

Cynthia Damon

Looking for Seneca's *Historiae* in Suetonius' *Life of Tiberius*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to identify potentially Senecan material in Suetonius' *Life of Tiberius*, the site of one of the two generally accepted references to the *Historiae* (*Tib.* 73.2 = *FRHist* 74 F1). Given the paucity of the evidence for the *Historiae* the discussion is necessarily speculative, but suggestive connections are found especially in material pertinent to *equites Romani* or tendentiously pro-Caligula. If Seneca's *Historiae* did herald a new golden age presided over by Caligula, this might explain the work's apparent neglect by subsequent historians.

Traces of the elder Seneca's *Historiae* are difficult to detect in the ancient literary tradition, but Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* is a good place to look, since the scholarly biographer supplies one of the two generally accepted references to the *Historiae* (*Tib.* 73.2 - *Appendix F1*);¹ he also seems to have used material that originated in Seneca's rhetorical works for his *De grammaticis et rhetoribus*.² The principal aim of this paper is to identify potentially Senecan material in Suetonius' *Life of Tiberius*, the site of that reference to the *Historiae*.

Identifying Suetonius' sources is a large and complex project and one – given the disappearance of most of those sources – in which success is ultimately unattainable. Jacques Gascou devoted some 300 pages of his monumental *Suétone*

1 I take this opportunity to express my lively gratitude to Maria Chiara Scappaticcio for the invitation to participate in a stimulating conference devoted to the *Historiae* of Seneca the elder. I am also grateful to John Ramsey for sharing with me his expertise on equestrian jury panels. In what follows, citations of Suetonius refer to Kaster (2016). Citations without title refer to the *Life of Tiberius*. Fragments of the Roman historians are cited from *FRHist*.

2 Suetonius borrows the language of the elder Seneca for his notice on Albucius Silus (*rhet.* 30.4, cf. *contr.* 7. *praef.* 4.6). A debt to our Seneca has also been conjectured in Suetonius' lost notice on Cestius Pius (*rhet.* fr. 1), who "is one of the main figures in Sen.'s memoirs" (Kaster (1995) 327). Suetonius cites "Seneca" in the *Life of Virgil*, paraphrasing a passage that may have come from a lacuna in the elder's *Controuersiae* but has also been attributed to a lacuna in the younger's *Epistulae morales*; see Grisart (1961) and Kaster (1995) Appendix 4, "Suetonius and the elder Seneca." On the basis of some surprising gaps in Suetonius' material on topics treated in the elder Seneca's rhetorical works Kaster (1995) 355–359 postulates that Suetonius' direct source was an unidentified intermediary, not Seneca himself. On Suetonius' source at 73.2, where he cites again 'Seneca' without further qualification, see n. 67 below.

historien to the topic,³ but for the purposes of the present paper a quick overview of the various categories of source used in the *Life of Tiberius* will suffice; particular attention will be paid to Suetonius' use of material from historiographical sources. In the second and longer section of the paper I turn to the question of the moment: Can we detect material from Seneca's *Historiae ab initio bellorum ciuilium* in the *Life of Tiberius*?

1 Sources for the *Life of Tiberius*

1.1 Types of source

After a life-by-life inquiry into Suetonius' use of his sources Gascoü concludes that the biographer produced a systematic aggregation of data taken from a variety of different types of source and was fairly catholic in his definition of 'source.'⁴ Gascoü finds traces of – to mention just the broadest categories – annalistic histories, contemporary pamphlets, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, letters, speeches, collections of *bons mots* and anecdotes,⁵ the *acta senatus*,⁶ inscriptions, oral sources (including Suetonius' own father on the death of Otho), and personal experience. The only sources Suetonius seems wary of are those discredited by adulation.⁷

Many of these categories were put under contribution for his *Tiberius*, which, with its 76 chapters, is the third longest of the twelve, after *Julius* and *Augustus*. Tiberius himself is a prominent source: Suetonius quotes his speeches, letters, and *bon mots*, mentions his *commentarii de uita sua*, and appears to have seen two copies of his will.⁸ He also implies that he looked for Tiberius' accounts, the

³ Gascoü (1984) 3–339, with general conclusions on 335–339.

⁴ Gascoü (1984) 337: “combinaison systématique d'informations empruntées à des sources de nature très différente” and “tout lui est bon pour reconstituer l'existence des Césars.”

⁵ On Suetonius quoting the emperors see recently Damon (2014).

⁶ De Coninck (1983) 175–178 suggests that *acta senatus* were used by Suetonius with particular intensity for the early phase of Tiberius' principate, when Tiberius' relationship with the senate was being shaped. Cf. Talbert (1984) 334–335.

⁷ See, e.g., *Cal.* 8.2 *Gaetulicum refellit Plinius quasi mentitum per adulationem*. Sources hostile to the Caesars are used without caveat (e.g., Antony at *Jul.* 52.2).

⁸ Edict: 34.2. Speeches: 24.1, 28, 29, 34.1, 47, 65.1, 67.3–4. Letters: 26.2, 32.1, 32.2, 50, 67.1. *Bons mots*: 22, 25.1, 28, 32.2, 53.1, 53.2, 57.2, 58.1, 59.2, 61.5, 62.3; *Cal.* 11; *Gal.* 4.1; cf. Vattuone (1983–84) 216: “Sull'esistenza ... di una tradizione di *logoi* tiberiani e di *dicta* da essi (o altrove) estratti non par lecito dubitare.” *Commentarius de uita sua*: 61.1, *Dom.* 20. Will: 76.

rationes imperii, but concluded that Tiberius did not publish any, despite the precedent set by Augustus and followed by Caligula (*Cal.* 16.1). Other explicit citations point to material from a “consular author of *Annales*” who is universally assumed to be Servilius Nonianus (61.6 *annalibus suis uir consularis inseruit*), and of course to material from Seneca himself (73.2 *Seneca ... scribit*) in a passage considered below, where Suetonius also cites material from other literary sources using the frustratingly opaque formulas *sunt qui*, *alii*, and *nonnulli*. The *Life* begins with antiquarian material pertaining to the *gens Claudia* (1.2), including a tally of Claudian magistracies (“28 consulships, 5 dictatorships, 7 censorships, 6 triumphs, 2 ovations”)⁹ and a Sabine etymology for the Claudian cognomen Nero (“strong” or “spirited”). In addition, biographer reproduces rumors¹⁰ and cites oral sources preserved in literary form, such as the verse criticisms quoted with relish in chapter 59, including this epigram: “[Tiberius] doesn’t care for wine: it’s blood he’s thirsty for now.”¹¹ Other types of sources can be detected despite the lack of explicit citation, particularly where Suetonius’ notices lack parallels in the historiographic tradition.

1.2 Historiography in the biography

The majority of Suetonius’ material for the *Life of Tiberius* presumably came from historiographical sources.¹² Until well past halfway through the biography the organization is largely chronological (chh. 4–41).¹³ And in these chronologically arranged chapters the presence of material from a source or sources shared with

⁹ For the historical problems in this list see Lindsay (1999) *ad loc.* Lindsay infers that Suetonius used “a digested version of the information” (7).

¹⁰ For insults and rumors see, e.g., 7.2: *uulgo existimabatur*, 21.1: *uulgo persuasum*, 38: *uulgo iam per iocum ‘Callipides’ uocaretur*, 43.2: *quae palam iam et uulgo nomine insulae abutentes Caprineum dictitabant*, 45: <uox> ... *excepta percrebuit*, 52.3: *multifariam inscriptum et per noctes celeberrime acclamatum est “redde Germanicum.”*

¹¹ Quoted at 59.1: *fastidit uinum, quia iam sitit iste cruorem*. Tacitus, by contrast, summarizes this material (*ann.* 1.72.4). For discussion see Slater (2014).

¹² See Lindsay (1999) 6–11 for sources in the *Life of Tiberius*, Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 13–15 for a brief introduction to the biographer’s “processes of dissolution and reconstitution” (13), and Gascou (1984) 9–339 for detailed examples.

¹³ In chapters pertaining to Tiberius’ vices, education, and physique (42–72) chronology recedes as an organizing principle. In Suetonius’ discussion of Tiberius’ rapaciousness (49), for example, the final item, his treacherous appropriation of Vonones’ treasure (49.2), is dated prior to those that precede it. See Gascou (1984) 408–410, especially 410: “il a préféré à une ordre chronologique un ordre ‘d’intensité’.”

historians of Tiberius' principate, particularly Tacitus and Dio, is undeniable. All three authors, for example, comment on Tiberius' debt relief measures, his interventions in trials, his repression of foreign rites, and his neglect of Livia's testamentary arrangements.¹⁴ This is not the place to investigate source of their common material; suffice it to say that the material that Suetonius seems to have drawn from this source includes both annalistic elements such as dates, dedications, and sumptuary policies,¹⁵ and the familiar tyrannical features of Tiberius' portrait: the paranoia, brutality, and sexual license that break through the carefully constructed façade of the *ciuilis princeps*.¹⁶ But Suetonius was not a slave to the common source: aware of conflicting traditions,¹⁷ he frequently diverges from Tacitus and Dio in the transmission, deployment, and interpretation of shared content.

Suetonius also supplements the common source or sources with events that the historians neglect¹⁸ or with details, sometimes indecorous, that they seem to have suppressed: only Suetonius reports that Livia's body had begun to rot by the time her funeral took place (51.2), for example, that the elder Julia's jailers beat her so severely that she lost an eye (53), that one form of torture used on Capri

14 Debt relief: 48.1, Tac. *ann.* 6.16–17, D.C. 58.21.5. Trials: 33, Tac. *ann.* 1.75.1, D.C. 57.7.6. Rites: 36, Tac. *ann.* 2.32.3 and 2.85.4, D.C. 57.15.8 and 57.18.5a. Livia's will: 51.2, Tac. *ann.* 5.2.1, D.C. 58.2.1. See also Scappaticcio (2018) 1065–1068 on Q. Haterius, whose encounter with Tiberius is reported by Suetonius (27.1) and Tacitus (*ann.* 1.13.6) and who may be mentioned in *P.Herc.* 1067. **15** Dates: 53 (cf. Tac. *ann.* 6.25.3), 73.1. Dedications: 20 (cf. D.C. 55.27.4, 56.25.1). Sumptuary measures: 71 (cf. D.C. 57.15.2).

16 See Baar (1990) 188–200, especially 189–191, with Lindsay (1999) 11–19.

17 Conflicting traditions: 1.1, 3.2, 5.1, 9.1, 10 (with 11.5), 22, 73.

18 Apropos of Tiberius' shameless "performance" (23 *impudentissimo mimo*) at the first senate meeting after Augustus' death, for example, which Tacitus ignores (*ann.* 1.8), Gascou (1984) 260 comments: "S. a donc sans doute eu ici accès à une source inconnue de Tacite." Other items appropriate to historiography but found only in Suetonius include: 25.3 details about the entrapment and trial of Libo Drusus not found in Tacitus' relatively full account (*ann.* 2.28–32) or Dio's short one (57.15.3–4); 26.2 Tiberius' abbreviated tenure of the consulships of 18, 21, and 31 CE, absent from the references to these consulships by Tacitus (*ann.* 2.53.1, 3.31.1) and Dio (57.20.1–2, 58.4.3); 34.2 a Tiberian edict banning *cotidiana oscula*; 35.2 Tiberius' demotion of two senators on moral grounds; 37.3 the misbehavior and punishment of the city of Pollentia; 50.3 Livia's public response to a fire at the temple of Vesta; 52.2 a deputation from Ilium with condolences on the death of Drusus; 58 examples of infringements of the *lex maiestatis* not mentioned elsewhere; 63 Tiberius' attempt to prevent people from consulting oracles; 72.1 the guards stationed on the banks of the Naumachia during Tiberius' visit to Rome in 32 CE (Tac. *ann.* 6.1.1 supplies the date but not the staging, which according to Lindsay (1999) *ad loc.* "may ... be authentic"). See also *infra* n. 75. Some, but perhaps not all, of these omissions may be explained by the lacunose state of the account of Tiberius' principate in both Tacitus and Dio.

involved tying up victims' ureters to prevent urination (62), and that the number of corpses on the Gemonian steps on a single day during Tiberius' murderous purge in 33 CE was twenty (61.4; cf. Tac. *ann.* 6.19.2 *immensa strages*). Less to his credit, Suetonius often generalizes on the basis of a single incident, saying, for example, that late in Tiberius' reign "no day was free of punishment," which must a hyperbolic report of the execution of Titius Sabinus on New Year's Day in 28 CE (61.2; cf. Tac. *ann.* 4.70.1–3). Or he trivializes the information in the common source by omitting a key detail, such as the role of Sejanus in concentrating the praetorian guard within the city of Rome (37.1; cf. Tac. *ann.* 4.2.1, D.C. 57.19.6).

To sum up. The picture derived by Gascoü for the *Caesars* as a whole is applicable to the *Life of Tiberius*: Suetonius' sources were numerous and of various types, and he used them with some freedom. Some of his divergences from our historiographical sources on Tiberius' principate can be credited to his use of different sources, and some to the expedients he used to convert historiography into biography.

2 Possible traces of the *Historiae* in Suetonius' *Life of Tiberius*

2.1 *Historiae ab initio bellorum ciuiliū*

To see where Seneca might fit in this picture it will be helpful to review what we little we know about his *Historiae*, with a particular focus on the *Life of Tiberius*.

Whatever starting point *ab initio bellorum ciuiliū* refers to – and there are several candidates –¹⁹ two things are clear. First, the beginning of Seneca's work will have overlapped with Livy's *Ab urbe condita* through 9 BCE and probably also with the works of the other annalistic historians he cites on the death of Cicero (*suas.* 6.16–24): Asinius Pollio, Aufidius Bassus, Cremutius Cordus, and Bruttedius Niger. So far as we can tell, the furthest any of these rival narratives went was 31 CE, the end point of Aufidius Bassus' history. For the post-Sejanus period, however, we can name no histories that would have been extant before Seneca's death at some point probably not too long after 37 CE, unless Claudius' works

¹⁹ Candidates include 133 BCE (Canfora (2015) *passim*), 49 BCE, and 43 BCE; see Levick in *FRHist* I 506 for discussion and bibliography. Seneca uses the plural *bella ciuilia* to refer to the wars that ended at Philippi and Actium (*suas.* 1.7, quoting Messala Corvinus), but also to a period prior to the death of Cicero (*contr.* 1 *praef.* 11).

were then available (*Claud.* 41–42, especially 41.3 *De uita sua*). So the second point that we can perhaps glean from this phrase is that Seneca would have been aware of the novelty of his account of *res Romanae* for the years 32–37 CE.²⁰

We are on somewhat firmer ground in assuming – from his son’s characterization of the *Histories*’ starting point as “the time when truth withdrew” – that the historian asserted the *ueritas* of his own account.²¹ As what historian does not? But in Seneca’s case the assertion of *ueritas* might have been buttressed by reference to the rather more uncommon circumstance that the work was to be withheld for posthumous publication.²² Posthumous publication suggests – but does not prove – that the work’s contents were unlikely to please the irritable Tiberius (61.3 *omne crimen pro capitali receptum, etiam paucorum simpliciumque uerborum*),²³ under whom some of it is likely to have been written. It is also possible, however, that the publication delay was meant to protect the author against suspicions of self-interested adulation.²⁴

It is not clear why Seneca framed a history that reached Tiberius’ death as having its beginning in civil wars.²⁵ Lactantius attributed to Seneca an overview of Rome’s history from its birth with Romulus to its old age in the period of civil wars (*inst.* 7.15.14; *Appendix* - F2). If the passage preserved by Lactantius represents either directly or indirectly the elder Seneca’s biological view of history, Seneca may have characterized the present as a rebirth.²⁶ But that inference is of

20 Cf. Scappaticcio (2018) 1080, with a different emphasis: “per gli ultimi anni del regno di Tiberio Seneca Padre dovette rappresentare una fonte importante.”

21 His claim, of course, was challenged by Tacitus, who asserts that the truth manifested in *all* post-Actium histories is crippled (*hist.* 1.1.1: *ueritas ... infracta*), especially those whose subject was the affairs of Tiberius and later *principes* (*ann.* 1.1.2: *res ... falsae*).

22 Cf. Sen. *contr.* 10 *praef.* 8 on Labienus rolling up a scroll before reading the end of a historiographical work at a recitation, with the implication that the unread portion of the scroll would not please the powerful; cited by Canfora (2015) 167–168 to show Seneca’s critique of Augustus. At the conference in Naples Tim Cornell reminded us that an author might wish to avoid giving offense not only to the emperor but also to other eminent contemporaries.

23 The passage continues with a list of Tiberius’ literary victims. On the context see, e.g., Knox (2001).

24 As Levick points out (*FRHist* I 506), that is how the elder Pliny explains the delayed publication of his contemporary history: *nat. praef.* 20: *iam pridem peracta* (sc. *temporum nostrorum historia*) *sancitur et alioqui statutum erat heredi mandare, ne quid ambitioni dedisse uita iudicaretur*.

25 Levick at *FRHist ad loc.* notes that “The scale of the work seems to be considerable, if it began in 49 BC and included so detailed an account of Tiberius’ death.”

26 Sussman (1978) 143–144 and *infra* 148–149 and Canfora (2015) 139–144 connect the publication (and possibly composition) of Seneca’s *Historiae* with a brief moment of tolerance for historiography early in Caligula’s principate (Suet. *Cal.* 13–16, D.C. 59.24.4, Sen. *dial.* 6.1.2–4). Levick

limited use, since it is difficult to determine where Seneca would have located the end of the civil wars and the beginning of the new era: with Augustus? Or perhaps with Caligula?²⁷ Still, it is clear that whichever of these rulers Seneca chose as his golden boy, his Tiberius was going to provide a dark contrast.

In short, we should be looking for traces of a work in which Rome's civil wars served a structural function and that was characterized by an awareness of its own novelty, particularly for the years 32–37, a polemical claim of honesty, and a suggestion that the work was dangerous to either the safety or the reputation of its author. Judging by the elder Seneca's comments about historiography, particularly its proximity to oratory, the *Historiae* are also likely to have had a pronounced rhetorical character.²⁸

One would think that a fresh, combative, risk-taking account written in a lively style by an eye-witness to the last years of Tiberius' principate would be prized by anyone trying to make sense of the second *princeps*. And yet Syme is not alone in summing up the source question thus: "Two writers of mark and consequence dealt with the principate of Tiberius Caesar, namely Aufidius Bassus and Servilius Nonianus." For Syme and others, Seneca is an also-ran.²⁹ The attitude of modern scholars reflects that of Quintilian, who doesn't even mention Seneca in his brief list of post-Livy historians, which includes only Bassus, Nonianus, and, rather grudgingly, Cremutius Cordus. However, Quintilian also overlooks Claudius, the elder Pliny, Cluvius Rufus, and Fabius Rusticus, to mention just a few, so his silence about Seneca is less pointed than it might seem.³⁰ True, Seneca is unlikely to have been the source exploited by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio for the official business of these years, since he was not a senator.³¹ He is also

at *FRHist* I 507 considers a publication date after the younger Seneca's return from exile in 49 CE more probable.

27 Cf., e.g., Suet. *Cal.* 13–16, and Barrett (2015) 72–106 describing Caligula's first six months in power as "a period of near-euphoria" (99).

28 In *Suasoria* 6, on whether Cicero would beg Antony's pardon to save his life, for example, Seneca insists that Pollio, writing history, seemed to vie with Cicero in eloquence: *suas.* 6.25: *adfirmare uobis possum nihil esse in historiis eius (sc. Pollionis) hoc, quem rettuli, loco disertius, ut mihi tunc non laudasse Ciceronem sed certasse cum Cicerone uideatur.*

29 Syme (1958) 277 mentions him only briefly. Cf. Levick in *FRHist* I 507: "the influence of Seneca's historical works is hardly a substantial subject." Canfora (2015) 154 is an exception: in his view Seneca's *Historiae* was Appian's main source for *Bella ciuilia* 1–2. See Rich *infra* 342–352.

30 As Quintilian explains (*inst.* 10.1.104), *sunt alii scriptores boni, sed nos genera degustamus, non bibliothecas excutimus.*

31 Of Seneca's two senatorial sons, only Gallio is likely to have been a member of the Tiberian senate (born c. 5 BCE, *cos. suff.* 55). Seneca the younger probably entered the senate after 37 CE; see Habinek (2013).

unlikely to have been the source of the scandalous stories of life on Capri, for which Servilius Nonianus, a known visitor to the island, is a better bet.³² But Seneca was in Rome during Tiberius' stay on Capri, including the years 32–37, which were not covered by Aufidius Bassus. So it seems worth asking whether we can identify material that subsequent historians (construed broadly) were more likely to get from Seneca than from any other source. From there we can perhaps draw some conclusions about the type of material Seneca contributed to the history of the early principate. By the time our extant sources were written, of course, the story of Tiberius' principate had been told by historians writing after Seneca – Servilius Nonianus and the elder Pliny, to name just two – and this tends to occlude Seneca's contribution, if any.³³ But the recent reemergence of this work provides a good excuse to try again to penetrate the fog. For the purposes of this paper I tested four approaches to task of detecting Senecan material in the *Life of Tiberius*.

2.2 Looking for the *Historiae*

2.2.1 *decuriae equitum*

First I looked for items, especially items relevant to the years 32–37 CE, that were not likely to be in one of the identifiable sources for the period, sources identifiable by content, if not by author or title: I was looking for items that were not senatorial or annalistic, not set on Capri,³⁴ not autobiographical for either Tiberius and Claudius, not antiquarian (like the etymology of “Nero”), not from Tiberius' speeches and letters, not documentary (like Tiberius' will), and not based on Suetonian autopsy. An item that caught my eye was a notice about equestrian jury lists.

More specifically, Suetonius' report that for the last eleven years of his principate Tiberius did not replenish the equestrian jury lists (41: *regressus in insulam rei p. quidem curam usque adeo abiecit ut postea non decurias equitum umquam suppleuerit*). Why report something that did not happen? The biographer's topical arrangement of his material facilitates comparisons between one Caesar and another, and as we will see, the jury lists make repeat appearances in the *Caesars*.

³² For Nonianus on Capri see Houston (1985) 195 n.35: “the hypothesis is now treated as a certainty.”

³³ See *supra* n. 2 on Suetonius' derivation of material from Seneca's *Controversiae* from an intervening source.

³⁴ Presumably Nonianus; see Champlin (2011) 32 n.8.

The notice in chapter 41 is the first item in several lists of things that Tiberius did not do once he retired to Capri: he didn't appoint new military tribunes or prefects or provincial governors, didn't appoint any governors for Spain or Syria for years at a time, didn't respond to enemy attacks on the empire (41); he didn't construct any magnificent buildings or finish the buildings he did start, he didn't sponsor entertainments or attend those put on by others (47), and so on. Replenishing the jury lists, apparently, is an example of the emperor's *cura rei publicae*, and Tiberius's neglect of the *decuriae* while on Capri is noticeable by contrast.

For the jury lists are mentioned in each of the first four *Lives*. Julius Caesar, who inherited a system that empaneled senators, *equites Romani*, and *tribuni aerarii*, eliminated the *tribuni aerarii* (*Jul.* 41.2; cf. D.C. 43.25.1–2). As for Augustus, among other provisions aimed at increasing the number of jurors, he added a fourth panel to the preexisting three: his new jurors would be drawn from a lower census class, the *ducenarii*, and hear cases involving smaller sums of money (*Aug.* 32.3);³⁵ Suetonius also reports that as an old man Augustus reviewed the jury lists in his Palatine library (*Aug.* 29.3 *decurias iudicum recognovit*). The *Life of Tiberius*, in addition to the notice about Tiberius' failure to replenish the jury lists, also contains a notice pertaining to an occasion some time before Livia's death in 29 CE on which Tiberius *did* revise the lists: Livia was putting pressure on him to enroll a new citizen in the jury lists and he refused to do so unless permitted to include the words "[a concession] extorted by his mother" on the relevant document (51.1: *instanti [sc. Liui] saepius ut ciuitate donatum in decurias adlegeret negauit alia se condicione adlecturum quam si pateretur ascribi albo extortum id sibi a matre*).³⁶ This is a peculiar combination of detailed reportage and implausible scenario, and the notice is quite likely to have annoyed Tiberius. (We will return to the apparent ban on including new citizens in the *decuriae*.)³⁷ The

35 Suet. *Aug.* 32.3: *Ad tris iudicum decurias quartam addidit ex inferiore censu, quae ducenarium uocaretur iudicaretque de leuioribus summis. Iudices a tricensimo aetatis anno adlegit, id est quinquennio maturius quam solebant.* When these arrangements met with resistance, Augustus reluctantly made concessions to render the new civic duty less burdensome: *Aug.* 32.3: *Ac plerisque iudicandi munus detractantibus uix concessit, ut singulis decuriis per uices annua uacatio esset et ut solitae agi Nouembri ac Decembri mense res omitterentur* (cf. D.C. 55.13). See Wardle (2014) on this passage and Henderson (1963), Demougin (1988), and especially Ramsey (2005) on the changing constitution of the jury panels after Caesar's death; according to Ramsey (2005) 36 Suetonius reports only the last Augustan phase (see further *infra* n. 37).

36 A notice in Tacitus' obituary for Lucius Volusius suggests that Tiberius may also have delegated the job on occasion: *ann.* 3.30.1: *censoria ... potestate legendis equitum decuriis functus*.

37 Ramsey (2005) 35 dates the ban on new citizens in the jury lists to early in the post-Actian period, a phase not mentioned by Suetonius.

last innovation recorded by Suetonius is the institution of a fifth panel at the beginning of Caligula's reign, apparently a further concession to ease the burden on jurors (*Cal.* 16.2: *ut leuior labor iudicantibus foret ad quattuor prioris quintam decuriam addidit*).³⁸ The *decuriae* are mentioned once more, in the *Life of Galba*, where Suetonius reports another non-occurrence: Galba did not add a sixth panel when asked to do so.³⁹ Almost none of this material is noticed by Tacitus or Dio, although these authors occasionally mention reviews of the equestrian *ordo* in general terms.⁴⁰ The jury-panel notices might be pigeonholed as the sort of insignificant administrative detail that the pedantic Suetonius paid attention to, with equestrian offices being perhaps of particular interest in a collection of biographies dedicated to a praetorian prefect, Septicius Clarus, who had reached the peak of the equestrian bureaucracy (*Lyd. Mag.* 2.6).⁴¹ And Suetonius himself might have felt a personal connection to the history of the jury panels if, as a plausible conjecture on his career inscription suggests, he himself was a *iudex*.⁴²

But Suetonius is not the only ancient author interested in this material: the elder Pliny (like Suetonius an equestrian office-holder) gives an account of the changing composition of the *decuriae*. It is embedded in his history of the use of rings to signify rank in *nat.* 33. The information is presented there in thematic rather than chronological order, but Pliny gives us a glimpse of jury panels from

38 In the *Lives* of Claudius (16.2) and Domitian (8.3) Suetonius reports the ejection of individual jurors but no further changes to the institution.

39 Suet. *Gal.* 14.3: *iudicibus sextam decuriam adici precantibus non modo negauit, sed et concessum a Claudio beneficium, ne hieme initioque anni ad iudicandum euocarentur, eripuit*. There is nothing in the *Life of Claudius* about the Claudian reform mentioned here, unless the vague language about “public business” at *Claud.* 23.1 alludes to it: *rerum actum diuisum antea in hibernos aestiuosque menses coniunxit* (cf. *Aug.* 32.2: *ne quod autem maleficium negotiumue inpunitate uel mora elaberetur, triginta amplius dies, qui honoraris ludis occupabantur, actui rerum accommodauit*). Otherwise, Claudius is said to have reviewed the jury panel lists (*Claud.* 15.1: *cum decurias ... expungeret*) but not to have changed their operation. See also *infra* n. 53.

40 E.g., Dio does not mention jury panels in connection with either Augustus' review of men of duceanian status (55.13.4) or Caligula's expansion of the equestrian *ordo* (59.9.5).

41 Suetonius also provides references to reviews of the lists: *Aug.* 29.3, *Cal.* 16.2, *Claud.* 15.1, 26.4, *Dom.* 8.1–3; cf. Tac. *ann.* 3.30.1, 14.20.5. On Suetonius' penchant for administrative detail see, e.g., Wallace-Hadrill (1980) 73–78, and 135 on the *decuriae*: “It (sc. the equestrian order) supplied the courts with juries, and changes in that field are detailed with some care.”

42 *Année épigraphique* 1953 n°73, line 4: *adlecto inter selectos a diuo Traiano*, with Townend (1961a) 100. On the *iudices selecti* more generally see Staveley (1953). Staveley wrote before the discovery of Suetonius' career inscription, but he mentions an apposite parallel from the career of Aulus Gellius (212–213, on Gell. 14.2.1).

the Gracchi to Caligula (33.30–34).⁴³ He also describes the above-mentioned ban on new citizens in the panels as contemporary Flavian practice (33.30: *seruatim ... in hodiernum est, ne quis e nouis ciuibus in iis iudicaret*).⁴⁴

The jury lists also turn up in more unlikely places. The younger Seneca mentions them in the *De beneficiis*, where he contrasts the judge who needs *sapientia* with the judge “enrolled in the panel (*in album*) by his bank account and his equestrian lineage,” neatly capturing two key characteristics of the equestrian judge: his property qualification, *census*, and fact that he was a citizen by birth, *equestris hereditas*.⁴⁵ Neither characteristic is necessary for Seneca's argument here, which is about philosophy, not jury panels; they just provide an “effet du réel” and a sonorous conclusion to a paragraph arguing that, unlike philosophy, a court is incapable of defining a *beneficium* or discerning the feelings of a beneficiary.⁴⁶ The jury panel reforms are also mentioned in the pseudo-Sallustian *Second epistle to Caesar* (7.10–12). This is a text widely believed to have been “written by a rhetorician masquerading as Sallust,” a rhetorician who “seems to have had a very good grasp of Republican history.”⁴⁷ Someone like Seneca himself, in fact. The letter, which is often labeled a *suasoria*, purports to offer advice to Julius Caesar in 50 BCE, on the brink of civil war. Among the reforms proposed, some of them quite anachronistic for the letter's dramatic date but attested elsewhere in Roman history, is one pertaining to jury panels. The author urges Caesar to extend eligibility to more of the citizen body by enrolling all members of the first

⁴³ Plin. *nat.* 33.30–34: 30 *diuo Augusto decurias ordinante ... seruatumque in hodiernum ...* 33: *Gaius princeps decuriam quintam adiecit ...* 34: *iudicum autem appellatione separare eum ordinem primi omnium instituere Gracchi*.

⁴⁴ Zehnacker (1983) does not discuss Pliny's source for this section or Book 33 more generally: “l'étude des sources de Pline est à refaire” (31).

⁴⁵ Sen. *benef.* 3.7.7: *ubi uero animi coniectura capienda est, ubi id, de quo sola sapientia decernit, in controuersiam incidit, non potest sumi ad haec iudex ex turba selectorum, quem census in album et equestris hereditas misit*. Seneca's rather ironic expression *ex turba selectorum* captures a third technical detail of equestrian jury service, the “exclusivity” of the *iudices selecti*, who may have been hand-picked by the *princeps*: see Staveley (1953) 209–213, qualified by Henderson (1963) 68–69. For income as the defining feature of judges see also Sen. *contr.* 2.1.7: *census iudices in foro legit*; Plin. *nat.* 14.5: *iudex fieri censu* (sc. *coeptus*). See also *infra* n. 48.

⁴⁶ For broad claims about the younger Seneca's debt to his father's *Historiae* see Canfora (2000) and (2015) 164–202 (acknowledging a debt to Castiglioni 1928), especially the description of the *Historiae* as a “patrimonio letterario della famiglia” (174). On the more general literary debt see Trinacty (2009).

⁴⁷ Ramsey (2005) 30. On the *Epistle* see recently Santangelo (2012).

census class, i.e., those who met a property qualification of 100,000 sesterces, a quarter that of the equestrian *ordo* and half that of Augustus' *ducenarii*.⁴⁸

Scholars who study these various attestations have not discussed in any great detail the original source(s) of the history of Rome's equestrian jury panels.⁴⁹ It seems likely that the immediate source of the material in Suetonius' *Caesars* was his earlier treatise *De institutione officiorum*, whose title suggests that it contained a historical survey of official duties.⁵⁰ But this simply pushes the question "Where did Suetonius get it?" back one stage, for the existence of an overview in Pliny's *Natural History* makes it hard to believe that Suetonius was the first compiler of the *decuriae* material.⁵¹ Of the sources cited in the index for Pliny's Book 33 only two candidates emerge for the *decuriae* material.⁵² One possibility is Licinius Mucianus, who is the only author on Pliny's list known to have outlived Caligula: his collection of imperial speeches might have included a speech that we know Claudius to have given on the subject of judiciary reforms.⁵³

⁴⁸ [Sall.] *epist.* 2.7.11: *Iudices a paucis probari, regnum est; ex pecunia legi, inhonestum. Quare omnes primae classis iudicare placet, sed numero plures, quam iudicant.* On the anachronistic connections between this proposal, echoed at *epist.* 2.12.1, and that of Antony in 44 BCE see Ramsey (2005) 29–30.

⁴⁹ The scarcity of historical scrutiny mentioned by Staveley (1953) 202 has been remedied by, e.g., Henderson (1963), Demougín (1988), and Ramsey (2005), but the source question remains neglected.

⁵⁰ For jury service as an *officium* see *Gal.* 15.1: *existimabatur (sc. Galba) etiam senatoria et equestris officia bienni spatio determinaturus nec daturus nisi inuitis ac recusantibus.* Although Suetonius' treatise on "offices" is almost entirely lost, one of its three surviving fragments concerns a bureaucratic arrangement instituted under Augustus: fr. 200 Reifferscheid: τὸ τῶν ἔργων σκρίβιον οὐκ ὄν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ Αὐγουστός προσέειπε τῇ ἀρχῇ τὴν ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ βασιλικὴν ἀνεγείρων. On Suetonius' creation or transmission of chronological surveys in connection with his treatise *On games* see fr. 185 Reifferscheid: *qui quos quem per ordinem et quibus idolis ludos instituerint, positum est apud Suetonium Tranquillum uel a quibus Tranquillus accepit.*

⁵¹ Suetonius may, however, have supplemented it, since an item absent from Pliny's survey and present in Suetonius' series of notices pertains to Galba (*Gal.* 14.3, quoted *supra* n. 39).

⁵² Sources cited for *Plin. nat.* 33: *EX AUCTORIBUS Domitiano Caesare. Iunio Gracchano. L. Pisone. M. Varrone. Coruino. Attico Pomponio. Caluo Licinio. Cornelio Nepote. Muciano. Boccho. Feltiale. Fenestella. Valerio Maximo. Iulio Basso qui de medicina Graece scripsit. Sextio Nigro qui item. EXTERNIS Theophrasto. Democrito. Iuba. Timaeo historico. Qui de medicina metallica scripserunt: Heraclide. Andrea. Diagora. Botrye. Archedemo. Dionysio. Aristogene. Democle. Mneside. Attalo medico. Xenocrate item. Theomnesto. Nymphodoro. Iolla. Apollodoro. Pasitele qui mirabilia opera scripsit. Antigono qui de toreutice scripsit. Menaechmo qui item.*

⁵³ Portions of the speech on judiciary matters delivered by Claudius to the senate survive on papyrus (*BGU* 2.611; text, images, and bibliography can be found online at <http://berlpap.smb.museum/02461/> (verified 17 March 2018). No details pertinent to our investigation emerge, but the speaker does mention the *quinque decuriae* in the first surviving line.

The other is Fenestella, whose *Annales* seem to have included chronological overviews.⁵⁴ Suetonius cites both Claudius and Fenestella elsewhere (Claudius: *Claud.* 21.2; Fenestella: *Poet.* 11). But as we have seen, he also cites Seneca, and it seems at least possible that the *Historiae* was the (or a) source for the references to the *decuriae* in the younger Seneca's *De beneficiis* and the pseudo-Sallustian *Letter to Caesar* – i.e., in works where historical facts serve primarily rhetorical purposes.⁵⁵ Seneca's pride in his own equestrian status comes across clearly in the *Controuersiae* (*contr.* 2 *praef.* 3),⁵⁶ and he was well informed about contemporary trials (*contr.* 7.4.6–8 with 7 *praef.* 6–7; 2.3.13, 7.2.8, 7.5.12, 7.6.22). Furthermore, in his rhetorical works, which communicate his admiration for historiography (*suas.* 6.14–16), he provides chronological overviews of the rise of declamation (*contr.* 1 *praef.* 12) and the development of the historiographical death notice (*suas.* 6). And the contentious issue of jury service would be hard to overlook in a history starting anywhere in Rome's long century of civil wars.⁵⁷ One might even go a little further and say that in this matter the record would have shown that the system created *guttatim* by emperors from Caesar to Caligula was less divisive than any of its Republican predecessors.⁵⁸

54 According to a problematic notice in the elder Pliny, Fenestella died late in Tiberius' principate (*nat.* 33.146 = *FRHist* 70 T2). On the difficulty of dating Fenestella and his rivalry with Livy see Drummond at *FRHist* I 489–496. Surviving fragments of Fenestella's work make him a plausible source for a survey of jury panel rules (e.g., *FRHist* 70 F15 on chronological overview of use of elephants, F 24–26 on developments in use of silver dinnerware, pearls, and fancy togas, possibly also F14 on use of gold rings, F5 on the institution of the 12-month calendar, and F7 on the origin of the term *quaestor*). He is cited once by Suetonius, in the *Life of Terence* (*FRHist* 70 F11) and once by the younger Seneca (*epist.* 108.31 = *FRHist* 70 F8). The material pertaining to Caligula could have been added by Pliny himself, born c. 23 CE.

55 Pliny cites the younger but not the elder Seneca as a source: *nat.* 1, for Books 6, 9, 36; cf. 6.60, 9.167, 14.51, 29.10.

56 Cf. *contr.* 2 *praef.* 5 on Blandus, qui <primus> *eques Romanus Romae docuit*.

57 The issue is prominent in the opening paragraph of Florus' book on the civil wars, for example: *epit.* 2.1: *quid ad ius libertatis aequandae magis efficax quam ut senatu regente provincias ordinis equestris auctoritas saltem iudiciorum regno niteretur?*

58 For the divisiveness of judiciary law proposed by C. Gracchus see, e.g., Varro *de uita populi Romani* IV fr. 114 Riposati: *iniquus equestri ordini iudicia tradidit ac bicipitem ciuitatem fecit*, echoed by Flor. *epit.* 2.5: *iudiciaria lege Gracchi diuiserant populum Romanum et bicipitem ex una fecerant ciuitatem*. See also Wiseman (2010) and Canfora (2015) 151–154. For developments in the imperial period see Demougín (1988), who devotes an appendix to the Julio-Claudian jury panels: “le siège de juré, tout en conservant son prestige social, perdit de son importance politique” (443).

2.2.2 *iusiurandum mariti et uxoris*

Am I on thin evidentiary ice in suggesting that the history of equestrian jury panels figured in Seneca's *Historiae ab initio bellorum ciuilium*? Of course. But the pronounced equestrian angle of the jury panel topic led me to look more closely at an equestrian-related episode earlier in the biography. Apropos of Tiberius' attention to public morals Suetonius reports that Tiberius released an equestrian husband from a vow never to divorce his wife, after it was discovered that the man's wife had committed adultery with their son-in-law (35.1 eq.: *R. iuris iurandi gratiam fecit <ut> uxorem in stupro generi compertam dimitteret quam se numquam repudiatum ante iurauerat*). The parallel tradition is silent about this incident, although Tacitus does report some of the senatorial examples of female *impudicitia* that Suetonius packages with this equestrian incident under the heading of familial hearings about *feminae famosae* (Tac. *ann.* 2.85.1–2, cf. *Tib.* 35.2). The husband's premarital oath is unusual,⁵⁹ and his predicament looks like something that would come up in a comedy⁶⁰ or in a *controuersia* on the theme of *iniustum repudium*.⁶¹ Our convener has already mentioned the Suetonian passage in connection with the *mulier stuprata* of our papyrus,⁶² so I will just point to the

⁵⁹ For a premarital oath that occasioned a divorce see Gell. 4.3 *praef.* 2 on Caruilius Ruga, who divorced a barren wife because he had sworn that his marriage was for the purpose of producing children (also 17.21.44).

⁶⁰ For the oath cf. especially Ter. *Ad.* 332: *qui sine hac iurabat se unum numquam uicturum diem*; similarly Plaut. *Merc.* 790–791, Ter. *Hec.* 60–62.

⁶¹ For the declamatory theme of *iniustum repudium* see, e.g., Quint. *decl.* 251 (with the “lex” *intra quinquennium non parientem repudiare liceat*), 262 (which begins *Lex iniusti repudii, maxime necessaria ad continenda matrimonia, et his praecipue moribus, quibus finem tantum necessitas facit, super omnes leges tuenda est*), 327, 368. Also Sen. *contr.* 2.5.17, Quint. *inst.* 7.4.38, Calp. *decl.* 10.3. Perhaps Suetonius relished the parallel between the husband's predicament and that of Tiberius, whose desire to sever his marital bond with the adulterous Julia the biographer stresses (10.1: *uxoris ... taedio, quam neque criminari aut dimittere auderet neque ultra perferre posset*). It may be that Tiberius' biographer Barbara Levick (1999) ch. 8 concurs with my doubts about the historicity of the event reported by Suetonius, since she nowhere mentions Tiberius' concession to the unhappily married Roman knight in her chapter on Tiberius' relationship with the *equites* and *plebs*.

⁶² Scappaticcio (2018) 1064–1065.

equestrian protagonist⁶³ and mention that Seneca does in fact discuss a *controuersia* on the theme of a marital oath (*contr.* 2.2).⁶⁴ In “The oath sworn by husband and wife,” *iusiurandum mariti et uxoris*, the couple swore that if one died, the other would commit suicide; Seneca tells us that Ovid declaimed on the theme (*contr.* 2.2.8). The details are different, of course, but both oaths reflect the same basic “till death do us part” sentiment.⁶⁵

2.2.3 Seneca ... scribit

Next I took the obvious approach: I scrutinized the Senecan version of Tiberius' death, the fourth of four reported by Suetonius. More specifically, I looked for features that distinguish Seneca's version from the other versions reported by Suetonius (*Appendix* - F2). This seemed like it might generate some leads on Senecan “taste,” because we know that Seneca was interested in death scenes: he gives an overview of the history of historiographical death scenes in *Suasoria* 6 and credits them with offering a comprehensive picture of the life of the deceased, analogous to that of a *laudatio funebris* (*suas.* 6.21: *fere consummatio totius uitae et quasi funebris laudatio redditur*).

The variants are as follows:

- version 1) Caligula poisoned Tiberius (*uenenum ei a Gaio datum lentum atque tabificum*).
- version 2) Tiberius was denied food when he asked for it (*in remissione fortuitae febris cibum desideranti negatum*).
- version 3) Tiberius was smothered with a pillow after reviving when someone tried to remove his signet ring (*puluinum iniectum cum extractum sibi deficienti anulum mox resipiscens requisisset*).

⁶³ Two other equestrian-related notices absent from the parallel tradition: at 42.2 Suetonius reports that Tiberius appointed the equestrian-ranked Caesonius Priscus to a new secretariat “*a uoluptatibus*,” and at 51.1 he reports that Tiberius mistreated Livia's friends and connections after her death, among them a man of equestrian rank (*uno ex iis, equestris ordinis uiro, et in antliam condemnato*).

⁶⁴ Cf. *contr.* 1.6 on another husband oath-bound to wife (especially 1.6.8, 1.6.10–12), and Quint. *inst.* 9.2.98: *Nam et in totum iurare, nisi ubi necesse est, graui uiro parum conuenit, et est a Seneca dictum eleganter non patronorum hoc esse sed testium*.

⁶⁵ E.g. Sen. *contr.* 2.2.2: *adsiduae contentiones erant: ‘ego magis amo’: ‘immo ego’; ‘sine te uiuere non possum’: ‘immo ego sine te’; qui solet exitus esse certaminum, iurauimus*. And *contr.* 2.2.5: *Hunc enim animum sine dubio fuisse iurantium, ut uiui non diducerentur*.

The signet ring in version three was presumably the ring Tiberius inherited from Augustus, which, Suetonius tells us, was used by all the Caesars (*Aug.* 50). The biographer makes sure we take his point that Tiberius holds a powerful symbol of Caesarism in a death grip by giving a fourth version, also involving the signet ring, and attributed to Seneca:

- version 4) Tiberius, realizing that his end is near, ponders whether to pass the signet ring to some successor, decides against so doing, calls for his attendants, and when no one responds, gets out of bed, collapses, and dies alone in his bedroom (*Seneca eum scribit ... concidisse*).⁶⁶

As many have noted, Seneca's version implies no wrongdoing. In versions 1 and 3 Tiberius is actively murdered, and even version 2, with *negatum*, implies intentional assistance to the dying process. But Seneca's *nemine respondente* implies no more than neglect, and his *deficientibus uiribus* describes a natural death. Seneca's version might therefore be the most acceptable of the four to Caligula, at least in the short term.⁶⁷ (At some unspecified point *postea* (*Cal.* 12.3) Caligula started boasting that he once went into Tiberius' bedroom with murderous intent, dagger in hand.)⁶⁸ But the cause of death is not the only thing that differentiates Seneca's version from the others. Even the précis given by Suetonius is enough to indicate that Seneca depicted the dying man's thought process in some detail: "I'm dying. Shall I name a successor? No, I am going to stay emperor to the end. Let me get some help here. No answer? I'll have to do something about that!" But with Tiberius' mind still heading angrily for the door his body gives out. This death scene is not exactly a *consummatio totius uitae* or a *laudatio funebris*, of course, but it has a lively plot on which a good bit of emotion and description

⁶⁶ In the amalgamated version of these variants at *Cal.* 12.2–3 Suetonius makes Caligula, not the dying Tiberius, the central figure. For differences between the two scenes and what they say about Suetonius' biographical priorities see Wardle (1994) *ad loc.* and Ramondetti (2002), both with further bibliography.

⁶⁷ This weakens the case presented by Barrett (2015) 71, echoing Hurley (1993) 190, for identifying Suetonius' source as the younger Seneca: "It is argued by Grisart 1961 that the elder Seneca was intended here. But given that there were tensions between Caligula and the younger Seneca, it is much more likely that the latter is intended."

⁶⁸ Suet. *Cal.* 12.3: ... *cum sint quidam auctores ipsum (sc. Gaium) postea etsi non de perfecto, at certe de cogitato quondam parricidio professum, gloriatum enim assidue in commemoranda sua pietate ad ulciscendam necem matris et fratrum introisse se cum pugio cubiculum Tiberi dormientis sed misericordia correptum abiecto ferro recessisse.*

could be overlaid.⁶⁹ We know from his discussion of competing versions of Cicero's death scene that Seneca expected historians to supplement a factual core – Cicero assassinated on Antony's orders, head and hand(s) displayed on the *Ros-tr* in Rome – with dialogue, emotion, description, corroborating details, and ironic reversals (*suas.* 6.17–21), within the bounds of plausibility, of course (*suas.* 6.15: *haec inepte ficta cuilibet uideri potest*).⁷⁰ But is hard to say how the Senecan version of Tiberius' death scene, the one reasonably secure Suetonian borrowing from the *Historiae*, can help us identify more Senecan material in the *Caesars*. One might look for traces of Senecan “taste” more generally in Suetonius, but it would be hard to avoid the disquieting thought that this death scene has a great deal in common with the death scenes written by near contemporary historians for Cicero. So how “Senecan” is it? On the whole I am inclined to distrust the results of this approach, apart from what can be gleaned about the Tiberian death scene itself, most importantly that it was less hostile to Caligula than any of the others.

2.2.4 *parricidia*

Assuming (on admittedly slight grounds) that Caligula was depicted in a positive light in Seneca's *Historiae*, for my final approach I scrutinized episodes pertinent to the rehabilitation of the memory of Germanicus. This rehabilitation was of course a persistent project during the principates of Germanicus' son and brother, and it is robustly evident in both the historical tradition and the material record.⁷¹ So the topic is not specific to Seneca. But he would have witnessed the initial campaign, which began directly upon Caligula's accession: in Caligula's eulogy for Tiberius, according to Dio, the praise for Tiberius was less prominent than the recollection of Augustus and Germanicus (59.3.8). And Caligula thereupon hastened to gather the scattered remains of his mother and brothers for interment in the Mausoleum of Augustus (54.2, *Cal.* 15.1; D.C. 59.3.5–6; see also *Cal.*

⁶⁹ Even the scant remains of Seneca's story are “effectively moving” for Baldwin (1983) 150.

⁷⁰ His topic here is *quomodo quisque se ex historicis aduersus memoriam Ciceronis gesserit* (*suas.* 6.14). For discussion see, e.g., Roller (1997), Berti (2007) 325–328, Migliario (2007) 142–149, Feddern (2013) 426–465.

⁷¹ For the Suetonian evidence on the principate of Caligula see below, for that of Germanicus' brother see *Claud.* 11.2: *fratris memoriam per omnem occasionem celebratam* with Hurley (2001) *ad loc.* The bibliography on Germanicus is enormous. Orientation is available at Bonamente/Segoloni (1987) and, more recently, Rivière (2015) 545–550. For coinage see recently Reinard (2015).

12.3, quoted *supra* n. 68). The new *princeps* also honored the still living mother and daughters of Germanicus (*Cal.* 15.2–3; D.C. 59.3.3–4) and renamed the month of September “Germanicus” (*Cal.* 15.2). Suetonius’ *Life of Tiberius* contains a detail relevant to the rehabilitation of Germanicus not mentioned elsewhere, namely, a letter addressed to Tiberius by Artabanus, the king of Parthia. This letter appears in the discussion of Tiberius’ reactions to criticism, for according to Suetonius the Parthian king accused Tiberius of “kin-killing and slaughter and cowardice and extravagance,” then advised him to kill himself (66):

Quin et Artabani Parthorum regis laceratus est litteris parricidia et caedes et ignauiam et luxuriam obicientis monentisque, ut uoluntaria morte maximo iustissimoque ciuium odio quam primum satis faceret.

It is generally assumed that the occasion for this letter was the embassy sent in 35 CE to reclaim the treasure with which the deposed king of Armenia, Vonones, had arrived in Syria nearly twenty years earlier (*Tac. ann.* 6.31.1: *missis qui gazam a Vonone relictam in Syria Ciliciaque reposcerent*).⁷² The letter’s tone certainly suits the aggressive behavior that Tacitus attributes to Artabanus at this late date in Tiberius’ reign: the Parthian ruler unilaterally supplied Armenia with a king in place of the recently deceased Artaxias, a king crowned by Germanicus with much fanfare in 18 CE.⁷³ But Tacitus mentions no letter,⁷⁴ and the contents as summarized by Suetonius sit uncomfortably alongside a demand for the return

⁷² On the historical circumstances of both episodes see recently Olbrycht (2012) and (2016). In what follows I assume that the letter summarized by Suetonius is a historical fiction and make no presumptions about the existence of a historical letter. Suetonius mentions both Artabanus’ hostility to Tiberius and his graciousness to Caligula at *Cal.* 14.3: *Artabanus Parthorum rex, odium semper contemptumque Tiberii prae se ferens, amicitiam huius (sc. Gaii) ultro petiit*. See also *infra* n. 76.

⁷³ *Tac. ann.* 6.31.1: *C. Cestio M. Seruilio consulibus nobiles Parthi in urbem uenere, ignaro rege Artabano. is metu Germanici fidus Romanis, aequabilis in suos, mox superbiam in nos, saeuitiam in popularis sumpsit, fretus bellis quae secunda aduersum circumiectas nationes exercuerat, et senectutem Tiberii ut inermem despiciens audiusque Armeniae, cui defuncto rege Artaxia Arsacen liberorum suorum ueterrimum imposuit, addita contumelia et missis qui gazam a Vonone relictam in Syria Ciliciaque reposcerent; simul ueteres Persarum ac Macedonum terminos seque inuasurum possessa Cyro et post Alexandro per uaniloquentiam ac minas iaciebat.*

⁷⁴ Or if he does, it is designated vaguely by the expression *iaciebat* (*ann.* 6.31.1, quoted *supra* n. 73). If so, the contents of the letter are strikingly different. Woodman (2017) *ad loc.* associates the charges of kin-killing etc. with *addita contumelia*.

of what Suetonius earlier called “a huge treasure” (49.2: *ingenti gaza*).⁷⁵ Even without a firm context, however, the letter proves a striking critique of Tiberius, headed by the charge, *paricidia*, that would have been most pertinent to an attempt to revive public regret for the deaths of Caligula's parents and siblings and enthusiasm for Germanicus' surviving son.⁷⁶ Both kin-killing and letters are of course standard fare in the declamations commemorated by Seneca⁷⁷ – and in imperial-era biography and historiography. So there is no particular reason to attribute Artabanus' letter to the *Historiae*. But its surprising conclusion, with its reference to the unappeased hatred of Tiberius' subjects (*ut ... maximo iustissimo-que ciuium odio quam primum satis faceret*), does anticipate nicely another episode unique to Suetonius, a crowd scene in Rome when news of Tiberius' death arrived (75.1):

Morte eius ita laetatus est populus ut ad primum nuntium discurrentes pars 'Tiberium in Tiberim!' clamarent, pars Terram matrem deosque Manes orarent ne mortuo sedem ullam nisi inter impios darent, alii unicum et Gemonias cadaueri minarentur.

The passage continues with more details: the Gemonian steps were on people's mind because Tiberius' last victims, who had pleaded for delaying execution until Caligula's arrival, has just been exposed there (75.2). And a few days later,

⁷⁵ But in other details, too, Suetonius' account of Germanicus' actions in Armenia differs materially from the parallel tradition: most notably, only Suetonius reports that Germanicus conquered the king of Armenia (*Cal. 1.2: cum Armeniae regem deuicisset*); according to Tacitus the installation of the new king was entirely peaceful (*ann. 2.56.2–3*, with Olbrycht (2016) on the events and Kaster (2016) *ad loc.* for attempts to emend away this discrepancy). Other unparalleled details appear in Suetonius' account of Vonones' death: 49.2: *Vononem regem Parthorum, qui pulsus a suis quasi in fidem p. R. cum ingenti gaza Antiochiam se receperat, spoliatum perfidia et occisum* (cf. Tac. *ann. 2.4.3*, 2.58, 2.68, with Lindsay (1999) *ad loc.*: “Suetonius appears to be unfair in claiming that Vonones' death was a product of the greed of Tiberius”).

⁷⁶ According to Seager (2005 [1972]) 275 n.61, “Suetonius' version of Artabanus' letter must be grossly exaggerated.” Suetonius is also our sole authority for Artabanus' mourning for Germanicus (*Cal. 5: regum etiam regem et exercitatione uenandi et conuictu megistanum abstinuisse, quod apud Parthos iustitii instar est*; it may be relevant to the possibly Senecan origin of this material that the rare word *megistanus* also turns up in a letter written by his son: Sen. *epist.* 21.4). See Hurley (1993) 43 n.17 for the uniquely pro-Caligula *tendence* in Suetonius' report of the meeting between Artabanus and the imperial legate L. Vitellius in 37 CE at *Cal. 14.3* (cf. I. *AI.* 18.101–102, D.C. 59.27.3, and an incompatible account at *Vit. 2.4*).

⁷⁷ *Paricidium* occurs more than 100x in Seneca's rhetorical works. Letters are a plot element in *contr.* 1.7, 4.3, 7.4, 10.6.

when Tiberius' corpse was on its way to Rome for the funeral, another crowd proposed a preliminary attempt to cremate the tyrant at Atella (75.3).⁷⁸ A historian who was in Rome in 37 CE would have been well placed to capture the contemporary anti-Tiberius pro-Caligula mood.⁷⁹

3 Conclusions

For a paper as speculative as this one has been conclusions are necessarily in short supply. It is perhaps worth noting that some of the Senecan and potentially Senecan material I have discussed reflects badly on Tiberius and well on Caligula.⁸⁰ This is true of Tiberius' death scene and Artabanus' letter, and also of the equestrian jury panels, where Caligula followed Augustus' precedent and Tiberius did not.⁸¹ The divorce case, however, could be spun either for or against Tiberius: he either released a member of the elite from a foolish oath and made a wicked woman pay for her crime (that is how Suetonius tells it), or he interfered in a matter that the family might have preferred to settle privately. If Seneca's *Historiae* did herald a new golden age presided over by the one son of Germanicus who survived the Tiberian gloom, however, subsequent historians may well have turned up their noses and kept their distance from the work.⁸²

78 Lindsay (1999) *ad loc.*, with further references and bibliography: "It was notorious that a tyrant's body could not be totally consumed by the flames."

79 Cf. Lindsay (1999) 187: "Such a view of the last stages of the Tiberian regime was perhaps encouraged by Caligula and Macro, who could not fail to benefit from an unfavourable review of the predecessor."

80 Contrasting views have been expressed on Seneca's attitude to the principate more generally. Fairweather (1981) 3–26, for example, views Seneca as "a man of his time" and maintains that his son's portrait of him as a truth-telling and dissident historian is primarily indicative of that son's preoccupations, while Canfora (2015) argues that Seneca's work was characterized by "*pietas* republicana" (155; see also 164–172). On Seneca's ideological legacy see recently Petrovičová (2015) and Lentano (2016).

81 See also *supra* nn. 35–41.

82 See Gascou (1984) 274–279 on Suetonius' disregard for pro-principate authors such as Velleius and Josephus, and cf. Townend (1960) 119 "Pliny ... appears ... to have been rendered obsolete almost before he completed his *Histories* by his failure to take a savage enough line about Nero and his predecessors."