest of Germany been in progress: At the very beginning of his historical excursus, Tacitus emphasizes that Germany continues unconquered, despite the claims of the emperor Domitian, who issued coins with the legends *devictis Germanis*, *Germania capta*, and *Germania devicta* (see Appendix III).

3 **many disasters on both sides:** Tacitus next glancingly mentions many of the great enemies of Rome, implies the disasters suffered at their hands, and alludes to the difficulty of their conquest.

Samnites: The Samnites, an Oscan-speaking people of central Italy, fought three wars against Rome, the second of which included a Roman disaster at the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C. Their ultimate subjugation was not finally accomplished until the first century B.C.

Carthaginians: The Carthaginians were also involved in three bitter wars with Rome, the first two extremely lengthy (264-241, 218-201), the last brief and fatal (149-146). The second war involved the great figures of Hannibal and Scipio Africanus, the third the destroyer of Carthage, Scipio Aemilianus, the second Africanus.

Spain: The conquest of the Spanish peninsula began with territory gained in the second war against Carthage and continued over some two centuries, involving much bitter and brutal warfare. Spain was not fully pacified until the principate of Augustus. In Tacitus' day, there were three Spanish provinces, Tarraconensis, Baetica, and Lusitania.

Gaul: Southern Gaul, essentially the modern Provence, became a Roman province in 121 B.C. Julius Caesar conquered the vast remainder of Gaul during the decade of the fifties. But Tacitus may well also have had in mind the invasion of the Gauls in 390 and the subsequent burning of Rome, as well as the bitter struggles in Gallia Cisalpina in the late third century. In his presentation of the four peoples, Tacitus is typically varied. First come names, singular followed by plural, then the lands in the plurals, an effect which cannot readily be replicated in a translation. This is a fine example of inconcinnity.

Parthians: The Parthians occupied the middle eastern area which approximates the territory of modern Iran.

the liberty of the Germans: The unconquered Germans culminate the list of Roman enemies. The Parthians were still an active threat to Rome's security in the East, but the Germans were nearer and thus more dangerous. Within a score of years after the publication of the *Germania*, the emperor Trajan waged successful war against the Parthians, with vast conquests, soon abandoned by his successor Hadrian.

kingdom of Arsaces: The kings of Parthia traditionally took the name of Arsaces as a title.

Crassus: M. Licinius Crassus, the wealthiest of the Romans in the late republic and a member of the unofficial alliance known as the "First Triumvirate," along with Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, was defeated and killed in battle against the Parthians at Carrhae in 53 B.C.

Ventidius: P. Ventidius Bassus, proconsul of Syria, was victorious over Pacorus and the Parthians in 38 B.C. Pacorus was the Parthian king's son. Ventidius' origin was of the lowest. He had been a muleteer, but adherence to Caesar's cause brought him ultimately to the consulship and a pontificate. He fought the Parthians as a legate of Antonius. Use of the preposition *infra* reveals the humiliation which Tacitus perceives in the defeat of a Parthian of royal birth by a man from the lowest levels of Roman society. The Latin words *et ipse* are elliptical; the expression in full would be *Oriens qui et ipse amisit*.

4 **five consular armies:** These disasters occurred between 113 and 105. The names of the generals follow in rapid succession; the effect, stylistically and in impact, is that of an obituary. Cn. Papius Carbo, consul 113, was routed by the Cimbri in Carinthia, modern Austria. L. Cassius Longinus, consul 107, was defeated in the Garonne valley, in France, and his army was humiliated by being compelled to pass under the yoke. M. Aurelius Scaurus, suffect consul in 108, was taken prisoner by the Cimbri and put to death, while Q. Servilius Caepio, consul 106, and Cn. Mallius Maximus, consul 105, were separately routed at Arausio (modern Orange, in Provence) in 105. This last defeat ranked with those of the Caudine Forks against the Samnites and of Cannae against Hannibal in 216 as one of the most overwhelming in Roman history.

one after another: The word *simul* gives the sense of "in rapid succession."

Augustus: Designated in the text as *Caesar*.

Varus and his three legions: This was the debacle of 9 A.D., when P. Quinctilius Varus and the 17th, 18th, and 19th legions were destroyed in the Teutoburg Forest. A huge statue of Arminius, who defeated Varus, was dedicated in 1875 near Detmold, but within the last decade discoveries made in the Kalkriese, east of Bramsche and north of Osnabrück, have revealed a more likely site for the disaster.

Gaius Marius: In the year 105 B.C., because of the despair caused by the continuing series of defeats, the Roman people elected C. Marius to the first of five successive consulships, from 104 to 100. He rebuilt the armies and his superior generalship continually foiled the enemy. He destroyed the Teutones at Aquae Sextiae in southern France in 102 and the Cimbri at Vercellae in northern Italy in 101. The threat from the northern barbarians was at last over.

the Deified Julius: Caesar fought the Germans, chief among them Ariovistus, from 58 to 55 B.C., without lasting effect.

Drusus and Nero and Germanicus: Nero Claudius Drusus (38-9) and Tiberius Claudius Nero (the later emperor Tiberius), Augustus' stepsons, waged war vigorously in Germany, the former between 12 and 9, the latter between 9 B.C. and 11 A.D. in eleven campaigns. Germanicus, the son of Drusus, commanded in Germany between 14 and 16.

soon: Subsequently, rather than immediately. More than a score of years intervened.

Gaius Caesar: Perhaps better known as the emperor Caligula, he led a "bogus" campaign in 39. Suetonius, *Caligula* 45- 47, gives the details. There was a feigned battle, with some members of the emperor's guard dressed as the German enemy and some Gauls disguised as prisoners.

- 5 **internal strife and civil wars:** Nero's death in 68 led to the rapid succession of four emperors, Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian, with the violence of Roman army fighting Roman army, frequently on Italian soil.

the winter quarters of legions: The revolt of Iulius Civilis, a Batavian chieftain, who had gained Roman citizenship through service in the auxiliaries, began in 69, the year of the four emperors, as an uprising on behalf of Vespasian against the rule of Vitellius, but soon turned into an attempt to recover the freedom of Gauls and Germans from Roman domination and was crushed in the following year. He and his supporters stormed the legionary fort at Vetera (Xanten).

triumphal processions: The "triumph," which was the culmination of a general's victory over an enemy, was a grand parade through the forum to the Capitoline Hill, ending at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Important captives were normally displayed among the booty before being put to death. Tacitus' comment gives the lie to Domitian's claim to have pacified Germany. The triumph over the Chatti, celebrated in 83, had no lasting effect, for the Chatti remained a viable power. The words *triumphati magis quam victi sunt* express Tacitus' disillusionment.

Chapter 38

- 1 **Now we must speak:** Tacitus resumes his discussion of the various tribes after the long historical digression of 37.

nation. . . tribes: The words *gens* and *natio* are used with the same distinction as they were in 2.3.

possess the greater part of Germany: The Chauci are said to occupy a vast territory in 35.1, yet they are a single tribe while the Suebi embrace many. The territory of the Suebi stretched from the Elbe to the Oder, northward from the Danube. The entire area of eastern Germany was known as *Suebia* (46.1) and the Baltic Sea was called the *Suebicum mare* (45.2). To a large degree, the tribes unconquered by Augustus constituted the Suebi.

- 2 **It is a characteristic:** The Chatti had had the custom of letting their hair and beard grow long (31.1), the Suebi adorn their hair extravagantly. *insigne gentis* is the equivalent of *proprium gentis* in 10.2.

to pull their hair back: Representations of this hair style have survived; the hair is tightly pulled back and piled on the side of the head, above the ear. For photographs, see Anderson, figs. 22 and 23, and Much/Lange/Jankuhn. abb. 11.

among the Suebi: As some others aped the custom of the Chatti, so too do others copy the trademark appearance of the Suebi.

have it even more intricately arranged: This is clearly a means of recognition, for both followers and enemy.

their hair arranged to increase their height: Quintilian speaks of this effect, *Inst. Orat.* 11.3.160, *capillos a fronte contra naturam retro agere, ut sit horror ille terribilis*, “they draw their hair back from the brow, contrary to nature, so that their appearance may produce dreadful horror.”

Chapter 39

1 **the most ancient and noble:** The first two sentences are short and compact. The two superlative adjectives at the very beginning emphasize the status of the Semnones. They lived east of the Cherusci.

credibility. . . is confirmed: The crucial words which confer prestige and authority, *antiquitatis* and *religione*, are bracketed by words linked by alliteration.

At an appointed time: Tacitus later used the same expression, *stato tempore*, with the words in reverse order, in *Ann.* 12.13.3. Cf. *certis diebus* in 9.1.

into a forest hallowed: The mood of the setting of these ceremonies is molded by the succession of words of religious significance, *auguriis patrum et prisca formidine sacram*. This is an hexameter line, perhaps drawn from Ennius.

they celebrate the dread beginnings: This clause is effectively made up of three pairs of words, which together represent Roman disgust for the Semnones' belief and practice, *caeso homine, barbari ritus, horrenda primordia*. As is so frequently the case in Tacitean tricola, the last element is the longest.

2 **another display of reverence:** *reverentia* is paired with *formidine*, *luco* with *silvam*. Tacitus' information about this sacred grove may stem from the visit to Rome in 91 or 92 of the Semnonian king Masyus and the prophetess Ganna (Dio Cassius 67.5.3).

raise himself and get up: *adtolli* is used in middle sense. The two infinitives mean essentially the same thing. The repetition is emphatic.

he rolls out: The subject shifts from the singular of *prolapsus est* to the plural of *evolvuntur*. The change moves the happening from the particular to the general.

the whole superstition: The word *superstitio* indicates Tacitus' scorn for the practice and the belief which it evokes. The word generally has pejorative sense among the Romans; *religio* is one thing, *superstitio* another. See 43.3.

3 **prosperity of the Semnones. . . prestige:** In this last sentence of the chapter, Tacitus picks up his treatment of the Semnones, after the extensive excursus on the religious rite. With *auctoritatem*, *fortuna* can only refer to good fortune.

because of their great number: The choice of the word *corpore* rather than *numero* permits a nice play on words, with *corpore. . . caput*, and a triple alliteration.

Chapter 40

1 **their small number:** The Semnones prided themselves on their great number, mentioned in the previous sentence. Quite the opposite sets the Langobardi apart. They lived along the Elbe, down river from the Semnones. Many centuries later, they were part of the barbarian migrations westward and southward; ultimately they entered Italy, where they played a significant role in the area now known as Lombardy. The word *Langobardos* almost at the beginning of the sentence essentially matches the recent mention of the Semnones, with the all-embracing *Sueborum* between them.

surrounded by very many and very powerful: They were the Chauci, the Angrivarii, the Dulgubini, the Cherusci, and the Semnones. But the Cherusci were no longer powerful (36.1).

not through submission but by taking risks in battle: *obsequium* had a distinctly political sense for the Roman reader; it means proper behavior before one who is more powerful. For some other Tacitean instances of its use, see *Agr.* 30.3 and 42.4 (*obsequium* is joined with *modestia*) and *Hist.* 4.74.4. The alliteration of *proeliis et periclitando* emphasizes the reason for their safety. Velleius Paterculus (2.106.2) says that the Langobardi were *gens etiam Germana feritate ferocior*, “more ferocious than even normal German ferocity.”

- 2 **Reudigni. . .:** All these tribes, meriting little more than brief mention, occupy the Jutland peninsula and the nearby mainland. In the fifth century the Anglii conquered a large part of Britannia.

Nerthus: The previous chapter on the Semnones had focused upon a religious rite, as does this one. The Semnones adore a male divinity, *regnator omnium deus*, these tribes his female counterpart, *Terra mater*. Tacitus links her with the *Magna Mater*, Cybele, hence a fertility goddess.

- 3 **there is a sacred grove:** The Semnones had worshipped in a grove, *lucus*, these tribes possess a *castum nemus*.

They do not enter upon wars: An unusual practice for any German tribes, since warfare and arms were such an integral part of customary life (14.2). But it was appropriate during the religious period.

peace and quiet: Contrary to normal German custom (15.1).

her holy place: The word *templum* means a religious place rather than a building, a temple, since we have been told that the Germans did not enclose their divinities within walls (9.2).

- 4 **whom the lake at once swallows up:** Is the lake on the island or on the mainland? Tacitus does not say; its isolation is emphasized by the adjective *secreto*, which is the first word of five linked by alliteration.

the mystic dread and the holy ignorance: *arcanus* and *ignorantia* are joined in sense, as are *terror* and *sancta*. The word *arcanus* had been used once before in the monograph (18.2), linked with *sacra*; here it is parallel to *sancta*. It is the equivalent of *celatus*, that which must be kept concealed.

what that divinity is: The intangibility of the goddess' nature is expressed by use of the pronoun *illud*. The indirect question, *quid sit illud*, depends upon the verbal sense of *ignorantia*.

Chapter 41

- 1 **this part of the Suebi:** The territory occupied by the tribes discussed in the two previous chapters, the Semnones, the Langobardi, and the devotees of the Nerthus cult.

the more remote areas: Tacitus here refers to the northern and eastern regions, leading on toward Poland.

the Hermunduri: The Hermunduri occupied territory north of the Danube, in the general area of northern Bavaria and Thüringen. They were surrounded by the Chatti, the Cherusci, and the Semnones.

to follow the course of the Danube: From west to east; the chapters 28-34 dealt with the Rhine tribes, from south to north.

the only ones of the Germans: The Hermunduri are given high praise, *fida Romanis*. They never revolted from their allegiance, and, although they live in barbarian territory, they have the same general status and privileges as the Ubii, who had been transferred by Agrippa from beyond the Rhine to the site of present day Cologne and proved faithful supporters and allies.

the very magnificent colony of the province of Raetia: *Augusta Vindelicum*, the modern Augsburg.

our arms and camps: *arma castraque* are balanced by *domos villasque*. The negated participle gains emphasis from its position at the end of the sentence. Most Germanic tribes lived by *raptus aut latrocinia* (35.2).

- 2 **The Elbe rises:** Its source is in Bohemia. Tacitus may have been confused, because in his day the territory of the Hermunduri did not reach so far to the east. The Elbe is the only inner German river which he mentions by name. Like the Rhine and the Danube, it served as a boundary, although only briefly.

now it is only a name: Once Rome's aspirations had extended to the Elbe as the eastern frontier of the Germanic provinces. In the last decade of the first century B.C., L. Domitius Ahenobarbus had had great success, *exercitu flumen Albim transcendit longius penetrata Germania quam quisquam priorum* (*Ann.* 4.44.2), "he crossed the river Elbe with his army, having penetrated further into Germany than any of his predecessors." Since the defeat of this expansionist policy at the hands of Arminius in 9 A.D., the Elbe remained in Germanic territory. Only Germanicus in the year 16 campaigned into the further reaches of Germany (*Ann.* 2). Tacitus' disappointment at this resignation of imperial ambition is clear from the *sententia* with which he closes; what was once common knowledge is now only a subject of report, *nunc tantum auditur*.

Chapter 42

- 1 **the Naristi and then the Marcomani and Quadi:** The Naristi are generally placed north and east of Augsburg, the Marcomani in Bohemia, and the Quadi in the territory stretching toward Budapest.

prestige and strength: In the early years of the first century A.D., the Marcomani under their king Maroboduus were the chief rivals of the Cherusci, led by Arminius, for primacy among the German tribes. The great difference was that, after initial enmity, Maroboduus supported the Romans while Arminius continued his violent opposition. Velleius Paterculus (2.109.2) reports that Maroboduus' army numbered 74,000. The Marcomani migrated into their present homeland after being defeated by Drusus in 9 B.C. and drove the Boii eastward. Tacitus underscores their power and bravery by the words *vires* and *virtute*, emphasizing their martial quality.

the frontier of Germany: Tacitus considers that the Danube ceases to be the boundary of Germany when it bends southward near Budapest. From that point, there are other peoples, such as Pannonians, whose origins and cultures distinguish them from the Germans.

- 2 **kings chosen from their own race:** In Tacitus' mind, rule by kings marks a decline from liberty, which becomes increasingly more severe as he continues toward the end of

the monograph; the worst of all occurs a woman rules (44.1, 45.6). The only saving grace for the Marcomani and Quadi was the fact that the kings were of their own royal stock. Now the circumstances have changed dramatically.

foreigners. . . Roman backing: Kings from other tribes have been imposed by Rome's pressure and authority. They were recognized as client kings, who served Rome's interests but spared Rome much of the expense, and bother, of a province. *Potentia* is a stronger word than *potestas*. In 28.1, Tacitus had spoken of *regnum potentia*.

arms. . . money: The Romans avoided involvement in the affairs of client states as much as possible. Occasionally they felt compelled to act, as in 19 A.D. when they replaced Maroboduus with Catualda (*Ann.* 2.62). It was advantageous to Rome for the Germans to be involved in *discordiae*; Tiberius had noted, when summoning Germanicus home in 16 A.D., that the German tribes could be left to their internal disputes (*Ann.* 2.26.3). Money purchased allegiance and enabled the kings to protect themselves against external enemies.

Chapter 43

1 **Marsigni. . . Buri:** From this point on, the various tribes become increasingly less important for Tacitus, as they are located ever farther from *Germania* proper. He discourses only upon those who stand out for some characteristic, which either links them with some Germanic tribe or markedly distinguishes them from others. Military prowess and religious rites are prime objects of interest. Proximity to the Suebi proper makes the Marsigni and Buri like their neighbors, but the languages of the Cotini and Osi show that they are not German. The first word, *retro*, balances the word *frons* of 42.1.

language and way of life: The words *sermone* and *cultu* are found again in 46.1. Tacitus had used them in *Agr.* 40.4, although the context is different.

the fact that they tolerate tributes: This judgment is subjective and moral. Germans do not pay tribute, ergo these tribes cannot be German.

to make their shame greater: The Osi, already mentioned in 28.3, had no means for resistance, but the Cotini could have produced iron weapons and defended themselves. That they possessed iron also sets them apart from the Germans, who essentially had none (6.1).

2 **All these peoples have settled:** This is the eastern area of the course of the Hercynian forest (30.1).

a continuous ridge of mountains: The western Carpathians.

Harii. . . Nahanarvali: These tribes probably lived in the region between the Oder and Vistula rivers. Tacitus is moving from south to north in his locations, but without precision. Only the first and last of these five interest him sufficiently to go into any detail. How many others form part of the *Lugiorum nomen* is unknown. The Lugii made up part of a *vis innumera* (*Ann.* 12.29.3).

3 **a grove of an ancient rite:** So too the Semnones had a sacred grove (39.2) and the goddess Nerthus was worshipped in a *castum nemus* (40.3).

people relate: The verb *memorant* has an unexpressed subject. Perhaps merchants are meant.

the gods are equivalent: The divinities are clearly twins, whom the Romans, as so often, equated with similar gods known to them. The words *interpretatione Romana*

state clearly what undergirds much of Tacitus' narrative, the attempt to make foreign customs understandable to his readers by invoking the familiar, the Roman context. Since *numini* is dative, it is likely that *Alcis* is also, but some interpret it as a predicate nominative. If so, the name would be *Alcis*.

no images, no trace of foreign belief: This confirms what was said about the representation of divinities in 9.2. Worship of Isis was a *peregrinum sacrum* (9.1); worship of Alci was not a *peregrina superstitio*.

- 4 **the Harii, besides their strength:** The Harii, perhaps the most terrifying of all the tribes described by Tacitus, are formidable fighters who also employ psychological warfare. The words *truces, insitae feritati* intensify the image Tacitus wishes to evoke.

enhance their natural savageness: The tricolon of *nigra scuta, tincta corpora; atras ad proelia noctes*, with three adjectives meaning essentially the same thing, sets the physical scene.

produce terror by the mere appearance. . . of a ghostly army: They cannot be seen in the dark, hence they appear ghostly. The words *formidine, feralis, terrorem, infernum* are devastating in their cumulative effect.

No enemy can withstand: The ablative absolute is so long and so important that it is best rendered it as a separate sentence. *nullo hostium*, with a partitive genitive, is used for the more common *nullo hoste*.

the eyes are overcome first: Tacitus concludes with another *sententia*. The great warriors of the Suebi knew that the impact of their terrifying hairdo could at first sight be decisive (38.2).

Chapter 44

- 1 **Beyond the Lugii are the Gotones:** The Gotones, better known as the Goths, who wreaked such havoc upon Rome in the third and fourth centuries A.D., lived beyond the Vistula River.

ruled by kings: See the note to 42.2.

characteristic of all these tribes: For *insigne*, see 38.2. Tacitus mixes the tangible, *scuta* and *gladii*, with the intangible, *erga reges obsequium*. The position of *obsequium* as the last element of the tricolon, and the longest, gives it emphasis. The western Germans had oblong shields and long swords (6.1).

- 2 **the states of the Suiones:** Their home may have been on islands in the Gulf of Sweden, such as Bornholm. The Suiones were the ancient inhabitants of Sweden, which was considered by Pliny the Elder to be a vast island (*HN 4.96*). Perhaps, consequently, the southern part of Sweden is meant.

The shape of their ships: This was uncommon in the ancient world. Roman ships invariably had a distinct front and rear. But in some river areas of Germany there were such vessels, and Germanicus used them in his campaign of 16 (*Ann.* 2.6.2).

They neither guide them with sails: Vergil had used the expression *velis ministrat* in *Aen.* 6.302 and 10.218.

the rowing can be changed: The Roman *remigium* was fixed in a ship, regardless of size. The benches and oars were immovable. In the uprising in Pontus against Vespasian's forces, the locals constructed such vessels (*Hist.* 3.47.3), *pari utrimque prora et mutabili remigio, quando hinc vel illinc appellere indiscretum et innoxium est*,

“with identical prows and the oarage changeable, since it makes no difference and is easy to approach land from one direction or the other.”

- 3 **Wealth also has honor:** The western Germans had little interest in wealth (5.3). Tacitus stated, at the beginning of 7, that kings were chosen on the basis of *nobilitas*, military leaders on the basis of *virtus*. Among the Suiones, however, neither of these qualities comes into play. *Opes* are crucial. The wealthiest man has absolute power. This wealth probably stemmed from trade, particularly in furs (17.1) and amber (45). **one man rules on this basis:** *Libertas* is entirely vitiated, replaced by *dominatio*. There is no recourse against authority. The position of the two ablatives at the end of the sentence underscores their importance.
- with no uncertain right to obedience:** The king's power is unlimited and not subject to appeal.
- Nor does every man keep his weapons:** For the importance of *arma* in the lives of the Germans whom Tacitus has already discussed, see the practice of the Chauci, *prompta omnibus arma* (35.2). Yet during the festival of Nerthus, all weapons were put away (40.3) and slaves were involved in the ceremony (40.4). It may be that Tacitus' statement is too broad, and that weapons were kept under guard only during religious festivals.
- the guard is a slave:** Among the other Germanic tribes slaves played no public role at all; nor did freedmen, except under kingdoms (25.2). The priority of slaves over freedmen here increases the degeneration of the Suiones.
- the Ocean prevents sudden attacks:** Yet the coastal Germanic tribes did not refrain from piracy (*Ann.* 11.18.1).
- the idle hands of armed men:** Tacitus had used a similar expression in *Agr.* 16.3, *miles otio lasciviret*, “the soldiers grew wanton in peace.”
- it is to the king's advantage:** A slave could never become a rival.

Chapter 45

- 1 **another sea:** The Suiones lived *ipso in Oceano* (44.2). Beyond *Oceanus* lies an *exterior Oceanus atque ignotum mare* (17.1). Tacitus had described the sea north of Britain in very similar terms (*Agr.* 10.5): *mare pigrum et grave remigantibus*, “the sea, sluggish and heavy to rowers.” Since Britain had first been circumnavigated under Agricola and it was then determined that it was an island (38.3), Tacitus' report of the northern sea may well have stemmed from Agricola himself. In all likelihood, he transferred the description to the furthest reaches of Germany.
- the last glow of the already setting sun:** Tacitus' description in *Agr.* 12.3–4 of the long nights is more extensive and detailed than that here.
- the sound of the rising sun:** “Popular conviction” heard the course of Apollo and his horses. *Persuasio* is not a reliable source of knowledge.
- 2 **a language closer to the British:** In other words, Celtic. They are clearly, therefore, not a Germanic people.
- the right shore of the Suebic sea:** This is the general area of the former East Prussia and Lithuania. The “Suebic sea” is the Baltic Sea.
- the mother of the gods:** An earth divinity, the equivalent of the Roman *Magna Mater*. She may well have been like Nerthus (40.2).
- amulets in the shape of boars:** The animal symbolized rash courage.

in place of weapons and as a protection against all things: The genitive is objective. Is *tutela* ablative following *pro* or nominative in apposition with *id*? The latter, probably; the inconcinnity is very Tacitean.

3 **rare use of iron:** This repeats what was stated in 6.1, *Ne ferrum quidem superest. grains and other crops:* See 23.

4 **given the customary laziness of the Germans:** For this thought, see 14.3 and 15.1.
gather amber: This lengthy description of amber probably stems from Pliny the Elder and the reports of merchants. But the Aestii were not the only ones who concerned themselves with amber; Pliny reported that Germanicus' fleet found it among the eastern Frisian islands (*NH* 37.42).

since they are barbarians: Dative of agent. The sense is pejorative, comparable to that of *ut inter Germanos* (30.2).

until our luxury gave it reputation: Tacitus had spoken similarly of British pearls and Roman eagerness for them (*Agr.* 12.6), *ego facilius crediderim naturam margaritis deesse quam nobis avaritiam*. "I should more readily believe that the pearls lack quality than that we lack avarice."

it is gathered in natural form: Tacitus offers a moral judgment in a brief but telling tricolon.

5 **you would think that it was the sap of trees:** The fullest description of amber is in Pliny 37.30-51.

the substances of which: This is a difficult passage, because of the uncertainty of *quae*. *nemora lucosque* are its antecedent, but with very loose connection in sense, caused in part by the distance between the two.

soon it becomes viscous: Tacitus' language recalls Vergil, *Georg.* 2.250, *sed picis in morem ad digitos lentescit habendo*, "but, like pitch, it becomes sticky to the touch."

6 **the Sitones:** One would expect that the Sitones would be linked with the Aestii rather than the Suiones, who were last mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Perhaps this brief passage has been misplaced in the text.

a woman rules: The entire discussion of the Suebic tribes concludes with the ultimate humiliation, not only rule by a king but rule by a woman. A powerful *sententia* draws the reader's attention.

Chapter 46

1 **the furthest extent of Suebia:** Since Tacitus equates eastern Germany with Suebia (38.1), his description of Germany could well have ended here. Indeed, this brief sentence may well be better placed at the end of the preceding chapter. But he employs the remaining narrative to reach a philosophical and ethical conclusion.

I am uncertain: Tacitus' source material was probably silent on this subject. The verb *dubito* is followed by an indirect question, the introductory word being omitted.

Peucini and Veneti and Fenni: These three tribes formed a continuous line, from south to north. The Peucini inhabited territory east of Dacia, on the Black Sea, the Veneti land approximately equivalent to modern Belarus, the Fenni modern Finland.

certain sources: Strabo, *Geog.* 7.3.15, and Pliny, *NH* 4.99-100, are our prime sources.

language, manner of life, and in their fixed dwellings: A tricolon. The words *sermone cultu* (already used in 43.1) are the equivalent of *habitus* and *lingua* of 45.2.

Filth. . . sloth: Cf. 20.1 and 15.1.

their coarse appearance: The verb *foedantur* emphasizes the consequences of mixed marriages, *coniubiis mixtis*. The Germans were pure of blood, *minime*. . *hospitiis mixtos* (2.1).

- 2 **forests and mountains:** The genitives are partitive.
the Germans. . .the Sarmatians: The Sarmatians stretch far eastward from the Ukraine to the Caspian Sea.
carry shields: Tacitus later, in *Hist.* 1.79.4, stated that the Sarmatians did not use shields, *neque enim scuto defendi mos est*.
traveling on foot and with speed: The Germans employ their feet, the Sarmatians are dependent upon horses. The phrase is bold and compelling, with alliteration of the first and last words.
- 3 **The Fenni:** They are the last people Tacitus discusses, at considerable length and with great detail, even though they are not German. Their mode of life is the most primitive of any peoples yet described, but one significant advantage accrues, mentioned at the end. Tacitus employs his sparest style for this description: a series of adjectives and nouns without connectives and without a main verb, with considerable alliteration. The effect is staccato.
And the same hunt feeds men and women alike: Among the Germans, the hunt is of little interest and the women stay home and care for the household (15.1).
The children have no other protection: The genitives with *suffugium* are objective.
But they think it a happier state: *beatius* is the crucial word; they possess very little, but know no other life and have no other aspirations. Hope and fear relative to others do not come into play.
they have attained a most difficult thing: This is the ultimate goal of both Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, contentment with one's own life. There is nothing the Fenni pray for, since they are unaware that they are missing anything.
- 4 **The rest is now in the realm of fable:** Cf. *omne ignotum pro magnifico est* (*Agr.* 30.3), "everything unknown is considered marvelous." Perhaps to emphasize the contrast between man and beast, Tacitus uses pairs of synonyms, *ora vultusque* and *corpore atque artus*.

Appendix I

THE ROMAN EMPERORS AND THEIR REIGNS

Augustus	27 B.C. – 14 A.D.
Tiberius	14 – 37
Gaius (Caligula)	37 – 41
Claudius	41 – 54
Nero	54 – 68
Galba	68 – 69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69 – 79
Titus	79 – 81
Domitian	81 – 96
Nerva	96 – 98
Trajan	98 – 117
Hadrian	117 – 138

Appendix II

THE DISPOSITION OF THE GERMAN LEGIONS

The year 88

Germania Superior

- VIII (Argentorate [Strassburg])
- XI Claudia pia fidelis (Vindonissa [Windisch])
- XIII (Moguntiacum [Mainz])
- XXI (Moguntiacum [Mainz])

Germania Inferior

- I Minervia (Bonna [Bonn])
- VI Victrix (Novaesium [Neuss])
- X Gemina (Noviomagus [Nijmegen])
- XXII Primigenia (Vetera [Xanten])

The year 103

Germania Superior

- VIII Augusta (Argentorate [Strassburg])
- XXII Primigenia (Moguntiacum [Mainz])

Germania Inferior

- VI Victrix (Novaesium [Neuss])
- X Gemina (Noviomagus [Nijmegen])

The change from four legions in each German province to two stemmed from Trajan's focus upon the Danube region. The provinces of Moesia Superior and Inferior grew from five legions in 88 to nine in 103.

Appendix III

COIN ILLUSTRATIONS

Domitian, sestertius, brass, Rome, 85 A.D.

Obverse: Head of Domitian facing right with laurel wreath, on his shoulder an *aegis*, IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM COS XI CENS PER P P

Reverse: Mourning, sitting Germania and bound, standing German, between them a trophy and a shield, on the ground lie various weapons. GERMANIA CAPTA, in the lower segment S C



Domitianus, dupondius, brass, Rome, 85 A.D.

Obverse: Bust of Domitian facing right with radiate crown, on his shoulder an *aegis*, IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM COS XI CENS POT

Reverse: Field standard, crossed long shields, trumpets and lances. S-C in the field.

