opposite. Ovid does more than just play with the name of the ritual. He also thinks through its meaning.

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TACITUS, *ANNALS* 1.7.1–5*

In his essay 'Tacitus on Tiberius' Accession'[1] Tony Woodman offers a radical and to my mind largely convincing reassessment of Tacitus' account of the debate in the senate on 17 September and the events that led up to it. His principal conclusions about the debate itself may be summarized as follows. What Tacitus says about Tiberius' speech is that it was impressive but lacked credibility.[2] In it Tiberius, according to Tacitus, was at first suggesting that he himself should play no part at all in the future governance of the empire. But later in the debate, perhaps as a response to senatorial protests and lamentations, he made a concession by suggesting that he might be prepared to undertake some part of the total task, only to retract and withdraw once more to his original position.[3] The causes of delay catalogued by Tacitus in *Ann*. 1.7.6–7 refer to the period between Augustus' death and the accession debate, not to the debate itself and later.[4]

All this seems to me essentially right and to mark a major advance in our understanding of both Tacitus and Tiberius. The matter on which I wish to join issue with Woodman is his interpretation of *Ann*. 1.7.1–5.[5]

At Romae ruere in seruitium consules, patres, eques. quanto quis inlustrior, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes uultuque composito, ne laeti excessu principis neu tristiores primordio, lacrimas, gaudium, questus, adulationem miscebant. (2) Sex. Pompeius et Sex. Appuleius consules primi in uerba Tiberii Caesaris iurauere apudque eos Seius Strabo et C. Turranius, ille praetoriarum cohortium praefectus, hic annonae; mox senatus milesque et populus. (3) nam Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat, tamquam uetere re publica et ambiguus imperandi. ne edictum quidem quo patres in curiam uocabat nisi tribuniciae potestatis praescriptione posuit sub Augusto acceptae. (4) uerba edicti fuere pauca et sensu permodesto: de honoribus parentis consulturum, neque abscedere a corpore, idque unum ex publicis muneribus usurpare. (5) sed defuncto Augusto signum praetoriis cohortibus ut imperator dederat; excubiae, arma, cetera aulae; miles in forum, miles in curiam comitabatur. litteras ad exercitus tamquam adepto principatu misit, nusquam cunctabundus nisi cum in senatu loqueretur.

The crucial features of Woodman's view are as follows: (i) *nam Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat* (3) alludes to the motion of the consuls presented at the debate on 17 September and means something like 'Tiberius began his whole reign with the consuls'; the imperfect *incipiebat* is therefore not frequentative.[6] (ii) Since the whole thrust of Tacitus' narrative is to show that Tiberius was in fact *ambiguus imperandi*, that phrase must be separated from *tamquam*. Woodman therefore repunctuates as follows: *re publica; et, ambiguus imperandi, ne edictum quidem . . .*[7] (iii) *loqueretur* (5) is

* I am grateful to Tony Woodman and Bruce Gibson for their comments on a draft of this note. They should not be assumed to agree with the views expressed. The comments of *CQ*'s anonymous referee also inspired some improvements.

[1] A. J. Woodman, 'Tacitus on Tiberius' accession', in *Tacitus Reviewed* (Oxford, 1998), 40–69, with copious references to other modern scholarship, with which this note is not directly concerned.

[2] Ibid., 42ff. [3] Ibid., 46–7, 50ff. [4] Ibid., 56ff.

[5] Ibid., 53ff., 63ff. [6] Ibid., 64ff., with criticism of earlier views.

[7] Ibid., 67–8.

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also not frequentative but refers only to the meeting of the senate at which honours for Augustus were discussed.[8]

These contentions are open to several serious objections. (i) renders Tacitus guilty of a series of bewildering and unflagged chronological jumps, first from August to 17 September, then back again to August. The interpretation of the whole phrase *nam . . . incipiebat* is extremely strained. In particular it encourages the reader to infer that Tiberius took the initiative in prompting the motion of the consuls. If this were the case it would ill accord with Tiberius' supposed reluctance to assume power and would indicate that Tacitus was, as commonly assumed, accusing him of hypocrisy, not, as Woodman argues, merely of obscurity and ambiguity.

The force of the imperfect, if it is not frequentative, is by no means clear. This is also true of another imperfect, *comitabatur* (5), the natural sense of which is clearly frequentative, and perhaps even of a third, *uocabat*, in the description of Tiberius' edict: if Tacitus is referring to one meeting and one only of the senate, why should he not write *uocauit*?

In (ii) the repunctuation produces a form of expression that seems very harsh and clumsy. But if Woodman's overall approach is correct, *ambiguus imperandi* cannot both mean 'undecided about accepting the principate' and be governed by *tamquam*. If the traditional punctuation is to be retained, an alternative meaning for *imperandi* must therefore be sought.

What that meaning might be becomes apparent once it is understood that in this whole passage Tacitus is concerned with two closely related antitheses: (i) that between civil and military business; (ii) that between two competences which Tiberius might have chosen to use to get various things done, his *imperium* and his *tribunicia potestas*. Therefore *ambiguus imperandi* should be understood as 'hesitant about using his *imperium*', just as *imperator* (5) means 'holder of *imperium*' (surely the only possible sense in context).[9] This interpretation of *imperandi* can of course hold good only if Tiberius' *imperium* was valid within the city of Rome. But there is every reason to suppose that it was so in 14 and had probably been so since 10.[10]

It cannot of course be denied that in imperial sources in general, and indeed in Tacitus himself, the most common sense of *imperare*, used absolutely, is 'be/become emperor',[11] corresponding to the republican usage in the sense of 'be governor/commander'.[12] Nevertheless there are passages where the point at issue is, as here, the exercise of *imperium* rather than the mere possession of it.[13]

[8] Ibid., 54–5.

[9] This appears to be how M. T. Griffin, in I. Malkin and Z. Rubinsohn (edd.), *Leaders and Masses in the Roman World* (Leiden, 1995), 37–8, understands the word.

[10] For discussion, cf. Seager, *Tiberius* (London, 1972), 52. For Tiberius' position in 10, cf. Suet. *Tib*. 17.2. That Augustus' own *imperium* had been valid inside the city since 19 B.C. should never have been doubted. Dio states that he had the *fasces* (54.10.5); that he did not also have the power they symbolize is inconceivable. The best discussion remains that of A. H. M. Jones, *Roman Government and Law* (Oxford, 1960), 13–15, who does not, however, note the apparent exercise of *maior potestas* by Augustus mentioned by Dio under 12 B.C. (54.30.4).

[11] Cf. e.g. Tac. *Hist*. 1.8, 4.9, *A*. 1.6; Plin. *Pan*. 5.5; Suet. *Claud*. 3.2, *Galb*. 4.1, and so on.

[12] Cf. e.g. Cic. *Font*. 16, *Arch*. 21, *Att*. 6.1.2; Caes. *BG* 7.17.5.

[13] Cic. *Leg*. 3.6: *militiae ab eo qui imperabit prouocatio nec esto*. The comment on the general run of commanders put into the mouth of Marius (Sall. *BJ* 85.11): *quem uos imperare iussistis, is sibi imperatorem alium quaerat*. Fabius' comment on Minucius (Liv. 22.26.7): *haudquaquam cum imperii iure artem imperandi aequatam*. (Cf. also Liv. 23.32.9). Most strikingly Eumenius (*PL* 9[4].15.3), who praises those emperors who *imperandi potestatem cohortandi humanitate conciliant*.

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Sections 3 and 4 are concerned with civil matters. Regarding these, Tacitus makes two statements about how Tiberius proceeded. The first, *cuncta per consules incipiebat* does not refer to the motion of the consuls but is general and all-embracing: 'he initiated all business through the agency of the consuls'. Any natural reading of *miles in curiam comitabatur* (5) implies that Tiberius visited the senate more than once before 17 September. Nor is there any counter-evidence to suggest that there was only one meeting before that date. The second is specific: even when he did summon the senate himself (perhaps on more than one occasion if *uocabat* too is frequentative), he did so only by means of his tribunician power. To the first he adds the comment *tamquam uetere re publica et ambiguus imperandi*. The first part of this observation is appropriate only to what precedes: the initiation of business by the consuls is an outwardly republican phenomenon, the tribunician power of a princeps or his chosen associates is not. The second could apply equally well to what follows. Both by initiating business through the consuls and by preferring to use his tribunician power when initiating business himself, Tiberius could be said to be behaving 'as if he were in two minds about using his *imperium*'.

But it is only in Section 5, with its powerfully adversative opening, that the full force of *tamquam* becomes apparent. In the civil sphere it might have looked as if Tiberius was hesitant about using his *imperium*, but in military matters he showed no such vacillation, issuing orders as a holder of *imperium* and surrounding himself with a military escort when he entered the forum or the senate. Only when he spoke in the senate (not necessarily only once, since *loqueretur* too may be frequentative) did he show himself hesitant.

The advantages of this reading are that it allows the entire passage to refer to the period between Augustus' death and Tiberius' accession and absolves Tacitus of accusing Tiberius of hypocrisy here, which he does not do, as Woodman has convincingly shown, in his account of the accession debate itself. It does not undermine Woodman's overall reinterpretation but rather reinforces it. With his conclusion, that Tacitus presents the 'portrait of a man whose sense of responsibility was in perpetual conflict with his desire for withdrawal, of a man who was truly *ambiguus imperandi*',[14] I am wholeheartedly in agreement.

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[14] Woodman (n. 1), 69.

NOT A FUNERAL NOTE: TACITUS, *ANNALS* 1.8.5–6*

populumque edicto monuit [sc. Tiberius] ne, ut quondam nimiis studiis funus diui Iulii turbassent, ita Augustum in foro potius quam in Campo Martis, sede destinata, cremari uellent.
Die funeris milites uelut praesidio stetere, multum 6
inridentibus qui ipsi uiderant quique a parentibus acceperant diem illum crudi adhuc seruitii et libertatis improspere repetitae, cum occisus dictator Caesar aliis pessimum, aliis pulcherrimum facinus uideretur: nunc senem principem, longa potentia, prouisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus, auxilio scilicet militari tuendum ut sepultura eius quieta foret.

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