

**Tacitus' more negative sceptical representations of
Augustus' political career contrasted to portrayals in
the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio**

MPhil Thesis

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Statement of Candidature

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

The source material cited in this thesis has been legally utilised and duly acknowledged. This thesis does not contain defamatory material.

Graham Fitzpatrick

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All translations of Latin and Greek primary source texts are my own, unless otherwise noted. All primary source texts, which were employed in this thesis, were Loeb editions.

Abstract

This thesis will focus on comparing and contrasting the different representations by Tacitus, Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio about Augustus' political career. Building on extensive scholarly examination of Augustus' political attitudes and behaviours in recent centuries,¹ this work will provide a unique comprehensive analytical discussion of Tacitus' more sceptical explicit and implicit portrayals of the characteristics of Augustus' political career, compared to and contrasted with the more positive, but sometimes ambiguous, depictions found in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

Throughout the entire study, Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' political career will be the main focus. This will be especially evident in Chapter 2 when an extensive analysis of a number of different perspectives on Augustus' political career, found in Tacitus' *Annals*, will be provided. Chapters 2 to 5 will identify key components of Tacitus' own views about Augustus' political career, as distinguished from those of the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

These new comparisons and contrasts between these five different Roman authors will be achieved mostly within the context of thorough examinations of previous scholarly debates about major aspects of Augustus' political career and his associated evolving political system. Also, this study will fill in numerous gaps in previous scholarly discussion and evaluation of these same issues.

¹ Lintott 1992b: 251.

Introduction to methodology, representations of Augustus, the façade theory and Augustus' ambiguity

1.1 Methodology and structure

There has been extensive previous academic research on the individual portrayals by Tacitus, Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio of Augustus' political career. At times, some researchers have aimed to find the supposed "one real Augustus" believed to be located in the texts of Tacitus and/or these other Roman writers. Methodologically, however, this study will not attempt to provide a comprehensive representation of this one "real" Augustus, who was supposedly hidden among all of the extant primary source evidence. Instead this work will explore Tacitus' nuanced evaluative representations of Augustus' political career, which will be newly compared with and contrasted to portrayals of his political activities by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, and by other Romans, primarily Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. Occasionally, it will be necessary to examine some characteristics of Augustus' attitudes and actions which were not particularly political, in order to provide appropriate historical background to these analyses of his political career.

Augustus' *Res Gestae* provided foundational representations of Augustus' political career.² Velleius Paterculus' Latin text was written close to the time of Augustus' principate

² The *Res Gestae* has been described as an inscription (Cooley 2009: 2). Brunt and Moore maintained that the *Res Gestae* was a more elaborate development of the *elogia* which were given at funerals among Romans (Brunt and Moore 1967: 2-3). Ramage stated: "Much has been written about the form of the *Res Gestae* without any real agreement on the matter" (Ramage 1987: 15), but argued that Augustus invented "a unique literary form" (Ramage 1987: 113). Augustus' *Res Gestae* can be described as a form of self-eulogy. Because Augustus probably wrote in the genre of self-panegyric or *eulogia* or something similar, to some extent this explains the *Res Gestae*'s lack of criticism of Augustus.

and contains relevant depictions of the same. Suetonius' biography of Augustus and Cassius Dio's extensive commentary on Octavian/Augustus' political career are included here, despite the fact they wrote after Tacitus composed his texts. Both Suetonius and Cassius Dio are significant sources for the present study because they mirror some previous Roman oral and written traditions about Augustus, despite the fact that these two authors both had their own personal political agendas and were influenced by the different historical contexts of their own particular eras.³

In this present study, 481 references in footnotes mentioned Tacitus, 55 referred to Velleius, 113 cited Augustus' *Res Gestae*, 104 mentioned Suetonius and 96 referred to Cassius Dio. These figures are reflected in the fact that Tacitus is the main Roman author discussed in this thesis and Tacitus' perspectives on numerous issues related to Augustus' political career are contrasted to the views of these other four Roman writers. Despite the fact that these other four writers each play a less significant role in this thesis than does Tacitus, they each provide important representations of Augustus' political career which can be compared and contrasted to Tacitus' evaluations of the same.⁴

In this thesis, there will be some brief mentions of specific coins, portraits and buildings, which provide depictions of Augustus' political career, but they will be few in number. This study will also employ parts of the works of Strabo,⁵ and Roman writers such as Appian and Seneca the Younger, but these will only have minor roles in the comparing and contrasting of the various public portrayals of Augustus found in the Roman historical, literary and cultural tradition, to Tacitus' evaluative portrayals of the same images. Tacitus obviously would not have read the texts of Suetonius and Cassius Dio, but he would have almost certainly come into contact with the oral and written historical, literary and cultural

³ For analyses of the influence of historical contextual influences on Cassius Dio, refer to Alföldy 1974: 92-93 and 98-109; Bering-Staschewski 1981:125-134; De Blois 1984: 358-377.

⁴ It can be argued that throughout his texts, Tacitus demonstrated a more perceptive, critical and sceptical type of mind than did Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. This would also partly explain the differences among their respective representations of Augustus' political career.

⁵ Strabo was born in Pontus but was educated in Rome and possibly had Roman citizenship.

tradition from which these two later authors drew. Tacitus' direct and indirect commentary on Augustus was composed by him in response to these traditions. Tacitus' awareness of these traditions is evident in his *Histories* 1.1, *Annals* 1.1 and in his mentions of previous Roman historians such as Sallust, Livy, Pliny the Elder, Cluvius Rufus and Fabius Rusticus.⁶

Augustus' political career began in 44 B.C. and ended at his death in A.D. 14. His principate began in 28/27 B.C. and also finished in A.D. 14. Chapters 2 to 5 will focus both on Augustus' earlier political career and on his principate, but in each chapter the focus will mainly be on Augustus' principate.

On occasion, this present work will briefly look at the relevant aspects of the genres⁷ and associated structures and forms of the texts of Tacitus, Velleius, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Augustus' *Res Gestae*, but this will not be a primary focus of this study.⁸ To have made genre a major emphasis of this present thesis would have required at least one extra chapter. This, however, would have resulted in this thesis far exceeding the word limit.

The term "historiography" is difficult to fully define, but generally historiography refers to the study of the theories, methodologies and techniques of historical scholarly research, and to the accumulated body of critical debates found in the secondary and/or

⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.69, 3.30, 4.34, 13.20, 14.2, 15.53, 15.61, *Agricola* 10 and *Histories* 3.28.

⁷ Ryall noted: "Genre can be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual art products, and which supervise both their construction by artist and their reading by audiences" (Lacey 2000: 132). Lacey argued "...it must be remembered that genres 'continually change, modulate and redefine themselves' (Turner, 1993, p. 38)...In addition, genre texts do not offer *everything* that constitutes the genre to which they belong, it is paradigm against which we can assess the way a text is the *same* and *different* from the generic template." (Lacey 2000: 134-135). See the following texts for discussion of genre conventions: Lacey 2000; Neale 1980; Todorov 1990; Berger 1997: 36-37). Formalism, Structuralism and Narratology are three modern literary theories which focus on analyses of the genres, structures, codes and forms of texts.

⁸ For useful discussion of ancient literary genres, see also Rossi 1971: 69-94; Cairns 1972; Conte 1994b. Marincola rightly noted: "...the traditional notion of genre as a fixed and static category has given way to an appreciation of the more complex role that generic tradition and individual innovation play within literary composition" (Marincola 1999a: 281). Tacitus' two texts *Histories* and *Annals* and the text of Cassius Dio are written in various forms of the genre of historical narrative, but the academic debates about the distinguishing characteristics of these texts are unlikely to be ever finally concluded. There are also various scholarly interpretations of the characteristics of the particular type of the genre of biography employed by Suetonius in his writings about Julius Caesar and various Roman emperors (For example, see Luce 1982: 1056-1060; Carter 1982, 2-5; Baldwin 1983: 66-100; Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 8-10 and 66-72; Conte 1994a: 547-549). Also, Yardley and Barrett maintained that it is difficult to assign Velleius' text to any well-established genre (Yardley and Barrett 2011: xxvi). For further discussion of the possible genre employed by Velleius, refer to Woodman 1975a: 2-13, Woodman 1975b: 282-288; Woodman 1977: 28-56; Starr 1981: 162-174; Yardley and Barrett 2011: xxviii-xxix and Cowan 2011: 73-92).

primary sources on any particular topic in the discipline known as history. Historiography also relates to the theories, methodologies and techniques of the writing of history and of the presentation of historical research based on critical analysis, selection of reliable primary and secondary source materials and evaluation based on scholarly methods of criticism. On the basis of the title of this present research, it is erroneous to attempt to categorise this present study as solely an examination of the historiography of Tacitus' representations of Augustus' political career contrasted with only the historiography of the portrayals provided by Velleius, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Augustus' *Res Gestae* of the same matter. This work of research contains both historiography and analyses of particular historical issues related to Augustus' political career. Examples of these specific historical issues are the characteristics of Augustus' political attitudes and behaviours during the era of the Second Triumvirate, during Augustus' sole rule after Actium and during Augustus' principate, the features of the unwritten changing Roman political constitution during the same time periods, and the topics of *libertas*, *dominatio*, *imperium*, *principatus* and *res publica*. It is obvious that each of these issues need to have individual theses devoted to each of them at an appropriate postgraduate level. Despite this, note that in this current thesis, these particular historical issues provide suitable instruments through which the historiographic components of the representations of these five Roman writers can be appropriately examined and contrasted.

The structure of this work is as follows:

This present Chapter 1 will provide essential background information about the representations of Augustus in the extant sources and an associated literature review. This literature review will be supplemented by an ongoing literature review in various footnotes throughout Chapters 2 to 5. Also, this present chapter will supply an introduction to the two foundational concepts of my exploration of Tacitus' and other authors' representations of Augustus' political career: the notions of façade and ambiguity. An extensive literature review relevant to each of these two concepts will also be provided.

Chapter 2 is a foundational chapter. In Chapter 2, we will see that Tacitus did not provide just one view of Augustus' political career in his *Annals*, but instead employed other Romans to present various competing representations of Augustus' political activities. These other Romans were Tacitus' imaginary commentators in *Annals* 1.8.6 at Augustus' funeral, the *prudentes* among Augustus' supporters referred to in *Annals* 1.9, the *prudentes* among Augustus' opponents referred to in *Annals* 1.10 and the Emperor Tiberius. Some key aspects of these sections of *Annals* will be compared and contrasted with relevant sections from Augustus' *Res Gestae*.

Chapter 3 will compare and contrast Tacitus' view of the legal or constitutional characteristics of Augustus' principate with perspectives found in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. This chapter will also examine Tacitus' undermining of Augustus' explicit self-representation as having fulfilled all legal or unwritten constitutional precedents, and will reveal that Tacitus portrayed Augustus' role as *princeps* as a convenient cover for the creation of a form of monarchy and despotism. Chapter 3 will also show that Tacitus attempted to erode the credibility of those representations which depicted Augustus sharing his power with the Senate and with the people of Rome through a form of partnership. This chapter will end with an exploration of what Tacitus believed were a number of major non-constitutional aspects of Augustus' principate.

Chapter 4 will examine depictions of Augustus related to the Roman concepts of kingship and despotism (*regnum, dominatio*) and freedom (*libertas*). This chapter will also explore Tacitus' rhetorical disclaimers and his attitudes to supposedly “moderate good” *principes*.

In Chapter 5, it will be demonstrated that contrary to numerous other Roman writers, especially Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, and the views of some modern scholars, Tacitus distinguished between the old Roman Republic (*vetus res publica*) and other types of *res publica*, including the form of *res publica* occurring under the

Augustan principate. It is necessary to establish this Tacitean foundational distinction in order to understand some of Tacitus' attempted undermining of other portrayals of Augustus, which were found in other ancient sources. This chapter will also examine the representation of Augustus as the restorer and saviour of Rome's *res publica*, and four competing theories about Augustus' principate: the view that the (old) *res publica* continued during Augustus' principate, the perspective that Augustus really restored the (old) *res publica*, the theory that Augustus pretended to restore fully the old *res publica* and various versions of the façade theory. This chapter will also argue that Tacitus alleged that Augustus instituted a façade, which was not only limited to the constitutional characteristics of his government, but also was incorporated into many non-constitutional aspects of his principate.

This thesis will uniquely compare and contrast Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' political career to depictions of the same found in Augustus' *Res Gestae* and in the writings of Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

1.2 Not just a detailed critical review and survey of modern scholarship

On the one hand, because the topic of the Augustan principate has been comprehensively debated by large numbers of scholars for many centuries, it is not possible to engage in a thorough examination of the topic of "Tacitus' more negative sceptical representations of Augustus' political career contrasted to portrayals in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio" without an extensive accompanying analysis of the major scholarship relative to this topic over especially the late 1800s, 1900s and 2000s. Without this thorough analysis of secondary sources, this current study would give the false impression that the author was naïvely unaware of many of the previous relevant significant historical debates related to different depictions of Augustus' political career.

On the other hand, because of the comprehensive examination of modern scholarship on the topic of Augustus' political career found in this present piece of research, it could be concluded that this study is essentially a detailed critical review and survey of modern scholarship on particular Roman evaluations of Augustus' political career. This, however, would be a false conclusion because this study also provides extensive historical analyses of most of the passages relevant to Augustus' political career in Tacitus' texts and of many of the most important passages relevant to Augustus' political attitudes and behaviours in the texts of the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, frequently accompanied by close examinations of these passages in Latin. Also, note that no other previous academic texts in English, German, French or any other language on Augustus' political career, have provided such a comprehensive analysis of Tacitus' more negative sceptical representations of Augustus' political career contrasted to portrayals in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio on the same matter, and has arrived precisely at all the same conclusions. Previous scholarly studies have either focused on one of these Roman writers' evaluations of Augustus' political career, or despite providing contrasts between the discussions of two or more of these Roman authors on this same topic, these modern studies have not done this in relation to all these five Roman authors together as comprehensively as found in this current study.

1.3 Various representations of Augustus

In this thesis, the words "representation", "portrayal," "depiction" and "image" will be used as synonyms and will have as a general meaning: "the view of one or more people about the real or supposedly 'real' characteristics of a person or object." When commenting on a "self representation" or "self-portrayal", this work will be referring to the features of the perspective(s) which a particular person conveys to others about the nature of his/her own

character, attitudes and behaviour, and not necessarily to the view which this specific person actually has of himself/herself. The word "image" can refer to physical objects such as statues, monuments and paintings which visually depicted Augustus, but in this thesis, the word "image" will be used to refer to the images of Augustus in the minds of other Romans. The latter usage of the word "image" will be a synonym of the words "representation", "portrayal" and "depiction".

In the following, the expression "Augustus' principate" will be used to describe the evolving political system which he instituted, regardless of whether he or any Roman author, who wrote in the Augustan era, identified Augustus' political system as the *principatus*. At later dates, both Tacitus and Velleius Paterculus conveniently employed the word *principatus* to describe Augustus' political system, even though this term by itself can never fully adequately explain all aspects of the same political system.⁹ Contrary to Cicero's earlier definition, this thesis will not employ the word *principatus* to refer to a political function which was different from being a singular political ruler.¹⁰

There has been comprehensive scholarly research in especially English and German about the various physical images of Augustus depicted in Roman calendars,¹¹ monuments, statues, paintings, coins, public and some private buildings, religious temples, architecture, topography, religious rituals, the layout of the city of Rome itself, military triumphs, and other primarily visual phenomena.¹² Augustus agreed to have various monuments built in Rome to

⁹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1 and Velleius Paterculus 2.89.6 and 2.124.2.

¹⁰ Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.2.6-7.

¹¹ Beard and Wallace-Hadrill have demonstrated how symbolism in Roman calendars was used to develop particular public images of Augustus (Beard 1987: 1-13 and Wallace-Hadrill 1987: 221-230).

¹² Modern discussion of these matters is plentiful. For example see Roller 2001: 3-13 and 213-285; Smith 1996: 31-47; Elsner 1996: 32-53; Boschung 1993; Hesberg 1988: 93-115; Zanker 1988; Reinhold 1980: 36-50; Charles-Picard 1968: 15-42; Moretti 1948. For many other similar academic studies on these topics, refer to my later section "Additional secondary sources about various physical images of Augustus" on pages 260-264. On the question of whether Roman coins were instruments of the propaganda of Roman emperors, see also Wallace-Hadrill 1981: 316; Belloni 1974: 997ff and Levick 1982: 104-116, especially 107. Wiseman has highlighted how symbolism found in aspects of architecture and topography was employed to foster various public images of Augustus (Woodman and West 1984: 117-128 and Wiseman 1987: 293-313). Refer also to Tanner 2000, 18-50 for an examination of Roman portraiture which emphasised interpreting art not as objects but rather as mediums serving the political purposes of strengthening the relationships between individual Romans and the Senate and the collective Roman people, and the bonds between political dynasts and their clients, and to Hölkeskamp 2005: 249-271 for a relevant review of a text on the roots during the old Roman Republic of historical commemoration

present various public images which would encourage many Romans to exalt and honour him.¹³ Zanker noted that visual images of Augustus were also created by clothing, state ceremonies, and Augustus' forms of social intercourse and conduct.¹⁴ Even the funerals of the Roman emperors created visual images of them.¹⁵ These mainly visual sources were almost totally dominated by the images of Augustus created by Augustus and his supporters.

Virtually every day in the Augustan era, individual Romans were confronted with at least some of the following: official government pronouncements, letters, notices, the writings of government bureaucrats, writings of poets and historians, statues, paintings, monuments honouring Augustus, buildings and temples which Augustus had ordered to be erected or restored, public triumphs honouring Augustus, the public religious activities of Augustus, Augustus providing grain for the Roman plebeians, the apparent characteristics of Augustus' dealings with consuls and other public office bearers, and Augustus providing theatrical shows, gladiatorial sports, exhibitions of athletes and wild beast hunts. Also throughout the Augustan era, Romans would have engaged in the production and reception of many verbal texts which either focused on Augustus or at least contained a subsidiary reference to him.¹⁶ These representations of Augustus would have contained political and non-political elements, but note that even the non-political elements usually carried some type of political overtones.

in Roman visual arts. For an examination of the ideas and language found in what some scholars would classify as the propaganda of Emperors Augustus to Commodus in coins and art, refer to Fears 1980a: 98-109. Refer also to Section III "Bildnis und Skulptur" and Section IV "Bildpropaganda" in *Kaiser Augustus und die Verlorene Republik*, 1988: 93-528. This valuable text of 637 pages was the result of an exhibition in Berlin on Augustus and the lost Roman Republic.

¹³ For example, Rehak argued that the main aim of the four monuments: the Mausoleum, Horologium-Solarium, Ara Pacis and Ustrinum on the Campius Martius in Rome, was to glorify Augustus' birth, life, achievements and death (Rehak 2006: 146). Ovid closely linked Augustus' private residence with the *Ara Pacis* and the Roman gods (Ovid, *Fasti* 1.709-722). For studies on the *Ara Pacis* see Moretti 1948; Ryberg 1949: 79-101; Weinstock 1960: 44-58; Bender 1985: 1-16 and Settis 1988: 400-425, Elsner 1991: 50-91; Billows 1993: 80-92. In his *Res Gestae* 12, Augustus referred to consecrating an altar to *Pax Augusta* in the Campius Martius. See also Ingholt 1969: 176-187 and 304-318; Eisner 1979: 319-324; Elsner 1996: 32-53.

¹⁴ Zanker 1988: 3. Contrary to Zanker, Stevenson focused on the ambiguity of the visual images of Augustus in ancient Rome after 27 B.C. (Stevenson 1997: 125-153).

¹⁵ For contrasting images of Augustus' funeral, see Tacitus, *Annals* 1.8 and 11, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 100.2-4 and Cassius Dio 56.37-38. Refer also to Davies 2000.

¹⁶ Note Zanker's relevant comments on the responses of Romans to the various images which the Augustan regime created (Zanker 1988: 274). For other useful articles on Augustus, see Edmondson 2009 and Ando 2000.

It may have been true that Augustus and Maecenas rarely if ever explicitly commanded or even asked contemporary poets,¹⁷ artists, sculptors, coin producers, historians and other writers to create materials which were in agreement with Augustus' favoured self-representations. Note, however, in his *Histories* 1.1 and *Annals* 1.1 Tacitus strongly implied that there were significant obvious and more subtle social pressures created by monarchical or despotic governments which overtly or covertly reward compliance, even if they did not openly punish non-compliance.¹⁸

Kienast claimed that Augustus was a master of propaganda who knew how to use various media to propagate his new monarchy,¹⁹ but Zanker more astutely asserted that in Rome in the Augustan era, the "complex interrelationship of the establishment of Augustus' monarchy, the transformation of society, and the creation of a whole new method of visual communication" was not simply a propaganda machine at work but was instead "the interplay of the image that the emperor himself projected and the honours bestowed on him more or less spontaneously, a process that evolved naturally over long periods of time."²⁰ Similarly, Roller convincingly argued that the creation of the various representations of emperors, such as Augustus, involved a process of competitive dialogue, negotiations and power struggles among various Roman individuals and groups who invented these different portrayals of each emperor, about the different ways in which the emperor would employ his power to intervene or might potentially intervene in various circumstances in ways most advantageous to themselves.²¹ Kennedy and Wallace-Hadrill came to similar conclusions.²² It is likely that

¹⁷ Refer to Appendix 3 for discussion of the attitudes of the poets Virgil and Horace to the Emperor Augustus.

¹⁸ Sailor 2008: 41.

¹⁹ Kienast 1982: 214-252. For dissertational discussions of what the authors classified as Augustan propaganda rather than publicity, refer to Becher 1969 and Johnson 1976. See also Freyburger-Galland 2009: 17-30; Enenkel and Pfeijffer 2005 (See chapter on Augustus); Weber and Zimmermann 2003. According to Cassius Dio, Tiberius said at the time of Augustus' death, that some of Augustus' achievements in the civil wars were depicted in many paintings and books (Cassius Dio 56.37.4-6).

²⁰ Zanker 1988: 3. In his review of Zanker's *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* and its previous German original *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*, Wallace-Hadrill noted that German and Italian rather than British historical scholarship has produced the most advanced and sophisticated research into the manipulation of the physical environment in Augustan Rome (Wallace-Hadrill 1989a, 157).

²¹ Roller 2001: 6. Similarly, Kloft argued that the ideology of the principate was a mixed product of Augustus using traditional aristocratic images of *res publica* in his attempts to legitimise his reign, and of the ideas and imagined expectations of Roman citizens about his principate (Kloft 1984: 311) For Rich's criticism of Kienast's

some of Augustus' representations were planned beforehand, but many others were developed in a slow patient process of trial and error, through which the opinions of Roman citizens were tested in different situations as the years progressed.²³

The social construction of the various representations of Augustus by Roman senators, nobles, equestrians, plebeians, legions, the Praetorian Guard, writers, theatre actors, the towns and cities of Italy, the provinces and various other individuals were attempts by these groups and individuals to facilitate the creation of a political system which would result in Augustus employing his political and/or military powers to fulfil what they regarded as their personal or collective needs and wants. The public justification of Augustus' political and military powers was a work in progress²⁴ which was regularly moulded and amended by Augustus, his closest supporters and Romans in general. We see evidence of the ongoing dialogue between Augustus and the Roman people about how he was to be publicly represented when Romans proposed that he be a dictator and consul for life and be called "good and just master (*dominum aequum et bonum*)," but he rejected all three,²⁵ whereas when they labelled him *pater patriae*, he accepted this title with the accompanying public image.²⁶

This thesis will examine Tacitus' explicit and implicit evaluations of the different public representations about Augustus, compared to and contrasted with the portrayals of

view that changes in Roman society and culture were primarily a result of Augustus' intentional personal choices in comprehensively preplanning his policies rather than Augustus cooperating with his subjects in determining the ideology and imagery of his government, see Rich 2004: 175. Wallace-Hadrill made similar criticisms of the earlier 1982 edition of Kienast's *Augustus: Prinzeps und Monarch* (Wallace-Hadrill 1985, 246).

²² Kennedy convincingly argued: "The power of Augustus was the collective invention, the symbolic embodiment of the conflicting desires, incompatible ambitions and aggressions of the Romans, the instrumental expression of a complex network of dependency, repression and fear" (Kennedy 1994, 35). Wallace-Hadrill made similar assertions about the purposes of the representations which the Roman senatorial and equestrian elite created of contemporary emperors (Wallace-Hadrill 1981, 318). In his writing *To Polybius on Consolation* 7.1-4, 8.1-2, 12.3-5, 13.1-4 and 14.1-2, Seneca's base flattery towards the Roman Emperor Claudius is evidence of the fact that some Roman writers produced political discourses about various emperors, partly with the aim of encouraging these emperors to behave in ways which these writers desired. Seneca wrote his *To Polybius on Consolation* during his exile by Emperor Claudius (Basore 1970, Introduction, viii). Part of Seneca's flattery involved emphasising Claudius' supposed mercy (*clementia*), justice (*iustitia*) and compassion or tenderheartedness (*miser ricordium*). Seneca made these comments in the context of referring to Claudius saving his life from execution and Seneca's desire to be granted a respite from exile (Seneca the Younger, *To Polybius on Consolation* 13.2-4).

²³ Scullard 1982: 208.

²⁴ Ando 2003: 135.

²⁵ *Res Gestae* 5 and Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52 and 53.1.

²⁶ *Res Gestae* 35.

Augustus found in other ancient writers, primarily the *Res Gestae*,²⁷ Velleius Paterculus,²⁸ Suetonius²⁹ and Cassius Dio.³⁰ Significant vestiges of the actual public representations, which were created by Augustus and his officials throughout his life, were depicted in parts of the

²⁷ For useful commentary and discussion on Augustus' *Res Gestae*, see Mommsen 1883; Ehrenberg, 1925, 189-213; Brunt and Moore, 1967; Canali 1973: 151-175; Braunert 1974: 343-358; Heuss 1975: 55-95; Giebel 1975; Urban 1979: 59-74; Hellegouarc'h and Jodry 1980: 803-816; Yavetz 1984: 1-36, Ramage 1987; Chapter 26 "The *Res Gestae* of Augustus" in Sherk 1988: 41-51; Wolters 1988: 197-206; Simon 1993; Turpin 1994: 427-437; Damon 1995; Wallace 2000; Scheid 2007 and. Cooley 2009. For a brief critique of Ramage's text, refer to Levick 1989: 204. Von Wilamowitz-Mollendorf naïvely asserted that whatever Augustus wrote in his *Res Gestae* was true (von Wilamowitz-Mollendorf 1886: 625) and Nicolet argued that the *Res Gestae* "uses...historical and political concepts that were precise and, I would say indisputable" (Nicolet 1991: 17). For further discussion on the ongoing debate about the reliability and historical truthfulness of Augustus' *Res Gestae*, see *The Cambridge Ancient History* Volume 10, 1952: 593; Benario 1975a: 301; Bosworth 1999: 1; Ridley 2003: 159-227; and Rowe 2007: 273. Syme rightly warned that it would be imprudent to employ Augustus' *Res Gestae* as a certain guide for history and noted that the *Res Gestae* is just as instructive in what it leaves out as what it includes (Syme 1939: 523). For a survey of scholarship on the *Res Gestae* from 1914 to 1941, see Volkmann 1942b: 1-94. Cooley noted that the *Res Gestae* "offers an invaluable insight into the political ideology of the Augustan era" but is "not the place to look for an objective account of Augustus career, least of all in its early stages" (Cooley 2009: 2 and 35). Guven accurately described Augustus' *Res Gestae* as "a monument of imperial image for all" (Guyen 1998: 30-45).

²⁸ For analysis of Velleius Paterculus' text and/or the images of Augustus in it, see Lana 1952; Dihle 1955: 637-659; Hellegouarc'h 1964: 669-684; Silverberg 1967; Woodman 1969: 564-566; McGonagle 1970; Sumner 1970: 257-297; Woodman 1975a, 1-25; Woodman 1975b, 272-306; Syme 1978: 45-63; Starr 1980, 287-301; J. Hellegouarc'h and Jodry 1980: 803-816; Starr 1981: 162-164; Hellegouarc'h 1982; De Monte 1999: 121-135; Christ 2003, 61-80; Woodman 1983: 1-294; Kober 2000; Sanchex-Manzano 2003: 343-356; Giebel 2004; Ker 2007: 351-354; Lobur 2007: 211-230; Schmitzer 2007: 399-417; Gowing 2007: 411-418; Cogitore, 2009: 51-72; Cowan 2011. For prudent evaluation of Tacitus' possible employment of the texts of Velleius Paterculus and other previous historians in the first century, refer to Klingner 1958: 194-206. Despite Syme and Klingner strongly criticising Velleius' qualities as an historian (Syme 1933:147 n.3; Syme 1939: 393 n.1, and 488; Syme 1956: 262; Syme 1958: 367; Syme 1995: 289 and 323; Klingner 1958: 194), Woodman, Sumner and Yardley and Barrett have attempted to redeem Velleius' reputation, but to what degree the latter scholars have been successful is open to debate (Dorey 1975: 18 and Woodman 1977: 51-56; Sumner 1979 64-68; Yardley and Barrett 2011: xxxi-xxxvi). Tacitus' strong rebukes, of previous Roman historians falsifying the histories the Emperors Tiberius Caligula, Claudius and Nero because of cowardice, and after the Battle of Actium twisting historical truth through flattery, are difficult to totally discount. Velleius was probably one of the flattering historians whom Tacitus wrote about in *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 1.1. For Levick's review of A.J. Woodman's, *Velleius Paterculus: The Caesarean and Augustan Narrative* (2.41-93), see Levick 1986: 53-56.

²⁹ For discussion of Suetonius and his text, refer to Hanslik 1954: 99-144; Steidle 1963; Della Corte 1967; Townsend 1967: 79-111; Flach 1972: 273-289; Bradley 1976: 245-253; Malcovati 1977: 187-195; Cizek 1977; Lounsbury 1987: 1-179; Syme 1980, 104-128; Grimal 1981: 2-9; Gascou 1984; Birley 1984: 245-251; Carter 1982; Townsend 1982: 1049-1061; Baldwin 1983; Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 1-216. For a worthwhile survey of scholarship on Suetonius from 1938 to 1987, see Benediktson 1993: 377-446. For an evaluation of Augustus' supposed purposes and exploits in particularly Suetonius' *Divus Augustus* and *Res Gestae*, see Reinhold 1980: 36-50. One of Suetonius' aims appears to have been to undermine some of Tacitus' earlier claims about Augustus (For example, compare Suetonius, *Tiberius* 21.2-6 to Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10 in relation to Augustus' attitudes to Tiberius). It can be argued that one of the weaknesses of Suetonius' biographies of Roman emperors was that despite narrating various political incidents involving emperors, Suetonius provided little explicit historical analysis of imperial power beyond that which illustrated features of the particular emperors' characters (Wiedemann, 2000, 530-531).

³⁰ For significant commentary on and assessments of Cassius Dio's attitudes to Emperor Augustus, refer to Millar 1966, 83-118; Manuwald 1979; Swan 1987: 272-291; Ian Scott-Kilvert 1987: 25-29; Reinhold 1988; Rich 1989: 86-110; Rich 1990; Reinhold and Swan 1990: 155-173; Pelling 1997 117-144; Swan 2004. Carter asserted that Cassius Dio' representations of Augustus are generally favourable after the civil wars ended (Ian Scott-Kilvert 1987: 25). Millar argued that Cassius Dio' attitude to the Augustan principate was a mixture of acceptance and indignation (Millar 1966: 102). Millar asserted that Cassius Dio did not "waste much time on praise of Augustus" (Millar 1966: 102), but this evaluation relates more accurately to Dio's explicit praise of Augustus rather than to the seeming implicit approval behind many of his comments about Augustus during his principate.

Res Gestae, Velleius, Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio. In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus provided a series of very positive self representations. Velleius also presented a very positive view of Augustus and never once significantly criticized him.³¹ Despite occasionally criticising Augustus, Suetonius generally had a high opinion of his attitudes and behaviours³² and Cassius Dio generally portrayed Augustus as a role model emperor, despite being critical of aspects of his behaviour in 44 B.C. and as a triumvir.

The next section will introduce the reader to the topic of Tacitus' numerous representations of Augustus.

1.4 The numerous representations of Augustus by Tacitus

Despite there being numerous criticisms in the scholarly literature since the time of Voltaire of various aspects of Tacitus' texts,³³ some of these seemingly valid, Tacitus' works are a necessity for any attempted complex and nuanced analysis of the various representations about Augustus' principate. Galinsky criticized Tacitus' evaluations of Augustus' principate.³⁴

³¹ Velleius 2.89.1-6. Also, Velleius tried to blame totally Mark Antony and Lepidus for the murders of Cicero and many others through the dreaded proscriptions, thereby supposedly excusing Augustus (Velleius 2.66.1-2). Velleius was a strong supporter of the Caesarean faction in Roman politics. This was evident when Velleius labelled Julius Caesar a great man, praised his public entertainments, triumphs and clemency (Velleius 2.56.1-4) and criticised two tribunes of the plebeians for charging Julius Caesar with a desire to set up a *dominatio* (Velleius 2.68.4). Cowan highlighted Velleius' "evident desire to celebrate the achievements of Augustus" (Cowan 2011: Introduction, ix and xi). Similarly, Woodman rightly noted that Velleius was enthusiastic and patriotic towards Emperor Tiberius (Woodman 1977: 55). See Velleius 2.120.1, 2.121.1-2, 2.122.1-2 and 2.123.1-2 for his flattery towards Tiberius.

³² Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1-2, 69.1-2, 72 and 73.

³³ Voltaire 1772: 455; Beesly 1878:146-147; Jerome 1914, Chapter 15; Reid 1921, 195 and 197-198; White, 1932: 44-46; Lofstedt 1948: 4; Miller 1959: 4; Daitz 1960: 33; Dorey 1960: 66-71; Tanner 1969: 99; Dunkle, 1971, 17-18. Meyer made the following accusation against Tacitus: "Nothing more malicious than the portrayal of the last years of Augustus and the overview of his deeds in the introduction to the *Annals* has probably ever been written" (Meyer 1910: 446 n.3). During the 1800's up to the beginning of World War One when scholarly ideas of never-ending progress and future utopias predominated, Tacitus' critique of the political and ethical situations in especially the first century A.D. Roman Empire was rejected by many scholars (Mellor 1993:3-4). For useful general analysis of Tacitus' texts, see Classen 1988: 115-116, Sage 1990: 851-1030 and 1629-1647, and O' Gorman 1997. For the commentary on Tacitus' political positions, see also Mendell 1957: 64-70.

³⁴ Galinsky 1996: 78-79. Lacey asserted that Galinsky manifested an uncritical acceptance of what Augustus said in his *Res Gestae* (Lacey 1998: 16).

Also, Gruen accused Tacitus of having a cynical and prejudiced view of Augustus' reign,³⁵ but the same could be said of the other Roman writers whom Gruen depended on as supposed evidence of his perspectives on Augustus' principate.

Christ argued that Tacitus was the first writer to provide "an essentially negative overall assessment of Augustus."³⁶ It, however, is more accurate to maintain that Seneca's *De Clementia*, which was written prior to the era in which Tacitus authored his texts, and the *Octavia*, which was probably composed prior to the time period in which Tacitus wrote his texts, both include significant criticisms of Augustus' political career, but Tacitus' *Annals* and *Agricola* combined contain a relatively more comprehensive negative sceptical assessment of Augustus' political career than found in either of these texts.³⁷

Scholars have invented all types of overly simple explanations for Tacitus' passionate opposition to the principate as first instituted by Augustus.³⁸ For instance, N. Miller argued that because Tacitus had experienced at close hand the cruel tyrannical behaviour of the Emperor Domitian and how powerless he and all other Romans were to put a stop to such terror, Tacitus had a dislike of rule by emperors.³⁹ Syme more convincingly argued that it is wrong to assert that Tacitus' views were merely or largely the product of his memories of his last years under Emperor Domitian.⁴⁰ It is almost certain from Tacitus' words in *Agricola* 2-3 and 45 that he was deeply affected by Domitian's reign, but there is not enough explicit evidence in the extant sources to claim with certainty that every aspect of Tacitus' views of

³⁵ Gruen 2005: 33.

³⁶ Christ 1978: 470. Similarly, Witte argued strongly that Tacitus adopted a hostile view of Augustus (Witte 1963), and Carter maintained that Tacitus was the first Roman to regard the principate (*principatus*) as being in opposition to the Roman *res publica* (Scott-Kilvert 1987: 3).

³⁷ Despite criticizing Augustus' earlier cruel murders and involvement in civil wars, Seneca praised Augustus' later restrained (*moderatus*) and merciful (*clemens*) behaviours and claimed that Augustus later deserved to be called father (*parens*) of the Roman people (Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.10.3 and 11.1-2). Refer to Appendix 3 for more details about Seneca's *De Clementia* and the *Octavia*.

³⁸ For example, see Tanner 1969, 99.

³⁹ Miller 1973: Introduction xi. For similar perspectives, see Daitz 1960: 33 and Lofstedt 1948: 4.

⁴⁰ Syme 1958, Volume 1, 422. Similarly, Comber insisted that considering we know so little about Tacitus' personal life, it is useless speculating about whether "possible psychological scars left on him by the guilt of the Domitian years" influenced what Tacitus wrote about an emperor (Comber 1996: 213. For a similar view, see Shotter 1988: 225.

Augustus was a product of his experiences with Domitian.⁴¹ Wiedemann argued that many of the issues dealt with by Tacitus are reflections of the politics of the reign of Hadrian.⁴² There is an element of truth in this comment, but Wiedemann does not sufficiently recognise Tacitus' broader comparison of each Roman emperor to what Tacitus regarded as the relevant characteristics of the *mos maiorum* associated with the *vetus res publica*.

Academic analyses of Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus have attempted usually wrongly to deduce accurately Tacitus' supposedly one intended representation of Augustus.⁴³ This present thesis, however, will demonstrate that Tacitus strongly believed that Augustus and his officials specialised in cleverly disseminating or subtly encouraging a number of different sometimes ambiguous, sometimes contradictory and/or occasionally changing public representations about Augustus to the Roman public, who in response developed their own varying mental images of him.⁴⁴

There has been comprehensive scholarly debate about the seeming and actual characteristics of the political and military authority (both in terms of *imperium* and *auctoritas*) and power (*potestas*) of the institution of the principate which Augustus inaugurated.⁴⁵ Scholars like Niese, Kaerst,⁴⁶ Dessau⁴⁷ and Gelzer⁴⁸ claimed that the Roman

⁴¹ For some useful background information about various aspects of life in Flavian Rome, refer to Boyle and Dominik 2003: 1-684.

⁴² Wiedemann 2000: 528-529.

⁴³ Ceausescu was one example of this tendency of some scholars to try to discover what Tacitus supposedly identified as the single image through which Augustus and his followers represented him to the various groups and individuals among Romans and non-Romans in the Roman Empire (Ceausescu 1974: 183-198). Levene claimed that the form and nature of Tacitus' comments encourage readers to try to unite them into one coherent picture (Levene 1997: Introduction xiii).

⁴⁴ Levick asserted that Augustus deliberately continuously maintained a politically ambiguous stance, permitting the Roman people to have many and varied expectations of him (Levick 2010: 15).

⁴⁵ For relevant analysis of the seeming and real features of the political and military authority and power of the principate which Augustus instituted, the relevant literature is plentiful: Von Premerstein 1937; Syme 1939: 313-330 and 509-524; Chilver 1950: 408-435; Last 1947: 157-164; Adcock 1951: 130-135; Crook 1953: 10-12; *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume XI 1954: 404-408; Salmon 1956: 456-478; Rostovtzeff 1960: 162-182; Kunkel 1961: 353-370; Grenade 1961; Brunt 1961a, 236-238; Brunt 1962: 70-73; Staveley 1962: 80-82; Balsdon 1962: 77-80; Adcock 1964; Brunt 1984: 423-444; Earl 1968; Meier 1966; Salmon 1968; Jones 1951: 112-119; Hammond 1968: 25-47 and 54-87; Millar 1968: 265-266; Tanner 1969: 95-99; Jones 1970: 1-175; Millar 1973: 50-67; Lacey 1974: 176-184; Cartledge 1975: 30-40; Alföldi 1971; Millar, 1981: 144-152; Bengtson 1981; Kienast 1982; Badian 1982: 18-41; Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 32-48; Garnsey and Saller 1982; Christ 1979; Millar and Segal 1984; Syme 1986; Ramage 1987; Judge 1987; Mackie 1987: 41-61; Christ 1988; Richardson 1991: 1-9; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill 1993; Galinsky 1996: 3-79; Lacey 1996; Crook 1996: 70-146; Stanton 1998: 281-298; Lacey 1998: 16-32; Bleicken 1990; Raaflaub and Toher 1990; Rich 1990; Strothmann, 2000; Eck 2003; Severy 2003: 158-186; Mackay 2004: 249-259; Ridley 2005: 48-76; Galinsky 2005; Judge 2009: 203-227 and

constitution in 27 B.C. was monarchic. Some scholars like Meyer, Hammond, Judge, Millar and Stanton, however, have conjectured that Augustus ensured the constitution of the old Roman Republic functioned totally or almost completely unhindered during at least the early part of his principate.⁴⁹ For example, Millar maintained that Augustus did not restore the old Roman *res publica* but the political institutions of the *res publica* largely remained active during the rule of the Triumvirs Octavian, Antony and Lepidus and then during the reign of Augustus as *princeps*,⁵⁰ and Stanton postulated that when looking back, Tacitus did not believe that Augustus brought about any major constitutional change in Roman politics.⁵¹

Scholars such as Gibbon, Scott, Von Premerstein, Carcopino, Rostovtzeff, Syme, Scullard, Grant, Jones, Brunt, Bengtson, Hohl, Salmon, Kunkel, Kelly, Lacey, Cartledge, Wellesley, Charles-Picard, Bringman, Benario, Meier, Ramage, Brunt and Moore, Moles, Mackay and Keaveney have argued from sometimes different stances that Augustus pretended to have restored literally the old Roman Republic.⁵² Scholars such as Millar, Judge,

Starr 2010: 296-298. In 1928, Rostovtzeff asserted that during the previous 50 years, opposing scholars had wrongly hypothesised that Augustus' political system was solely a monarchy or solely a restoration of the old Republic or solely a dyarchy or partnership between the supposedly two independent authorities of princeps and Senate (Rostovtzeff 1960: 166-167). Refer also to B. Witte's classic dissertation *Tacitus uber Augustus*, 1963. From worthwhile analysis of the views of Mommsen, Wickert, Beranger, Gelzer, Kunkel, Syme, Vittinghoff, Alföldy, Zanker and Christ, refer to Chapter 2 of Winterling 2009.

⁴⁶ Niese 1910: 241ff; Kaerst 1929: 653ff (both these entries cited in Kolbe 1969: 76-77).

⁴⁷ Volume 1 of Hermann Dessau's *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit* is devoted to the reign of Augustus. In it, Dessau rightly rejected the theory that Augustus' principate was a diarchy and insisted that Augustus was a despot right from the start (Dessau 1924: 39ff). See Marsh's comment on Dessau's view (Marsh 1927: Preface vii).

⁴⁸ Gelzer 1923: 147-195.

⁴⁹ Meyer 1903: 385ff; Meyer 1922: 176 and 189; Hammond 1933: 4-5, 21ff and 195-197, Hammond 1940: 24 Hammond 1956: 457; Judge 2009: 223; Stanton 1998: 281, 287 and 297. In a modified version of the view that the Roman Republic continued throughout all of Augustus' reign, Boak claimed that Augustus aimed to retain the old Roman Republican constitution as much as practically possible while personally maintaining an immensely broader scope of functions than any other Roman magistrate, but supposedly not being an autocrat (Boak 1955: 264 and 266). This perspective was not a form of the façade theory, but note that numerous versions of the façade theory include the notion that Augustus retained as much of the old Roman Republican constitution as he believed was necessary to maintain his political façade.

⁵⁰ Millar 1973: 50, 53-54, 61 and 67. Millar qualified this by asserting that the Second Triumvirate was more reliant upon Republican political institutions than were the political regimes of Julius Caesar and of Augustus Caesar (Millar 1973: 67). Castritius criticised Millar's arguments (Castritius 1982: 9-10).

⁵¹ Stanton 1998: 281, 287 and 297.

⁵² Gibbon 2000: 73; Scott 1925: 90; von Premerstein 1937; Carcopino 1934: 153-155; Rostovtzeff 1960: 39, 166 and 171; Syme 1939: 314, 318, 323-324, 328, 330, 372-373, 516 and 522; Scullard 1982: 211 (Even though Scullard referred to Augustus' principate as "a restored republic" which disguised his predominant military power and the ultimate sanction of his authority (211), he also said that it would be preferable to state that Augustus had "restored 'constitutional government' rather than 'the Republic'"(212)); Grant 1949: 102; Jones, 1951: 112; Chapter 4 entitled "The Restoration of the Republic" in Jones 1970: 44-61. (Also, see pages 79 and 83-84); Brunt 1962: 70; Jones 1965: 50, 79 and 83; Brunt 1966: 86-87; Bengtson 1967: 254; Hohl, 1947: 114-

Woodman, Stockton, Zanker, Crook, Galinsky, Stanton, Shotter and Gruen have opposed this view.⁵³ Alternatively, Mommsen, Pelham, Meyer, Hirschfeld, Kornemann, Siber, Canali and Eder hypothesised that Augustus actually restored the Roman Republic,⁵⁴ while Judge argued against this perspective.⁵⁵ Scholars such as Mitteis, Schonbauer, Buchan, Marsh, Kolbe, de Francisci, Henry Stuart Jones and Adcock presented intermediate viewpoints between the theory that Augustus actually restored the old Roman Republic and the opposing view that Augustus pretended to have restored the old Roman Republic.⁵⁶ Wallace-Hadrill argued that

115; Salmon 1968: 10-12 (Earlier in 1956, Salmon argued that the expression *rem publicam restituit* found in the *Praenestine Fasti ad 13 January* should be translated as "he restored constitutional government" and not "he restored the Republic", something which Salmon emphasized that Augustus "most certainly did not do." Also, Salmon maintained that the Roman people enthusiastically and the Roman Senate more begrudgingly permitted Augustus to establish a new monarchical form of government instead of reviving the old republican constitution {Salmon 1956: 457-458}.); Kunkel 1961: 359-360; Kelly 1969: 179 and 189; Lacey 1974: 184; Cartledge 1975: 30-40; Wellesley 1975: 1-2 and 7; Charles-Picard 1968: 15-16 and 40; Bringmann 1977: 222; Bringmann 1980: 354-357; Benario 1983: 10; Meier 1990: 66-68 and 70; Ramage, 1987: 38-40 and 54-57; Brunt and Moore 1967: 9 and 16; Moles 1998: 169; Mackay, 2004: 251; Keaveney 2007: 98- 99. Some scholars refer to Augustus restoring the *res publica*, but did not clarify what they meant by this (Gowing 2005: 4-6 and Bloomer in Cowan 2011: 98).

⁵³For example, Gruen argued that the so-called First Settlement of 27 B.C. was "in no meaningful sense a restoration of the Republic' and neither did Augustus and any spokesman for him claim it was, nor did any extant official document, poet or prose writer of the Augustan era employ the expression *res publica restituta* about Augustus' political activities (Gruen 2005: 34-35). See also Millar 1968: 265-266; Millar, 1973: 50-67; Judge 1974: 279-311; Woodman 1983: 254; Stockton 1988: 150, 154 and 157; Zanker 1988: 100; Crook 1996: 70-146; Galinsky 1996: 42-79; Stanton 1998: 281-298. Shotter referred to Augustus turning the old republic into a new monarchy, which involved "the evolution from the 'old republic' to a 'restored republic'" and with the principle being "thoroughly traditional" and manifesting spirit of the founding fathers of the old republic (Shotter 2003: 139-140). Shotter's comments are unclear because he seems to have suggested that the "restored republic" was figurative by putting it in inverted commas, but then he later emphasised how much the Augustan principate was supposedly founded on Republican principles, despite being a monarchy.

⁵⁴ Mommsen 1887: Volume II, Part 2, and Volume III, 1252ff; Pelham 1911, 31-32; Meyer, "Kaiser Augustus", *Kleine Schriften*, I, 1924: 441-492; Hirschfeld 1905: 466ff; Kornemann 1938: 91; Siber 1940: 73f; Canali 1973: 170; Eder 1990: 88, 102-104 and 108.

⁵⁵ Judge 1974: 279-311.

⁵⁶ Mitteis 1908: 352; Schonbauer 1927: 264-318; Buchan 1937: 149-150 and 159-160; Kolbe 1969: 37-65; De Francisci 1929: 13ff; Jones in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 10, 1952: 127-132 (especially 132) and Adcock 1952b: 587-590 and Adcock 1959: 74, 76, 80 and 84-85. For example, Buchan claimed that the Augustan principate was neither a monarchy nor a republic but was instead a mixed constitution or as a subtle blend of Roman magistracy and Hellenistic monarchy (Buchan, 1937: 149-150 and 159-160). Buchan argued that Augustus aimed "to restore all of the Republic that would work" or to preserve those aspects of Republican political institutions which still had vitality and to adapt them to new purposes (Buchan, 139 and 149). Jones argued that Mitteis was close to the truth when he asserted that Augustus did not so much discard the constitutional forms of the old Republic but instead added the imperial administration to them (*The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 10, 1952: 132 and Mitteis 1908: 352). Adcock claimed that Augustus intended that the old Roman Republic continue to be a reality during his principate as much as possible, and claimed that it was inaccurate to describe Augustus' constitutional status as being a military monarch (Adcock 1952b: 587-588). Adcock postulated that the Augustan principate was Republican in some real and formal ways but had breached the old Republican Constitution and was not a regime of *Senatus populusque Romanus*, a government run solely by the Senate and people of Rome (Adcock 1952b: 589-590). Similarly, on the basis of his assumption that Augustus instituted a dyarchy or partnership with the Roman Senate in January 27 B.C., the Republic was "officially restored" in 27 B.C. and this "restored republic began to function with comparative freedom" in 22 B.C., Marsh claimed Augustus was forced to transform the principate into a slightly veiled despotism and to turn the restored republic into a sham, because he found that the administration of the Republic by the Senate began

the government of Augustus manifested elements of both façade and serious republicanism,⁵⁷ and was "part republican and part autocratic."⁵⁸

This thesis will demonstrate in Chapter 5 that Tacitus did not approve of any alternative version of the theory, supposedly proven by the writings of other Roman writers, that the old Roman Republic (*vetus res publica*) was fully or almost completely operating during the reigns of the oligarchic Triumvirate (this obviously including Octavian/Augustus) or of Augustus after the Battle of Actium. In Chapter 5, this study will also show that Tacitus never explicitly supported any of the alternative public images of Augustus, in reality or as a pretence, fully restoring the old Roman *res publica*, as supposedly represented in Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34.1, Velleius 2.89.3-4 and in the written and oral sources which Suetonius' *Divus Augustus* 28.1 and Cassius Dio's text later drew off.

While there have been scholars who have analysed Tacitus' attitudes to these issues, this thesis provides a unique series of comparisons and contrasts between Tacitus' representations of these issues and the portrayals of the same issues found in the writings of other Romans.

The next section will provide an introduction to the façade theory and the different contributions of Tacitus, Cassius Dio and Appian to this theory.

1.5 Introduction to the façade theory

The relevant sources contain compelling evidence that Tacitus portrayed Augustus' political career and principate mostly more negatively and sceptically than did the *Res Gestae*,

to badly affect his own supposedly separate administration (Marsh 1927: 230, 241 and 243). Marsh also argued that because from the time of Marius, the Roman army had no real loyalty towards the Roman Senate, Augustus was limited in what he was able to restore to the Senate (Marsh 1927: 220). Shotter asserted that the principate of Augustus was an evolution from the old Republic to a restored Republic and was founded on principles which were thoroughly traditional and showed that "the spirit of the Republic's founding fathers lived on" (Shotter 2003: 140. See also Shotter 1991: 3263-3328).

⁵⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1985b: 250 and Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 45 and 48. Wallace-Hadrill also wrote that the restoration of the Roman Republic by Augustus was muffled with its hypocrisy (Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 140).

⁵⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 32.

Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. As will be demonstrated especially in Chapters 2 to 5, when Tacitus identified what he believed were numerous negative characteristics of Augustus' political career, two of the undesirable features were façade and ambiguity. This section will provide a brief introduction to Tacitus' representations of the Augustan principate as a façade. The next section will focus on Augustus' alleged ambiguity.

Suetonius recorded that on the last day of his life, Augustus recognised that throughout his life he had been like an actor on the stage playing a part and he asked his friends whether it appeared to them that he had played the farce (or sham or pretence) of life (*mimum vitae*) fitly.⁵⁹ It can be reasonably argued that Augustus' remarks seemed to have been a deathbed confession to Augustus' friends of what Tacitus later accused him: Augustus had engaged in copious amounts of pretence or farce from the time he began to engage in Roman politics from 44 B.C. till his death.⁶⁰ Suetonius also noted that Augustus always prepared beforehand a written copy of whatever he wanted to say to other people, because of the fear of saying supposedly too much or too little if he spoke in an offhanded way.⁶¹ Such comments could be argued to suggest that Augustus was motivated by a powerful fear that others would accurately understand his real intentions and desires and/or was motivated by a drive to ensure that he did not undermine any of his previous pretence and deception by contradicting his previous statements.

Also significantly, Augustus burnt documents that related to the civil wars⁶² and later ensured that his brief version of the civil wars, in which he played major roles, was published after his death. Through these means, he attempted to dominate and manipulate the

⁵⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 99.1. Levick noted: "Playing a part had become Augustus' life's work, making the mask so much the harder to remove." (Levick 2010: 6). For discussion relevant to *Divus Augustus* 99.1, see Gurval 1995: 291; Davis 1999: 1-15 and Wardle 2007: 443-463.

⁶⁰ Smith and Boschung provided evidence of Augustus' excessive concern about his public images, even as expressed in portraits, and Augustus' willingness to distort his visual public image even when his own personal reality was markedly different from the public representations, for example due to aging (Smith 1996: 47 and Boschung 1993). Similarly, Charles-Picard highlighted that out of the approximately 150 extant marble or bronze effigies of Augustus, in profile or full face, very few wander from the ideal proportions of Greek aesthetics (Charles-Picard 1968: 19). Reinhold noted Augustus' "consummate skill as mythmaker for his age and posterity, his artful use of propaganda and symbols..." (Mellor 1989: 83).

⁶¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 84.2.

⁶² Appian, 5.132.

production of public discourses about the civil wars. Similarly, Cassius Dio noted that previously under the old Roman *res publica*, all matters were reported to the Senate and to the Roman people by various writers with sometimes different perspectives, but from the beginning of the reign of Augustus onwards, most things that occurred were kept secret (*kraptha*) and concealed (*aporreton*) by the emperors and their officials.⁶³ In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus rarely mentioned other personalities but when he did, he always subordinated them to his personality and activities,⁶⁴ while cleverly avoiding any portrayals of himself as a king, a *dominus* or a temporary dictator.

There have been large numbers of modern scholars who have advocated various versions of the façade theory of the Augustan principate, mostly employing Tacitus' and/or Cassius Dio's texts as their foundational evidence.⁶⁵ A number of scholars, however, for example Wirszubski, Earl, Kunkel, Crook and Levick have opposed façade theories about the Augustan principate, and have believed that his principate was republican to some degree without necessarily being a real full restoration of the old Roman *res publica*.⁶⁶ For example, Wirszubski conjectured that the Augustan principate "was not, and was not meant to be, an absolute monarchy in republican disguise," but rather was an attempt to preserve as much of the old Roman Republican system as was possible in a practical sense.⁶⁷ Such anti-façade

⁶³ Cassius Dio 53.19.3. Citing Cassius Dio 53.19 as evidence, Syme asserted that after Rome began to be ruled by emperors like Augustus, a veil descended and disguised the truth to varying degrees about various important matters of policy, resulting in the truth being impenetrable to future generations (Syme 1958, Volume 1: 398).

⁶⁴ Ramage 1987: 28.

⁶⁵ For major examples of German and Italian scholars who argued that Augustus' government was a façade and sham to varying degrees, see Dessau Volume 1, 1924: 15-62; Willrich 1927: 61; Heinze 1930: 386; Heinze 1933: 23 and 28-29; von Premerstein 1937; Alföldi 1971: 67 and 100; Ehrenberg 1965: 587; Vittinghoff 1959: 54, Flach 1973a: 562; Kienast 1984: 116, n.4; Hohl 1947: 107; Willrich 1927: 61; Klingner 1969: 500 and 502-503; Trankle 1969: 108; Hanell 1971: 190-191 and 197; Bleicken 1990: 87; Christ 1978: 467 and 470; Karl Christ 1979: 463-466; Christ 1984: 52; Christ 1988: 87 and 175-176; Kienast 1984: 134; Welwei 1996: 479; Bringmann 2002a: 409; Dettenhofer 2000; Gaertner 2008: 52; Garzetti 1974: 15; Gabba 1984: 78.

For prime examples of English-language scholars who argued that Augustus' government was a façade and sham to varying degrees, refer to Syme 1939: 1-3 and 317 and 1958, Volume 1: 378, 408 and 410-412; Nock 1957: 120; Grant 1949: 112; Dudley 1960: 124; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 102; Luce 1982: 1023; Wellesley 1975: 1-2 and 7; Carter 1970: 237 and 239; Seager 1972: 256-258 and 261; Mellor 1989: 27-28; Lacey, 1985: 60 and 67; Jones and Sidwell 1997: 110 and 138; Bradley 1986: 89; Stockton 1988: 157; Cartledge 1975: 39; Brunt and Moore 1967: 13; *Martin 1981*: 227; Rich 1990: 135; Price 1980: 39; Gradel 2002: 109-110; Mackay 2004: 192; Edmondson, Mason and Rives 2005: 194-195; Keaveney 2007: 1.

⁶⁶ Earl 1968: 56; Kunkel 1961: 360-361; *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 10, 1996: 7 and Levick 2010: 71.

⁶⁷ Wirszubski 1950: 129.

portrayals of the Augustan principate have no solid foundation in Tacitus texts, but are based upon contrary representations of Augustus' political activities found in the works of other Roman writers. Ronald Syme was one of the foremost proponents of the façade theory about Augustus' principate. Syme insisted that it is an error for modern historians to fancy that the Augustan principate was genuinely Republican in spirit and practice,⁶⁸ and maintained that Emperor Julian was later close to the truth when he labelled Augustus as a chameleon, changing colour but not substance.⁶⁹ Contrary to Syme, however, Judge claimed that "Tacitus does not see Augustus as having changed the Roman 'constitution'".⁷⁰

The façade theory is usually presented as one variation and component of the broader notion that Augustus pretended to achieve a complete or virtual restoration of the old Roman Republic (*vetus res publica*), but not all modern scholars who believe that Augustus' principate was a façade, assert that Augustus pretended to make such a restoration. The views of most modern scholars advocating versions of the façade theory are more nuanced than this and sometimes are not just related to the so-called first constitutional settlement of 27 B.C.⁷¹ Many adherents of various forms of the façade theory instead argue that Augustus began a new form of monarchy and/or despotic rule which he cleverly disguised with many of the attributes of the old Roman *res publica*.

The façade theory has been described as "the belief that Augustus publicised the transfer of control in 27 B.C. as a 'restoration of the Republic' and thus attempted to conceal his actual intentions behind a constitutional façade."⁷² But note that Tacitus' depiction of the Augustan principate as a façade was not just limited to the principate's constitutional and legal aspects, but also extended to most of the other non-constitutional aspects of the same political

⁶⁸ Syme 1939: 3 and 1958, Volume 1: 408 and 411-412.

⁶⁹ Syme 1939: 2.

⁷⁰ Judge 2009: 224.

⁷¹ For analysis of the political events of 28-27 B.C., see J. Beranger 1975: 165-190; Kienast 1982: 67-84 and Liebeschuetz 1986: 345-364.

⁷² Judge 2009, 203. Judge has provided a comprehensive useful critical analysis of the views of some of the main participants in the complex and ongoing academic debate about the façade theory in relationship to Augustus' reign, while also indicating his own perspective on the issues involved (Marshall 2009: 203-227).

system.⁷³ These constitutional and non-constitutional aspects will be examined in Chapters 2 to 5 in analyses of both Tacitus' own personal commentary and of the words he ascribed to the supposed wise opponents of Augustus in *Annals* 1.10.

One paramount characteristic of Tacitus' representation of Augustus' principate involved Tacitus' insistence that Augustus' political system was a façade or sham,⁷⁴ involving Augustus instituting a *dominatio*,⁷⁵ while pretending not to be a political master, king or permanent dictator. Tacitus frequently implied that what at first glance appeared to be the truth about an aspect of Augustus' rule often needed to be drastically qualified to get to the actual truth.⁷⁶ Tacitus also often employed Latin words such as *species*, *facies*, *imago* and *simulacrum* to suggest that he penetrated the façade of the principate.⁷⁷ Tacitus' critical employment of the expressions “the secrets of emperors (*secreta imperatorum*)”⁷⁸ and “the other secrets of absolutism (*alia dominationis arcana*)” of Augustus⁷⁹ also compellingly underline Tacitus' view that the public representations of the Augustan principate differed partly or totally from Augustus' secrets about his real political attitudes and behaviours.⁸⁰ Also, implying that it was normal for Roman emperors frequently to lie, pretend and disguise their real intentions, Tacitus had a Roman knight say that it was unlawful and dangerous for

⁷³ Wallace-Hadrill argued that Tacitus focused mainly on the deceptions in which unaccountable autocratic government disguises itself and less on the legal constitutional formalities which supposedly defined the limits of Augustus' political power (Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 13-14).

⁷⁴ Garzetti convincingly argued that Tacitus has no equal in his ability to depict the hypocrisy or contradictions resident in the principate in general and in every specific principate in relation to real powers and official powers (Garzetti 1974: 15). Develin rightly highlighted that Tacitus was: “by no means reticent to take upon himself the responsibility for stripping away the pretence” of Roman leaders (Develin 1983: 64).

⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3 and 2.59. O’Gorman argued that Tacitus followed the sceptical historiographical perspective which Thucydides developed in the fifth century B.C. (O’Gorman 2000: 2). She said that the sceptical historian was “one who expresses suspicion at evident causes or pretexts...Most importantly, the sceptical historian presents his reader with *both* false appearance *and* hidden truths....” (O’Gorman 2000: 3. See also 14). See Thucydides, Book 3.82.3-4 on the perversion of language and twisting of political and social norms.

⁷⁶ Similarly, referring to Tacitus’ frequently used appendix sentences, Damon observed: “... the style insists that first thoughts and initial appearances rarely suffice.” (Damon 2003: 19). See also Martin 2001: 27. Syme highlighted that throughout Tacitus' *Annals*, Tacitus continually made contrasts between words and actual substance (Syme 1958, Volume 1: 408).

⁷⁷ Kraus and Woodman, 1997: 111.

⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.30.

⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.59. Similarly, Tacitus referred to the “mysteries of the palace (*arcana domus*)” (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6).

⁸⁰ Similarly, Tacitus highlighted Tiberius' and Caligula's *simulatio* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4, 4.54 and 6.45), Tiberius' *simulo* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6) and Nero's secret imaginations (*secretae imaginationes*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.36).

ordinary Romans to try to read the thoughts of an emperor and the intentions he may shape in secret.⁸¹

Chapter 5 will provide evidence that Cassius Dio and Appian also accused Augustus of engaging in a façade, but note that Tacitus' portrayal of the façade characteristics of Augustus' principate mostly included more negative features from that presented by these two other Roman writers. Most of the scholars who asserted that Augustus created a political façade, demonstrated a high regard for one or more of the perspectives of Tacitus, Cassius Dio and Appian, while modern scholars who hold anti- façade perspectives about the Augustan principate, usually give more credence to the extant texts of Suetonius, Velleius, Nicolaus of Damascus,⁸² Strabo and Augustus' *Res Gestae* and to interpretations of Horace and Virgil which portray Augustus approvingly. This is understandable considering that nowhere in Augustus' *Res Gestae* does Augustus admit that he had instituted a form of despotism or monarchy under the cover of any type of façade or pretence,⁸³ and these other writers do not explicitly and unambiguously accuse Augustus of instituting any type of political façade.

In a more negative depiction of Augustus' political career than that provided in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, Tacitus asserted that Augustus' seemingly "Republican" form of permanent one-man rule (*uno regetur*)⁸⁴ in Rome under Augustus began on the foundation of façade, lies, deceitful propaganda, playing games with words, hypocrisy and other forms of ethical corruption.⁸⁵

The next section will provide an introduction to another component of Tacitus' negative and sceptical portrayals of Augustus' political career: Tacitus asserted that a number

⁸¹ *Abditos principis sensus, et si quid occultius parat, exquirere inlicitum, anceps* (Tacitus, *Annals* 6.8.4).

⁸² Nicolaus of Damascus used Augustus' autobiography as one of his main sources and constantly praised Augustus (Dobesch 1978: 91-174; Scardigli 1983: 121-123 and Ramage 1985: 234).

⁸³ Levi 1992: 185.

⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9. In *Histories* 1.1, Tacitus referred to all power being concentrated or bestowed on one (man) (*omnem potentiam ad unus*)—Augustus. Ehrenberg described the Augustan principate as "a monarchy in Republican forms, rather than a conventional monarchy" (Ehrenberg 1974:108).

⁸⁵ For relevant discussion of truth and lies in relation to the establishment of Augustus' principate, see Rich 2010: 167-194.

of public representations of Augustus' political activities were founded to a significant extent on ambiguity.

1.6 Augustus' ambiguity

Numerous scholars, such as Montesquieu, McDermott, Wallace-Hadrill, Lacey, Southern, Gradel and Levick, have identified the ambiguity of some of Augustus' public representations.⁸⁶ Augustus seems to have aimed to have been many but sometimes contradictory things to all Romans and non-Romans in his empire. Augustus cleverly employed different aspects of his self-representations when addressing different social groups.⁸⁷ The intense, though still largely unresolved, debates in the 20th century, and even in recent times, among modern scholars about the precise nature of Augustus' political and military powers in terms of *potestas*, *imperium*, *auctoritas* and *tribunicia potestas*, is further evidence of Augustus' success in creating much ambiguity and lack of clarity about these matters in relation to his political roles.

In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus almost certainly deliberately lied and/or intentionally left out important information and/or deliberately engaged in ambiguity on a number of occasions so that a more accurate account of his political and military activities, which may have been harmful to his public images, was avoided. Therefore, Augustus never comprehensively and precisely explained all of the characteristics of the principate which he instituted. Augustus provided only fragmentary descriptions of his rise to power and blurred his descriptions of his actual positions of power, deliberately concealing key facts and engaging in deliberate

⁸⁶ Montesquieu 1965: 122; McDermott 1980-1981: 26 and 28; Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 32-48; Lacey 1996: 153; Southern 2001: 104; Gradel 2002: 102; Levick 2010: 6 and 9. Augustus seemed to have learnt from the seemingly intentional ambiguity in the clever letters written to others by his stepfather Julius Caesar (White in Cairns and Fantham 2003: 68-95. For similar comments by Fantham, see Cairns and Fantham 2003: 12).

⁸⁷ Kloft 1984: 312-316 and 325-326.

ambiguity of description.⁸⁸ Lacey asserted that one of the main causes of Augustus' political success was "he deliberately avoided the clear-cut and explicit and preferred cautiously to allow political developments to occur, exploiting those which turned out for his advantage."⁸⁹ Augustus assertively created, subtly fostered or passively assented to the creation of many different and sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory public representations of him. Augustus' expert skill in being able successfully to present contradictory self-images is evident in his representation of himself as both the great defender of past Roman practices and the innovator of very significant changes.⁹⁰ Augustus seems to have been the master of ambiguity and of using different personae when dealing with different people, for example with Julius Caesar's veterans, Mark Antony, the Senate, Cicero and Sextus Pompey. Another aspect of Augustus' ambiguous self-representations was that he often cleverly mixed dubious assertions with uncontroversial comments.⁹¹ Augustus' ambiguity was guaranteed because there were so many gaps in his public pronouncements⁹² and because he did not have a written political constitution.⁹³

Boesche correctly argued that Tacitus believed one of the political results of absolute power was the corruption of language.⁹⁴ Similarly, Haynes rightly noted that Tacitus' "analyses are therefore highly literary in their sensitivity to nuances of language...,"⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Hanell 1971: 196-197. Similarly, Cartledge maintained that "Augustus never did anything or gave true reasons for his actions, unless he was compelled to do so" (Cartledge 1975: 31) and Yavetz noted: "the tendency to dissimulate was a prominent feature of Augustus' personality, and it marked his entire reign. Throughout, the *princeps* studiously avoided committing himself unequivocally on various subjects, and always preferred ambiguous formulations to clear ones" (Yavetz 1990: 35).

⁸⁹ Lacey 1996: 153. See also Hesberg 1988.

⁹⁰ Cooley, 2009: 38 and *Res Gestae* 8.5.

⁹¹ Heuss 1995: 1319-1359. A number of the contradictory or ambiguous political messages of Augustus' *Res Gestae* were that "constitutional change was really continuity," "the impulse towards autocracy...was actually based on popular consensus," "civil wars were really fights with foreign foes" and "war itself was effectively peace" (Cooley 2009: 36).

⁹² This was typified by his later *Res Gestae*. Quintilian taught that words broken by silences (*interrupta silentio dictio*) were an effective rhetorical device (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.71). Note that the Latin perfect participle *interrupta* meant having been interrupted or broken up by a gap. Quintilian's silences encourage readers or hearers in their imaginations actively to fill in the missing gaps in the wording of an original text and then to take ownership themselves for these guided creations of their own minds. The modern literary scholars Iser and Ingarden have discussed the concept of indeterminacies or gaps in texts (Iser 1978: 175-178 and 182 and Ingarden 1973: 392).

⁹³ Hammond, 1940: 24.

⁹⁴ Boesche 1987: 205

⁹⁵ Haynes 2003: 29.

correctly described Tacitus' *Histories* as possessing "the suspicion of appearances, and above all of language..."⁹⁶ and aptly pointed out that on a number of occasions, Tacitus referred to various Romans using words with different meanings from what they had previously been used by Romans to mean, in order to deceive and manipulate others.⁹⁷ It is true that Tacitus' texts often contain complex multi-layered meanings and have numerous difficulties in interpretation,⁹⁸ but as Moles astutely noted, Tacitus repeatedly trumped and used for his own ends, the systematic distortion of language in which Augustus engaged.⁹⁹

As we will see in Chapters 2 to 5, ambiguity is common when we compare and contrast the different Roman sources, for example the *Res Gestae* and the texts of Velleius and Suetonius, in their representations of Augustus' political attitudes and behaviours. This is partly the result of the fact that each source was a product of its own particular historical context, the pre-judgements and biases of the authors of each text, the limitations of language and the limitations of the relevant observers of historical events. In addition, Augustus and the members of his political regime in different ways deliberately promoted such ambiguity as a political strategy or at least did not try to correct particular contradictory public images which arose from the interactions of Augustus and the Roman people, if these politically advantaged Augustus. Also by their very nature, the various images of Augustus depicted in monuments, statues, paintings, coins, public and some private buildings, religious temples, religious rituals, the layout of the city of Rome itself, military triumphs, architecture, topography, Roman calendars, clothing, state ceremonies and similar phenomena were ambiguous to varying degrees. Tacitus attempted to undermine many of the various contradictory but

⁹⁶ Haynes 2003: 31. See also Levene 1997: Introduction xii and Boardman, Griffin and Murray 1988: 282.

⁹⁷ Haynes 2004: 34-35 and 43-44. See Tacitus, *Annals* Book 1.3.7, *Histories* Book 4.73.3 and *Agricola* 30.5. Compare Tacitus' approach to Suetonius' childlike naiveté towards Augustus when the latter claimed that Augustus always aimed to be as clear as possible (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 86.1).

⁹⁸ The complexity of Tacitus' texts is partly caused by his employment of innuendo, loaded and weighted alternatives, impressions, indirect comments, insidious suggestions and rumours. Scholars who have described and/or critically examined Tacitus' uses of these literary techniques are Marsh 1926: 136; Ryberg 1942: 383-404; von Fritz 1957: 94; Syme 1958: 347; Daitz 1960: 34; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 26-27; Sullivan 1976: 312-326; Whitehead 1979: 474-495; Develin 1983: 64-95; Shatzman 1974: 549-578; Shotter 1989: 13; McCulloch Jr 1984: 1-12; Byrne 1999: 339; Casule 2002: 22, 24 and 26.

For commentary on the difficulties in interpreting Tacitus' texts, refer to Pohlmann 1910; Vogt 1936: 1-20; Segal 1973:108; Sullivan 1976: 324-325; Luce 1986: 143-147 and Rutledge 2009: 429.

⁹⁹ Moles 1998: 156.

sometimes overlapping representations of Augustus found in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius Paterculus, above-mentioned inanimate objects and other sources, and in the tradition which later expressed itself in the writings of Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

This thesis does not assert that every sentence in every ancient extant source about Augustus' political career is ambiguous and contradictory to every other sentence in the sources on the same matter. Therefore when the extant sources agree about particular matters about the Augustan principate, it is reasonable to argue with a high level of probability that these representations reflect the original actual historical events. Note, however, that when significant ambiguity and/or contradictions about particular aspects of his principate are identified in the extant sources, it is unreasonable to make definite assertions about these particular aspects.

In the history of the academic discussion about the public images of Augustus, too many scholars have oversimplified the debate by assigning to Augustus a very limited number of representations rather than attempting to identify the complexity and various nuances of Augustus' and his supporters' portrayals of him. Unfortunately, some scholarly works have been given titles such as *The Image of Augustus* which even suggest that Augustus and his supporters only presented one image of himself to the Roman people.¹⁰⁰ Instead, there was diversity in Roman depictions of Augustus,¹⁰¹ but because of the ambiguous and contradictory nature of numerous aspects of the extant sources, it is unwise to try to identify an exact number of public representations of Augustus with precise details.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Walker and Burnett 1981 and Henig 1981: 61.

¹⁰¹ Smith 1996: 31-47. The question of how Augustus presented himself to the Roman public cannot be expressed in a simple phrase (Mackie 1986: 331). Related to this, Cotton and Yakobson correctly asserted that "the conflicting evidence of the sources seems to make it difficult to reconstruct a consistent 'official version' of the Augustan Principate" (Cotton and Yakobson 2002: 205).

¹⁰² Cotton and Yakobson asserted that Augustus' political regime had three different official versions of itself (Cotton and Yakobson 2002: 208). In the book *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* edited by Millar and Segal, a number of writers commendably attempted to identify different images of Augustus in terms of various power perspectives, but the problem of ambiguity and contradictions in the extant sources needed to be taken into account more comprehensively. Millar, however, rightly pointed out that "the emergence of a single ruler from within the Roman republican system had created a constitutional situation" which seemed "inherently ambiguous" (Millar and Segal 1984: 40). Precise singular representations of Augustus, for example Wickert's assertion that Augustus was not a monocrat, a *dictator perpetuus* or a *rex*, but instead was the *restitutor* and *conservator rei publicae*, the *vindex libertatis* and the *princeps civitatis* whose power is founded less on *potestas*

The hundreds of previous scholars who have tried to fit the statements by writers of inscriptions from Augustus' era, the Augustan poets, other Augustan writers, Velleius Paterculus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and other sources into one very coherent image, have actually to some degree been deceived by the brilliant but sometimes ambiguous and contradictory political rhetoric of Augustus and his officials. Rehak rightly highlighted that by Augustus' death at age 76, Augustus "had reinvented himself several times."¹⁰³ Augustus' excessive concern about his public images resulted in him a number of times experimenting with and changing his political and personal masks just like ancient actors frequently changed their masks during their performances.¹⁰⁴

Tacitus specialised in attempting to identify the ambiguities and contradictions in the words of Roman political leaders and also in their public images. For example, after recording that Tiberius gave a speech at Augustus' funeral in which Tiberius asserted that the political functions of the Roman *res publica* should be shared rather than just given to one person, Tacitus wrote "...the diction of Tiberius, by habit or by nature, was always indirect and obscure (*obscura*) even when he had no wish to conceal his thought; and now, in the effort to bury every trace of his sentiments, it became more intricate, uncertain (*incertum*), and equivocal (*ambiguum*) than before."¹⁰⁵ In the same context, Tacitus portrayed the Roman senators as being terrified that they might seem to understand what Tiberius was saying to them about such political matters. Engaging in a complex analysis of these different self-representations, Tacitus implied that the Augustan principate had resulted in such a dramatic deterioration in the mental-emotional states of most Roman senators that they regarded the safest policy to involve portraying an image of themselves that they did not understand what Tiberius' political intentions were. Tacitus' evaluation of these events typified his belief that

than *auctoritas*, suffer from the same error of ignoring the numerous contradictions and ambiguities in the extant sources (Wickert 1969: 114).

¹⁰³ Rehak 2006: Preface xii.

¹⁰⁴ Severy 2003: 33.

¹⁰⁵ *Tiberioque, etiam in rebus quas non occuleret, seu natura sive adsuetudine, suspensa semper et obscura verba; tunc vero nitenti ut sensus suos penitus abderet, in incertum et ambiguum magis implicabantur* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.11).

the nature of Augustus' principate fostered pretence and deceit in the ways in which emperors and their subjects represented themselves to each other.

Wallace-Hadrill made a significant point when he noted that when analysing the principate, "There is a danger in so peeling the husk of the supposedly superficial from the kernel of reality. The ambivalence itself may be of the essence."¹⁰⁶ While it is true that Tacitus often attempted to distinguish between what he regarded as superficial façade elements of the Augustan principate and its realities, there are some indications in his *Annals* of Tacitus believing that some ambiguous combinations of particular elements of the superficial and the real were the essence of Augustus' principate.

One major aspect of Augustus', his officials' and closest supporters' clever usage of ambiguity related to their employment of new definitions of the concepts of *princeps*, *rex*, *regnum*, *dominatio*, *res publica*, *libertas*, *tribunicia potestas* and the *imperium* of the people of Rome.¹⁰⁷ These new definitions competed with these words' older plural definitions and had significant political effects. The new definitions sometimes came in a form(s), which did not explicitly reject the connotations of older definitions, the latter having the potential to create unfavourable public representations of the Augustan principate. These new definitions, however, were employed with the intended purpose of replacing the older definitions with partly amended or totally new singular or ambiguous meanings. Over time, these new definitions of these words obtained a dominant status in the political discourses of most Romans, while numerous older competing meanings maintained various types of subversive and oppositional roles in the usually private discourses of the minority of Romans, who did not approve of the replacement of the *vetus res publica* with the Augustan principate. Ambiguous, contradictory or deceitful public images have a habit of becoming part of the realities of any political role, and it can be argued that this happened in relation to Augustus.

¹⁰⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 32.

¹⁰⁷ Cherryholmes rightly pointed out that political purposes and power arrangements often confer meanings on what is said (Cherryholmes 1988: 71).

Two of the unique features of Tacitus' texts, especially his *Annals*, are that they contain frequent explicit and implicit exposés of clashes of these dominant and oppositional discourses in relation to the beginning and continuation of the Augustan principate. For example, in Chapters 3 and 4, it will be shown that Tacitus employed some older definitions of the words *princeps*, *regnum*, *dominatio* and *libertas* in opposition to the employment of these same terms by Augustus, his officials and closest supporters. Also significantly in Chapter 5, it will be demonstrated that despite Tacitus sometimes employing the expression *res publica* to refer to the principate as originally created by Augustus and maintained under the rule of other emperors, he also contrasted being under what he identified as the old Roman Republic (*vetus res publica*) with being controlled by a *princeps*.¹⁰⁸

As will be demonstrated in Chapters 2 to 5, Tacitus mostly portrayed Augustus' political career both explicitly and implicitly far more negatively than did the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. The next chapter will examine different representations of Augustus' political career found in Tacitus' *Annals* and will identify some significant elements in Tacitus' own interpretations of Augustus' political activities.

¹⁰⁸ For example, see Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7, 11.23.2 and 16.22.

Different portrayals of Augustus in Tacitus' *Annals*

In this particular section, my immediate aim is to provide an outline of my arguments in the rest of this chapter. These arguments will later be presented step-by-step in order to build some foundational essentials of my case in answer to my thesis question.

This chapter will serve two main purposes: First, it will demonstrate that Tacitus depicted that there were a number of different views among Romans about Augustus' political career around the time of Augustus' death and the beginning of Tiberius' reign. Second, this chapter will begin the process of identifying some of the major aspects of Tacitus' own political perspectives about Augustus' political career and of distinguishing Tacitus' personal viewpoints from these suggested attitudes of particular Romans about Augustus. The achievement of these two primary purposes is essential in order to provide the foundations for reasonable comparisons and contrasts in Chapters 3 to 5 between Tacitus' own personal perspectives on Augustus' political career and those provided by Velleius, the *Res Gestae*, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

Tacitus' *Annals* contains representations of the dominant political and ethical discourses which originated from Augustus and his supporters, and of some opposing discourses of other Romans, including Tacitus himself.¹⁰⁹ Tacitus provided representations of the various images which the following different Romans provided of Augustus:

- (i) Tacitus' imaginary commentators in *Annals* 1.8.6.
- (ii) The *prudentes* among Augustus' supporters in *Annals* 1.9. The word *prudentes* referred to those having good understanding, having good sense, exercising foresight and/or being prudent.

¹⁰⁹ Tacitus held political office under three Roman emperors and had much experience of the reigns of at least two other emperors (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1).

(iii)The *prudentes* among Augustus' opponents in *Annals* 1.10.¹¹⁰

(iv)The Emperor Tiberius.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Tacitus believed that these four perspectives were the only public images of Augustus of which Tacitus was aware. Significantly at the beginning of *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus also depicted the majority of Romans at the time of Augustus' death having little understanding of the essential characteristics of Augustus' political career, but instead focusing on trifles. The obvious inference from this comment was that Tacitus believed that the Romans in his era needed to re-evaluate thoroughly the actual characteristics of Augustus' political career rather than concentrating on trivial political externals found in the oral and written historical traditions.

2.1 Tacitus' imaginary commentators in *Annals* 1.8.6

In *Annals* 1.8.6 and 1.10, Tacitus claimed that there were forms of opposition to Augustus which found expression immediately after Augustus' death. Tacitus asserted that there was no opposition (*nullus adversans*) to Augustus after the Battle of Actium, he seemed to have been referring to publicly identifiable significant military or political opposition to Augustus and not to more subtle forms of opposition.¹¹¹

In *Annals* 1.8.6, Tacitus attributed to his imaginary Roman commentators on the day of Augustus' funeral the statement that Augustus had provided power or military strength on an ongoing basis to his successors to the throne for use against the *res publica*.¹¹² The literal translation of *provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus* is "of the successors (to the

¹¹⁰ See Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 154.

¹¹¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. Other Roman writers confirm Tacitus' assertion of such opposition to Augustus (Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 7.45.149, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 19.1-2, Cassius Dio 54.3.3-4 and 54.15.1). For discussion, see Raaflaub and Toher 1990: 417-454 and Timpe 1987: 65-95.

¹¹²For analysis on Tacitus' comments in *Annals* 1.8.5-6 on aspects of Augustus' funeral, refer to Syme 1958: 315; Walker 1952: 69; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 151-153; Boyle 1990, 140 and Woodman 2002: 629-632. Woodman rightly corrected both Syme and Goodyear by arguing that in *Annals* 1.8.6, Tacitus was not referring to Julius Caesar's funeral but to Caesar's day of assassination (Woodman 2002: 630-631).

throne) also power (or military strength) having been provided against the *res publica*.” In Latin in some contexts, the preposition *in* in the accusative can mean "for use against", "for dealing with" or "against" (the latter in a sense of expressing hostility or expressing opposition or having a target of an assault). These imaginary commentators made this statement with reference to Tiberius having a military guard at Augustus' funeral. In this passage, Tacitus appeared to have desired his readers to consider the great changes that had occurred from 44 B.C. to A.D. 14 and seemed to have provided a prelude to Tacitus' representation of different Roman views in *Annals* 1.9-10.¹¹³

Furneaux interpreted *in rem publicam* in *Annals* 1.8.6 to mean “against the Commonwealth”¹¹⁴ while Nipperdey rendered it as “against the state (*gegen den Staat*)” and added “for the subjugation or servitude of the same (thing) (*zur Unterjochung desselben*).”¹¹⁵ Koestermann translated it as "for the subjugation or servitude of the state (*zur Unterjochung des Staates*).”¹¹⁶ Beranger, however, asserted that in *Annals* 1.8.6, Tacitus employed the phrase *in rem publicam* to mean "for the republic (*pour la republique*)" rather than "against the republic (*contre la republique*)".¹¹⁷ Beranger provided a comprehensive examination of the meaning of Tacitus' expression *provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus*,¹¹⁸ and in his evaluation of major aspects of Beranger's journal article, Goodyear rightly concluded that some of Beranger's evidence validated the argument that the preposition *in* in Tacitus' expression *in rem publicam* meant "for" rather than "against".¹¹⁹ Despite this, however, note that the general tone of the early chapters of Tacitus' *Annals* Book 1 provided a surrounding context which favoured the opposing conclusion that Tacitus used the preposition *in* in this expression to mean "against" rather than "for".¹²⁰ Beranger argued that because Tacitus

¹¹³ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 151.

¹¹⁴ Furneaux 1896: 193.

¹¹⁵ Nipperdey 1892: 59 n.3 and 238, n.8.

¹¹⁶ Koestermann 1963: 95.

¹¹⁷ Beranger asserted: “*Nous proposons de rapporter in rem publicam a provis...opibus et d’entendre non contre, mais pour la republique*” (Beranger 1960: 478).

¹¹⁸ Beranger 1960: 475-492.

¹¹⁹ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 152-153.

¹²⁰ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 153.

employed the phrase *in rem publicam* in *Annals* 3.24.2 in a way which would not permit the preposition *in* to mean “against”, this suggested that it could not mean “against” in *Annals* 1.8.6. This, however, is dubious reasoning which failed to recognise the obvious fact that many authors use the same expressions in different contexts with different meanings.¹²¹

Following some similar assumptions to Beranger’s, Woodman argued that the expression *provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus* meant “having provided for the state resources consisting of his heirs.”¹²² This questionable translation of *heredum* as the defining genitive “consisting of his heirs,” rather than as the possessive genitive “of the successors (or heirs),” and of *opibus* as meaning just “resources” rather than “military strength or power,” is contrary to the context. In this particular context, Tacitus’ imaginary commentators criticised the oppressive use of military strength by one of Augustus’ heirs, Tiberius, against the members of the Roman *res publica* on the day of Augustus’ funeral. Also note that Tacitus’ commentators referred back to the day of the assassination of Julius Caesar as being “that day of still bitter or grievous servitude and freedom (*diem illum crudi adhuc servitii et libertatis*)” and emphasised that this had been “repeated with unfortunate results (*inprospere repetitae*)” on the day of Augustus’ funeral. It is possible to translate the words *crudi adhuc servitii* to mean “still novel servitude” (Loeb, reprinted 1998, 253) or “still undeveloped servitude”, considering that it can be argued that the servitude of the Roman people during Julius Caesar’s dictatorship was both novel and undeveloped. Likewise, Goodyear interpreted *crudi adhuc* to mean “unripe”, “still fresh” or “not yet developed.”¹²³

Note, however, that Tacitus always depicted the servitude or bondage of the Roman people to the emperors as being bitter or grievous and Tacitus had previously in *Annals* 1.7 referred to the Roman consuls, senators and equestrians all rushing into slavery immediately at the beginning of Tiberius’ reign, even before Augustus’ funeral. Also, observe that Tacitus’

¹²¹ For more useful commentary on *Annals* 1.8, refer to Koestermann 1963: 90-95.

¹²² Woodman 2002: 632. Du Toit provided a similar interpretation of *Annals* 1.8.6 (Du Toit 1978: 156-157. For more commentary on Tacitus’ *Annals* 1.8.6, see Woodman 2006: 177.

¹²³ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 152.

commentators referred to the day of Julius Caesar's assassination as that day of *libertas*. This is closely related to his employment of the word *servitium* in the same phrase, with *libertas* having a basic meaning of freedom from slavery or *servitium*. Considering that Tacitus insisted that Augustus did not restore *libertas* to the Roman people but instead brought the Roman nobility into a state of *servitium*,¹²⁴ it seems obvious that Tacitus' expression *provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus* related to the fact that Tacitus portrayed Augustus as having provided Tiberius and his other successors with the power or military strength to bring the *res publica* into a state of *servitium* without real *libertas*, according to Tacitus' understandings of these two Latin terms. In this context, it is virtually impossible to translate *provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus* in the positive sense of "having provided for the state resources consisting of his heirs."

In Woodman's analysis of *Annals* 1.8.6, he focussed on Tacitus' imaginary commentators being annoyed by the presence of bodyguards at Augustus' funeral when at Julius Caesar's assassination there were no bodyguards present, but this was only one aspect of their agitation and was not their primary concern. One possible interpretation of Tacitus' expression *diem illum crudi adhuc servitii et libertatis* was as follows: On the day of Augustus' funeral, Tacitus' imaginary commentators had been disappointed that their hopes for the ending of their political slavery to Augustus and the restoration of real *libertas*, had not eventuated. Instead of the fulfilment of these hopes, there had been a supposedly unfortunate repetition of the results which occurred after Julius Caesar was assassinated, when there was a return of political slavery under the rule of the triumvirs despite many Romans falsely hoping that there would have been an ending of political slavery and a restoration of a fuller measure of *libertas*. Such an interpretation accords with the fact that earlier in *Annals* 1.4, Tacitus said that when Augustus was approaching death, a few voices in Rome began to discuss the possibility of a return to the blessings of *libertas*.

¹²⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1 and *Annals* 1.2.

In the next section, an analysis of Tacitus' representations in *Annals* 1.9-10 of two opposing viewpoints about Augustus will be provided.

2.2 Tacitus on two opposing perspectives about Augustus --*Annals* 1.9-10

In *Annals* 1.9-10, Tacitus employed the hypothetical supposedly wise supporters and wise opponents of Augustus' reign to clarify what he claimed were two different main Roman representations of Augustus and his principate.¹²⁵ There have been vastly contrasting scholarly assessments of Tacitus' *Annals* 1.9-10.¹²⁶

One question which continues to interest scholars is whether Tacitus' own personal perspective on Augustus was reflected in either *Annals* 1.9 or *Annals* 1.10. For example, Shotter claimed that contrary to common opinion, the specific Roman perspective which Tacitus presented in *Annals* 1.10 of Augustus' reign was not an expression of Tacitus' own view.¹²⁷ Shotter conjectured that Tacitus did not commit himself to either view and that the pro-Augustus perspective in Book 1.9 was shorter than the anti-Augustus view in Book 1.10 because the former contained briefer generalizations but the latter contained specific instances of Augustus' alleged negative behaviour which needed more words than the former view.¹²⁸ The main weakness in Shotter's interpretation is that throughout Tacitus' texts, especially in his *Histories* and in the remainder of his *Annals*, there is far more evidence of Tacitus supporting the perspective found in *Annals* 1.10 than the pro-Augustus view in Book 1.9. One of the reasons Tacitus judiciously gave details of these two opposing Roman views of

¹²⁵ In Graeco-Roman historiography, the employment of paired perspectives and paired speeches was common. For example, Livy employed this technique in Book 34.1.1-7.15 in the speeches of Cato Major and Lucius Valerius, and Cassius Dio used it in Book 52.2-40 in the speeches of Agricola and Maecenas (Adler 2012: 477-520). In *Annals* 1.9-10, Tacitus employed a variant type of this technique when he expressed two different views through indirect instead of direct speech and through two groups, rather than through two individuals. Iser rightly pointed out that each text absorbs, collects and stores a number of different contexts rather than just one all-embracing historical context (Iser 1978: 55).

¹²⁶ For example, see Furneaux Volume 1, 1896: 193-198; Meyer 1910: 446 n. 3; Ceașescu 1974: 186-187; Syme 1958, Volume 2: 432; Miller 1959: 123-128 and Koestermann 1963:96-104.

¹²⁷ Shotter 1967b: 171-174.

¹²⁸ Shotter 1967b:172.

Augustus' reign was to provide evidence for his contemporary Roman readers that his writings were not totally one-sided attacks on Roman *principes* and on the institution of the principate. However by not explicitly in *Annals* 1.9-10 identifying which view he supported, Tacitus encouraged his Roman readers to search for hints and clues in his other comments in *Annals* and in his other texts of which view he supported. Even if it is admitted that *Annals* 1.9 demonstrated that Tacitus half recognised a more positive view of Augustus' political and military career, it was really a grudging recognition, because *Annals* 1.10 largely or totally nullified the arguments of Augustus' supporters in *Annals* 1.9, the unfavourable view follows rather than precedes the more favourable view and Tacitus had previously provided a very unfavourable view of Augustus in *Annals* 1.2.¹²⁹

In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus boasted about his 37 years of tribunician power and his twenty-one salutations as *imperator*, about the Senate bestowing on him the honours of the Golden Shield, the civic crown and the laurels above his doorposts of his house and about the Senate, the Roman people and the equestrian order giving him the honourable title of *Pater Patriae*.¹³⁰ Mirroring these comments in his *Annals* 1.9.1, Tacitus specifically noted that after Augustus' death, most Romans focused on discussing trivial points of his reign such as Augustus having unbroken tribunician power for 37 years, the title of *imperator* twenty-one times and being given other multiplied or new honours. By introducing his comments to *Annals* 1.9-10 in this way, Tacitus was indicating to his readers that his appraisal of the perspectives of the two groups of Roman *prudentes* in this section was at a deeper level of assessment than what was provided by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, in which Augustus had mainly provided similar types of seemingly basic factual comments without providing an extensive analysis of the realities of his political and military power. Tacitus implied that the minority of Romans whom he classified as *prudentes*, this by inference including himself,

¹²⁹ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 156.

¹³⁰ *Res Gestae* 4 and 34-35.

were unconcerned about Augustus' multiple and new honours, as recorded in Augustus' *Res Gestae*.

To better understand Tacitus' evaluations of the origins and operations of Augustus' principate, we need to recognise that Tacitus made many of his comments in the context of him having an understanding of Augustus' *Res Gestae*.¹³¹ Tacitus attacked and attempted to undermine many aspects of the self-portrait provided by Augustus in his *Res Gestae* and aimed to demonstrate that many of Augustus' boasts reflected only outward appearances and reflected little of the reality of Augustus' life and political career.¹³²

Augustus' supporters among the *prudentes* argued that Augustus was partly motivated by the dutiful respect of children towards their parents (*pietas*) when he began the civil war against the forces of Brutus and Cassius,¹³³ but echoing Tacitus' own perspective, Augustus' opponents among the *prudentes* asserted that Augustus used *pietas* to his father merely as a cloak for his lust for being a despot (*cupidine dominandi*). Relevant to this, Tacitus later referred negatively to *cupido dominandi*.¹³⁴

In *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus portrayed the foundational characteristic of the perspective of Augustus' supporters being that the sole remedy (*remedium*) for the problems of Rome was to be governed by one man (*uno regetur*), while insisting that Augustus constituted the state or public affairs (*constitutam rem publicam*) not by means of a despotism or a monarchy or a dictatorship (*non regno tamen neque dictatura*) but by means of the name of princeps. Tacitus here used the ambiguous expression *res publica* which in context could mean either the (new) *res publica* or (ongoing) *res publica* or the (old) *res publica*. Similarly in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus said that he was offered the dictatorship and also a permanent consulship by the

¹³¹ For a study of the arguments of Tacitus against the official depiction of Augustus' reign found in the *Res Gestae*, see Urban 1979: 59-74.

¹³² Eck 2003: 2-3 and Baldwin 1977: 130.

¹³³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9. Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus providing a similar self-representation (Cassius Dio 53.4.4). But even Cassius Dio undermined this self representation by insisting that Augustus was motivated by the desire to become a monarch (Cassius Dio 53.11.1-12.1).

¹³⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.53.

Roman people and by the Roman Senate but he refused these offers.¹³⁵ Tacitus, however, refuted Augustus' claim that he did not set up a type of monarchy or form of despotism by Tacitus' earlier mention of Augustus uniting in his person the functions of the Senate, magistracy and the legislature¹³⁶ and by Tacitus accusing Augustus of *dominatio*.¹³⁷ As will be shown later in Chapter 3, in other parts of his *Annals*, Tacitus further undermined this claim that Augustus did not institute a monarchy (*regnum*). In his *Histories* 1.1, Tacitus made a statement about one-man rule in Rome which on the surface made it appear that he supported the view expressed in *Annals* 1.9 but in *Annals* 1.1-2 and other places, he made numerous comments which demonstrated he favoured the perspective manifested in *Annals* 1.10, he disapproved of any form of permanent autocracy and that the only form of one-man rule which he approved was a temporary dictatorship like under the *vetus res publica*.

In *Annals* 1.9, Augustus' supporters boasted that under Augustus' rule, Roman *imperium* was fenced in by the ocean (*Oceanus*) and distant rivers. It is almost certain that Tacitus intended this to be an allusion to Virgil's prediction that the *imperium* of Augustus Caesar shall be limited by ocean (*Oceanus*)¹³⁸ and Augustus' boast in his *Res Gestae* 26 about Augustus having supposedly reduced to a state of peace the provinces of the Germans bounded by the ocean (*Oceanus*) right up to the mouth of the Elbe River in Germany.¹³⁹ In order to undermine such assertions, in *Annals* 1.10 Tacitus attributed to Augustus' opponents the fact that Augustus' peace included the military disasters when Roman armies under Lollius in 16 B.C. and Varus in A.D. 9 suffered dreadful losses against German armies. By highlighting these two disastrous defeats of the Roman armies, Tacitus' *prudentes* also implicitly undermined the public image of Augustus always being victor, which was symbolised by the Roman people granting him the honour of having laurel trees in front of his

¹³⁵ *Res Gestae* 5.1. See also Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52 and Cassius Dio 54.1.4-2.1.

¹³⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.2.

¹³⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3 and 2.59.

¹³⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.286-287.

¹³⁹ Goodyear provided an analysis of these same issues (Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 159).

royal residence and which Augustus boasted about in his *Res Gestae* 34.¹⁴⁰ Tacitus intended that such representations would further undermine Augustus' credibility.

Eder wrongly conjectured that Tacitus respected the opinions of the *prudentes* who supported Augustus in *Annals* 1.9 as much he respected the attitudes of the *prudentes* who opposed Augustus in *Annals* 1.10.¹⁴¹ Despite Tacitus suggesting that these prudent supporters of Augustus had a special understanding of Augustus' principate, he did not agree with their opinions. Koestermann was convinced that Tacitus was the only extant Roman writer who tried to have a balanced perspective on Augustus, with both negative and positive points.¹⁴² It is doubtful though that Tacitus was aiming to provide completely balanced evaluations of different major Roman perspectives on Augustus' reign. On some occasions, Tacitus provided his Roman readers with many different political perspectives through which Rome's past and/or present political history was told through the words of various characters in his texts,¹⁴³ without him overriding these through his own personal explicit and/or implicit focalizations. He frequently, however, deliberately made his own political viewpoints more prominent or more persuasive. Tacitus ensured that his focalizations in *Annals* 1.10 overpowered his focalizations in *Annals* 1.9 partly through the representations of Augustus' principate found in other parts of Tacitus' texts, especially *Annals*. The criticisms of Augustus by others found in *Annals* 1.10 either undermine some of the praises of Augustus by others in *Annals* 1.9 and/or are never contradicted anywhere else in Tacitus' texts and are expressions of Tacitus' own perspective.¹⁴⁴ A comparison of *Annals* 1.9 and 1.10 with many of Tacitus' relevant comments in other parts of his *Annals* and his other texts, indicates he mostly or totally supported the latter more critical view in *Annals* 1.10 and felt that Augustus'

¹⁴⁰ See also Tacitus, *Germania* 37.5 and Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 23.1.

¹⁴¹ Galinsky 2005: 15.

¹⁴² Koestermann 1961: 349-350.

¹⁴³ Marincola rightly suggested there can be multiple focalizations or perspectives from which an author narrates in a text (Marincola, 1999: 303 and 318). See also Bal on focalization (Bal 1985:105).

¹⁴⁴ Walker 1952: 212-213.

statements about these specific matters in the extant *Res Gestae* were deceptions.¹⁴⁵ In *Annals* 1.10 and 1.2, there are allusions to and negative reassessments of some of the assertions made by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*.¹⁴⁶

Evidence that *Annals* 1.10 contains a summary of some of Tacitus' views on Augustus can be seen in the following points: In *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus had the *prudentes* refer negatively to Augustus abducting Nero's wife Livia and then Augustus asking the pontiffs the supposedly farcical question about whether she could marry Augustus when she was carrying a child conceived through her marriage to a previous husband. Similarly later in *Annals* 5.1, Tacitus wrote disapprovingly about Augustus taking Livia from her husband because he was smitten by her beauty and about Augustus taking Livia into his house without even allowing her an interval during her confinement while pregnant to her previous husband. Also in *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus ascribed to the *prudentes* the comment that as a mother, Livia was a curse to the *res publica*. This generally accorded with a number of other comments which Tacitus made about Livia. For example earlier in *Annals* 1.3, Tacitus asserted that there were two possible causes of the deaths of Lucius and Gaius Caesar, one of these being Livia's treachery, and in *Annals* 1.6, Tacitus alleged that Livia and her son Tiberius most probably had a grandson of Augustus murdered. In *Annals* 4.71, Tacitus also claimed that Livia worked in the dark trying to destroy her stepchildren, and later Tacitus criticised her for lacking in self control as a mother (*mater impotens*) and for being suitably inclined to the pretences of her son Tiberius and the craftiness or cunning tricks of her husband Augustus.¹⁴⁷ If these comments about Livia are combined together, they come close to agreeing with the assertion of the *prudentes* that Livia was a curse to the *res publica*. In addition in *Annals* 1.10, the

¹⁴⁵For an evaluation of the relationship between Tacitus' direct statements in his prooemium and the statements made by the negative voices in *Annals* 1.10, see Christ 1978: 469. Goodyear asserted that Tacitus leant strongly towards the unfavourable view of Augustus found in *Annals* 1.10, but did not necessarily approve of everything stated in this chapter (Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 162-163).

¹⁴⁶Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 104.

¹⁴⁷*cum artibus mariti, simulatione filii bene composita* (*Annals* 5.1).

critics of Augustus condemned his proscriptions, but note that earlier in *Annals* 1.2, Tacitus similarly criticised Augustus' proscriptions.¹⁴⁸

Employing the vehicle of an invented speech by Emperor Tiberius at Augustus' funeral, Cassius Dio attempted to justify Augustus' success in obtaining political and military support from opponents through Augustus pretending friendliness towards them but then later betraying these same allies so that he could step-by-step eliminate Brutus and Cassius, Lepidus, Sextus Pompeius, Antony and each of their groups of supporters for the supposed greater public good and without any personal gain for Augustus.¹⁴⁹ In *Annals* 1.10, however, Tacitus asserted that the *prudentes* among Augustus' opponents insisted that from his lust for dominion (*cupidine dominandi*) Augustus pretended (or produced a fraudulent imitation of) favour or friendship to the Pompeian groups (*simulatam Pompeianarum gratiam partium*) in Roman politics for a particular period of time in the 30s B.C. This was a highly significant accusation because it meant that, so that he could obtain total control of the Roman state, Augustus was willing to represent himself with a false political image, in order to obtain the support of Romans who would not normally support him if they knew what his actual intentions were. Whereas Cassius Dio depicted Augustus' frequent lying and betraying allies as being necessary for the good of the Roman state and having no personal benefit to Augustus, Tacitus' *prudentes* undermined this depiction.

A case can be made for the argument that *Annals* 1.10 provided evidence that Tacitus was well aware of the contents of Augustus' *Res Gestae*.¹⁵⁰ In *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus seems to have parodied parts of Augustus' *Res Gestae* as an official interpretation which Tacitus could subject to negative reinterpretation.¹⁵¹ In *Res Gestae* 2, Augustus claimed that he punished Brutus and Cassius by due process of law and that it was only when they waged war against the Roman *res publica* that he responded by defeating them in battle. Augustus' self-

¹⁴⁸ Hinard 1985.

¹⁴⁹ Cassius Dio 56.37.1-4.

¹⁵⁰ Haverfield 1912: 197-199.

¹⁵¹ Kraus and Woodman 1997: 98. For valuable comparisons of some of Augustus' major self-representations in his *Res Gestae* to Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus, refer to Christ 1978: 470.

representation here portrayed him as someone who was motivated primarily by his pious devotion to his adoptive father, acted totally legally without corruptly manipulating the Senate and Roman people to support his actions against Brutus and Cassius, wanted peace, did not initiate the civil war and only reluctantly fought against the Roman armies of Brutus and Cassius in order to defend the *res publica*. Tacitus, however, represented Augustus' critics insisting that in the case of Augustus' personal hatred of Cassius and Brutus, it is divine law or ethically right that private hatreds are abandoned or overlooked for the sake of the public interests.¹⁵² The obvious implication from this was that because of his personal hatreds, Augustus had instigated a civil war against Cassius and Brutus contrary to the greater interests of the Roman people.

Velleius approvingly portrayed Augustus ending the civil wars and restoring peace.¹⁵³ Augustus also congratulated himself for doing these things¹⁵⁴ and claimed to be motivated by a strong desire for peace.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, Horace referred to Augustus as the guardian of peace (*custodem pacis*),¹⁵⁶ sprung from the blessed gods and the best protector of the race of Romulus (*divis orte bonis, optime Romulae custos gentis*).¹⁵⁷ Virgil praised Augustus for bringing peace¹⁵⁸ and claimed that after Augustus was invoked by the Roman people in their vows, wars would cease.¹⁵⁹ Pertinent to these comments, Syme interpreted Tacitus' statement in *Histories* 1.1 to mean that Tacitus believed that it was necessary for supreme authority to be concentrated in the hands of one man if Rome was to be restored to peace and stability.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, Wallace-Hadrill argued that Tacitus regarded the principate as a necessary evil in

¹⁵² *fas sit private odia publicis utilitatibus remittere* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10).

¹⁵³ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3, 2.90.4 and 2.92.2.

¹⁵⁴ *Res Gestae* 12-13. The *Ara Pacis* in Rome commemorated the Augustan peace and the return of the so-called Golden Age (Rehak 2006: 146).

¹⁵⁵ Julius Caesar, *de Bello Civile* 3.18-19, 57 and 90 and *Res Gestae* 34.

¹⁵⁶ Horace, *Epistulae* 2.1.255. For similar comments, see Horace, *Odes* 3.14.15-16 and 15.17-20.

¹⁵⁷ Horace, *Odes* 4.5.1-2.

¹⁵⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.852.

¹⁵⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.290-291.

¹⁶⁰ Syme 1958, Volume 1: 408. Syme also labelled it "the peace of despotism." See also Syme 1964: 238-239 and Conte 1994a: 536.

order to preserve peace.¹⁶¹ Similarly, after quoting the expression *postquam bellatum....cessere* in Tacitus' *Histories* 1.1 and *postquam hic...regeretur* in *Annals* 1.9, Sion-Jenkis conjectured: "The existence of the monarchy in Rome is justified by it being essential for the maintenance of peace and the state as a whole."¹⁶² In *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus claimed that Augustus' prudent supporters referred to the needs of the affairs or welfare of the people (*necessitudo rei publicae*) motivating Augustus to engage in civil wars and to establish government by one-man. Augustus' supporters insisted that the sole remedy for Rome's political and social troubles and to ensure peace was that Rome "might be controlled or governed by one (*uno regeretur*)" permanently,¹⁶³ but note that in *Annals* 1.10 Augustus' prudent opponents argued that Augustus himself was one of the main Romans responsible for Rome's recent civil wars against Brutus and Cassius, Sextus Pompey, and Mark Antony.

The opponents implied that it was hypocritical for Augustus to boast about restoring peace and ending the civil wars when he was partly responsible for them. This portrayal of Augustus' actions was also in direct contrast to Augustus' attempted self-justification of his instigating of a civil war against Brutus and Cassius and was contrary to Ovid's representation of Octavian as being lawful or just through the use of the warfare (*iusta per arma*).¹⁶⁴ Tacitus supported the stance taken by the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10. This is evident in *Annals* 1.2 when Tacitus accused Augustus of disarming the *res publica* when his forces defeated the armies of Brutus and Cassius. Also, Tacitus later aimed to undermine the nature of the Augustan peace by emphasizing that after 12 years of rule by Augustus as joint triumvir and then 35 years as emperor, Augustus had failed to rid the Roman legions in Pannonia of their

¹⁶¹ Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 110.

¹⁶² Sion-Jenkis 2000: 135 and 166. There have been modern scholars who have had a more critical perspective of Augustus' peacemaking activities (Syme 1939: 9 and Mause 1999: 142-155). As evidence of his more critical perspective of the image of Augustus as the prince of peace (*Bild des Friedensfürsten Augustus*), Mause cited Tacitus, *Annals* 10.4 and 1.16-49, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 19.1, Suetonius, *Tiberius* 8 and 16.1, Velleius 2.91.2-4, Seneca the Younger, *Dialogi* 10.4.6, Pliny the Elder 7.45.149, Strabo 14.5.4 (670) and Cassius Dio 53.24.4-6, 54.3.2-5, 54.15.1, 55.10.15, 55.14-22.2, 55.27.2 (Mause 1999: 145 n.26, 150 n.66-70 and 154 n.108 and 112). See also Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 23.1. For a more positive view of Augustus' role in bringing peace to the Roman world, see Stier 1975: 3-54. See also Laruccia 1980.

¹⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ovid, *Fasti* 3.710.

hope of engaging in a new civil war and of appointing a one-man ruler who suited their desires.¹⁶⁵

Tacitus said after the Battle of Actium, "(for the sake) of peace it had been expedient (that) all (political and military) power to be assigned to one."¹⁶⁶ Note importantly, however, that when Tacitus here argued that it had been expedient that all power to be bestowed on one person, he did not maintain that it was legally or constitutionally right for this to become a permanent fixture in Roman politics. Also he did not suggest that he approved of a permanent *dominatio* or monarchy, but instead was almost certainly referring to Augustus functioning, for example, like the famous Roman hero Camillus did when the Gauls sacked Rome in about 390 B.C. In this desperate emergency, the Roman people approved of Camillus being appointed a temporary dictator until the trouble subsided,¹⁶⁷ but at the appropriate time Camillus resigned as dictator and permitted the Roman state to return to functioning without an absolute ruler. Relevant to this, in *Annals* 1.1 Tacitus maintained that dictatorships under the *vetus res publica* were only temporary expedients.

In his *Res Gestae* 1, 2 and 25, Augustus claimed to have always acted legally in defence of the *res publica* during his civil wars against Antony, Brutus and Cassius and Sextus Pompey. To emphasize his point, in his *Res Gestae* he refused to even mention any of their names. Also, Augustus asserted that by raising an army at his own personal expense he had freed Rome from the *dominatio* of the political faction led by Mark Antony.¹⁶⁸ Contrary to Augustus' stance, however, Tacitus' prudent opponents argued that because of his own personal lust for despotism, Augustus raised his own private army, illegally took possession of the armies of the consuls Hirtius and Pansa, after the latter two had either been killed in battle or murdered with Augustus planning these treasonous acts, extorted or obtained by

¹⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.16. See also Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4 and Kraus and Woodman 1997: 97.

¹⁶⁶ *omnem potentiam ad unum conferri pacis interfuit* (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1).

¹⁶⁷ Livy 5.19.2, 5.46.11 and 6.2.5-6. Burck noted a number of political parallels between Augustus and Camillus (Burck 1966: 99-100), but note that Camillus exercised unlimited *imperium* through being elected as a temporary dictator of Rome in an emergency, whereas Augustus permanently exercised absolute *imperium* as a triumvir and then *princeps*.

¹⁶⁸ *Res Gestae* 1.

force a consulship from the unwilling Senate (*extortum invito senatu consulatum*) and then turned the armies, which had been given to him by the Senate to quell the forces of Mark Antony, against the *res publica*.¹⁶⁹ Augustus also accused Sextus Pompeius of being a pirate who had taken up arms against the *res publica*,¹⁷⁰ rather than saying that Sextus Pompey was fighting to restore the old Roman Republic and to rid Rome of the despotism of the Second Triumvirate. Tacitus, however, undermined this representation by employing Augustus' opponents in *Annals* 1.10 to criticise Augustus for betraying Sextus Pompeius through the pretended peace treaty of Misenum in 39 B.C.¹⁷¹ Note that Sextus Pompeius had not been in Rome at the time of Julius Caesar's death, but despite this Augustus had Sextus Pompeius condemned to death in the proscriptions of the triumvirs.¹⁷²

Throughout *Annals* 1-6, Tacitus portrayed Tiberius as increasingly engaging in arrogance and cruelty. Relevant to this, Tacitus asserted that the prudent opponents of Augustus insisted that Augustus appointed Tiberius not for the good of *res publica* but because of wanting to heighten his own glory by providing the vilest of contrasts between himself and Tiberius, the latter being described as manifesting arrogance and cruelty (*adrogantiam saevitiamque*).¹⁷³ Tacitus knew that his Roman readers would have such comments backgrounded in their minds, when he foregrounded in the next section Tiberius' insistence that Augustus possessed a divine mind (*mens*). By this clever use of backgrounding and foregrounding, Tacitus was setting his readers up for asking themselves such questions as: "If Augustus had a divine mind and put the interests of the plebeians and other members of the Roman *res publica* before his own personal self interests, why did he inflict on them a successor who was supposedly so arrogant and cruel?" By presenting such implied questions to his readers, Tacitus was further undermining Augustus' public image as the kind self-

¹⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10. Compare to Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 11 and 26.1-2.

¹⁷⁰ *Res Gestae* 25.

¹⁷¹ *sed Pompeium imagine pacis* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10).

¹⁷² Cassius Dio 47.12.2, 48.17.3 and Appian 4.96. At the negotiations of the Treaty of Misenum in 39 B.C., however, Sextus Pompeius refused to break his sworn oaths to Augustus and Mark Antony by engaging in the proposed deception and arrest of the latter two (Appian 5.73, Plutarch, *Mark Antony* 32.4-5 and Cassius Dio 48.38.1-2).

¹⁷³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.11.

sacrificing *pater patriae* and the *paterfamilias* of the Roman Empire who was devoted to the best interests of his subjects.

Augustus claimed that prior to January 27 B.C. he had obtained the absolute control of affairs by universal consent¹⁷⁴ and that in 2 B.C., the entire Roman people gave him the title Father of my Country.¹⁷⁵ Suetonius appeared to have confirmed Augustus' latter claim when he maintained that the whole body of citizens unanimously offered Augustus the title of *Pater Patriae*.¹⁷⁶ Note, however, by asserting in *Annals* 1.10 that there were Romans who strongly opposed Augustus' actions in obtaining and maintaining his political power, Tacitus implicitly undermined these two portrayals of Augustus.

Augustus insisted that the Senate ordered him to see that the *res publica* suffered no harm and that in the same year the people of Rome elected him as a triumvir.¹⁷⁷ Contrary to this, Augustus and Velleius avoided mentioning the very significant fact that as triumvir, Augustus approved of the murders of large numbers of his fellow citizens without just trials. In *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus depicted Augustus' supporters asserting that very few had been dealt with by force (*pauca admodum vi tractata*) during Augustus' political career but Florus and Cassius Dio mentioned the large numbers who were murdered¹⁷⁸ and Suetonius wrote that despite supposedly initially trying to prevent a proscription, out of the three triumvirs, later Augustus was most insistent that none of the accused should be spared and he wanted to continue the proscriptions in future.¹⁷⁹ Florus and Cassius Dio tried to excuse Augustus' killing of his fellow citizens without just trials,¹⁸⁰ but note that their and Velleius' attempted

¹⁷⁴ *per consensum universorum potitus* (potens? - Cooley 2009: 257) *rerum omnium* (*Res Gestae* 34).

¹⁷⁵ *populus Romanus universus appellavit me patrem patriae* (*Res Gestae* 35).

¹⁷⁶ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 58.1. This grand all-inclusive statement needs to be interpreted with the understanding that it would have been impossible for all Roman citizens from every part of Italy and the non-Italian provinces to have been present in Rome at the time this offer was made and not all citizens in the city of Rome itself were compelled to gather in assemblies of the Roman people.

¹⁷⁷ On many occasions in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus claimed he had the support of the Senate and/or assemblies of the Roman people when this suited him, but avoided mentioning examples of him disobeying the decisions of the Senate when these did not suit him and failed to record occasions when he used his soldiers to coerce the Senate and/or assemblies of the Roman people to do what he wanted.

¹⁷⁸ Florus 2.16.6.3-4 and Cassius Dio 47.3.1-13.4.

¹⁷⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1-2.

¹⁸⁰ Florus 2.16.6.3-6 and Cassius Dio 47.7.1-4. Cassius Dio tried to excuse the numerous political murders and acts of violence which Augustus engaged in as a triumvir, blaming extraordinary circumstances rather than

justifications of Augustus' actions were contradictory to each other. Both Tacitus in *Annals* 1.2 and the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10 condemned Augustus for his proscriptions.¹⁸¹ Relevant to this, in his *Annals* 1.1-10 Tacitus portrayed the Augustan principate as being, contrary to outward appearances, a hereditary monarchy based on violence and deception.¹⁸² In all of the extant Roman sources, Tacitus' depiction of Augustus' principate was certainly the most negative and disapproving.

The next section will explore what were Tiberius' explicit and implicit portrayals of Augustus, as recorded in Tacitus' *Annals*.

2.3 Tiberius' explicit and implicit representations of Augustus

Syme argued that Tacitus may have arrived at "the strange but captivating idea" that before and after succeeding to the principate, "Tiberius was the victim of Augustus."¹⁸³ Relevant to Syme's comments, Strabo maintained that Tiberius made Augustus the model of his administration and decrees.¹⁸⁴ Tiberius' depiction of Augustus as an almost perfect model and/or the employment of images of Augustus as convenient instruments for Tiberius' attempts to solidify his own political power, were demonstrated when Suetonius noted that Tiberius even turned into capital crimes the criticising of any of Augustus' words or acts, beating a slave near or changing one's clothes near a statue of Augustus, and carrying a ring

Augustus (Cassius Dio 56.44.1-2), by claiming that these acts were committed chiefly by Lepidus and Antony, by arguing that Augustus agreed to these murders only because he shared political authority with Lepidus and Antony (Cassius Dio 47.7.1-2) and by blaming the Roman senators for in 43 B.C. not choosing one man as their permanent monarch (Cassius Dio 46.34.1). For useful discussion of the portrayals by Cassius Dio and Appian of the proscriptions of the Second Triumvirate, see Gowing 1992: especially 247-270.

¹⁸¹ Macrobius recorded that writing in the time of Augustus, the historian Asinius Pollio represented one of Augustus' public images as being the leader who currently had the political and military power to proscribe any Roman he so desired: "it is not easy to write against him (Augustus) who is able (or has power) to proscribe (*non est enim facile in eum scribere, qui potent proscribere*)" (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2.4.21). Suetonius provided an anecdote which supported the gist of Asinius Pollio's accusation (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.3-4).

¹⁸² Keitel 1984: 312.

¹⁸³ Syme 1958 Volume 1: 428.

¹⁸⁴ Strabo, 6.4.2. For discussion of Tiberius' weighty reliance upon the precedents set by Augustus, refer to Shotter 1988: 226-230; Shotter 1966a: 265-271; Shotter 1968: 194-214 and Shotter 1971: 1117-1123.

or a coin with an image of Augustus on it into a latrine or a brothel.¹⁸⁵ More than any other ancient Roman writer, Tacitus demonstrated exceptional concern about Tiberius' relationship with precedents set by Augustus.¹⁸⁶ For example, Tacitus satirically highlighted that it would be against divine law or the will of the gods for Tiberius to render null and void Augustus' words.¹⁸⁷ By emphasising that Tiberius was supposedly following political precedents set by Augustus, Tacitus was able to provide further evidence for his claims that Augustus had instituted a political system which was a *dominatio* and a monarchy (*regnum*), despite Augustus' denials and ambiguous self-representations.

Tacitus maintained that immediately after Augustus' death, a report went out saying that Tiberius is making himself master or is obtaining control of matters (*rerum potiri*).¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Tacitus portrayed Tiberius, from the beginning of his reign, as having already assumed absolute control of the Roman state¹⁸⁹ and as refusing to acknowledge publicly he had already assumed the full *imperium*.¹⁹⁰ Contrary to these political events, however, Tacitus later depicted a scene at Augustus' funeral involving Tiberius, giving an address in which Tiberius said that collective rule rather than one-man rule of the Roman Empire was a necessity for all other Roman rulers than Augustus: "Alone the divine mind of the deified Augustus was able to deal with such a great responsibility (or burden): having been invited by that (man i.e. Augustus) to share a portion of the anxieties, he himself (i.e. Tiberius) experiencing how difficult, how subject to Fortune was the burden of responsibility of controlling the whole (of the *magnitudinis imperii* mentioned in the previous sentence)."¹⁹¹ The word *mentum* can mean mind or divine mind depending on the context. In this context,

¹⁸⁵ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 58. See also Suetonius, *Tiberius* 58 and 69.

¹⁸⁶ For example, see Tacitus, *Agricola* 13.2, *Annals* 1.3, 1.7, 1.14, 1.72, 1.77, 2.59, 3.6, 3.54, 4.37-38 and 6.3. For relevant commentary, see Cowan 2009: 183, Shotter 1966b: 207-212, Ober 1982: 326 and O' Gorman, 1995: 91-114.

¹⁸⁷ *neque fas Tiberio infringere dicta eius* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.77).

¹⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.5.

¹⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6-7.

¹⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.13.

¹⁹¹ *Solam divi Augusti mentem tantae molis capacem: se in partem curarum ab illo vocatum experiendo didicisse quam arduum, quam subiectum fortunae regendi cuncta onus* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.11).

the meaning "divine mind" seems to be the most appropriate.¹⁹² Emphasising Augustus' supposed divinity, Tiberius asserted that only the divine mind of the deified Augustus, supported by the Roman goddess *Fortuna*, was able to control the whole Roman Empire. By saying this, Tiberius, contrary to Augustus' self representation of being just a consul with tribunician rights, was admitting that Augustus actually singly controlled the whole Roman Empire himself. This is confirmed by the following sentence in which Tiberius referred to his own supposed intention to share the functions of the *res publica* jointly with other Roman leaders instead of designating all duties to one person, implying that Augustus did the latter.

Also later Tacitus depicted that contrary to the fact that Tiberius had previously assumed absolute power, Tiberius pretended he was unable to take control of the whole *res publica* himself and claimed that he was willing to take charge of any single department of government which the Senate might allocate to him.¹⁹³ Asinius Gallus responded by asking Tiberius which specific department would he like for the Senate to assign to him.¹⁹⁴ In Tacitus' comments on Tiberius' response to this question, he depicted Tiberius as playing a deceitful game of playing with words. Tacitus argued that Gallus then admitted that he had asked this question in order to obtain from Tiberius an admission that the Roman state was already a single whole which needed to be governed by one person. Tacitus also attributed to a Roman knight, the comment to Tiberius and the Roman Senate that Tiberius was really the sovereign arbiter of all things (*summum rerum iudicium*) and all Romans had been left with the glory of obedience or subservience (*obsequii gloria*) to him.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, Tacitus provided examples of Tiberius behaving in a contradictory manner by sometimes insisting on what he wanted regardless of the attitudes of the Roman Senate,¹⁹⁶ while at other times criticising the senators for acting like his slaves. For example Tacitus recorded that after

¹⁹² Previously in *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus claimed that the *prudentes* who were opponents of Augustus, strongly criticised Augustus for promoting the worship of himself.

¹⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.12.

¹⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.12.

¹⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.8.

¹⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6, 1.8 and 5.3.

departing the Senate, Tiberius frequently mocked the senators by saying they were ready for slavery, with Tacitus satirically adding that despite Tiberius objecting to public *libertas*, he was growing weary of the submission of his slave-like senators.¹⁹⁷ By making all these related comments about Augustus' successor, Tacitus was implicitly providing a very negative portrayal of what he regarded as the inherent fundamentals, hypocrisy and ambiguity of the political system which Augustus had instituted.

As stated earlier, on another occasion after depicting Tiberius' diction as always being obscure and indirect, Tacitus represented Tiberius' diction in this speech at Augustus' funeral as being more intricate, uncertain and ambiguous than ever in order to conceal all traces of Tiberius' real sentiments.¹⁹⁸ In one sense, Tacitus represented Tiberius as an unfortunate individual who was bound by the ambiguous, contradictory and hypocritical political façade which Tacitus believed Augustus had instituted.¹⁹⁹ In another sense, however, Tacitus portrayed Augustus' successor Tiberius as being an almost expected product of the same supposedly negative system of government. Such portrayals of Augustus' political system as found previously in this chapter were far more negative than those provided in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

2.4 Concluding comments

This chapter has demonstrated that in his *Annals*, Tacitus portrayed the views of four different Roman personae in particular about Augustus and that Tacitus employed different perspectives to convey particular aspects of his own views about Augustus. Chapters 3 to 5 will provide further extensive evidence of what were the characteristics of Tacitus' attitudes to

¹⁹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.65.3-4. For commentary, refer to Woodman and Martin 1996: 457.

¹⁹⁸ *Tiberioque, etiam in rebus quas non occuleret, seu natura sive adsuetudine, suspensa semper et obscura verba; tunc vero nitenti ut sensus suos penitus abderet, in incertum et ambiguum magis implicabantur* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.11). See Daitz 1960: 36 and 47 and Seager 1972: 257.

¹⁹⁹ For an analysis of Tacitus' *Annals* 1.13, a passage which illustrates difficulties for Tiberius in relation to Augustus, refer to Shotter 1967a: 37-39.

Augustus and will demonstrate that there were significant differences between the representations of Augustus' political career found in Tacitus' relevant commentary when compared and contrasted with the depictions of Augustus by Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. It will become increasingly evident that Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' political career were mostly far more negative and sceptical than those of these four other Roman writers.

3

Legal and non-legal representations of Augustus' political career

3.1 Two different scholarly approaches to Augustus' political career

The discussion in this section will act as a necessary foundational guide to all that follows in later sections in this chapter. This present chapter will focus mainly on Augustus' principate, but will also refer to aspects of Augustus' earlier political career.

While it is true that the Romans had no written political constitution, the Romans venerated their own unwritten, though occasionally evolving, political conventions or traditions as part of their *mos maiorum*, and these conventions therefore formed an unwritten and sometimes changing political constitution. It is possible to distinguish between the written legal aspects and unwritten constitutional characteristics of Rome's political system at any one time. Note, however, that because Roman laws were often a reflection of the unwritten constitution and they both experienced regular changes as individual entities or in their relationships to each other, this thesis will not draw such a sharp distinction. This study will employ the word "legal" as an imprecise synonym for "constitutional".

Stevenson distinguished between two main scholarly approaches to the study of the Augustan principate.²⁰⁰ He labelled the first as the "constitutional approach", which was pioneered by Mommsen²⁰¹ and a number of British historians, which concentrated primarily on written evidence and which focused on the legal powers of the *princeps*, especially

²⁰⁰ Stevenson 1997: 125.

²⁰¹ See Mommsen 1887-1888 and Wiedemann 1996: 63-114.

*imperium*²⁰² and *tribunicia potestas*.²⁰³ Stevenson claimed that the second approach was initiated in the 1930s primarily by Andreas Alföldi, who concentrated on similarities between the Roman *princeps* and superhuman Hellenistic kings and on non-constitutional aspects of Augustus' political career.²⁰⁴ Like Alföldi, Judge has done a significant service to modern scholarship by emphasising the non-constitutional characteristics of Augustus' principate²⁰⁵ and as a result has helped to correct the Mommsen's over-emphasis on constitutional or legal aspects of the Augustan principate.

Kromayer's text "The Legal Justification of the Principate (*Die Rechtliche Begründung des Prinzipats*)" reflected the emphasis among some scholars in the 1800s and 1900s on how Augustus and his supporters tried to justify Augustus' new political system legally.²⁰⁶ In 1898, however, Kaerst questioned whether it was correct to interpret the principate solely in legal constitutional terms like Mommsen had previously done.²⁰⁷ Likewise much later, Syme rightly pointed out that it is wrong for historians to just focus on the legal or constitutional foundations of Augustus' powers²⁰⁸ and argued that the main

²⁰² For a discussion of the meanings of *imperium* in ancient Rome, see Drogula 2010: 419-452; Richardson, 1991: 1-9; Beranger 1953: 68-96 and 106-111 and Beranger 1977, 325-344. Mommsen and Leifer argued that the *imperium* of Roman consuls involved the absolute power of previous Roman kings (Mommsen 1887-1888, I.3., 22ff; Leifer 1914: 205ff). While all maintaining that the most ancient meaning of the Latin word *imperium* was supreme military authority, Heuss, Kunkel and Bleicken argued that the word later came to represent combined supreme military and civil authority (Heuss 1944: 57-133; Kunkel 1973:15 and Bleicken 1981: 291). Carter argued that the *imperium* of Roman consuls and praetors was "simultaneously civil and military" (Ian Scott-Kilvert 1987: 5). Drogula, however, asserted that *potestas* was possessed by all Roman magistrates (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.57) for use within the city of Rome but that *imperium* was limited to the supreme military authority given to some Roman magistrates to use outside of Rome and only in exceptional situations, through a temporary dictatorship or a *Senatus consultum ultimum*, inside of the city of Rome (Drogula, 2010: 419-452). Note though Drogula correctly pointed out that no complete definition of *imperium* survives in the extant literature from ancient Rome (Drogula 2010: 419). Koortbojian argued that Augustus gave a new meaning to the word *imperium* (Ewald and Norena 2010: 272), but it is probably more accurate to say that Augustus deliberately ensured that his representations of *imperium* in relation to his own principate lacked clear definition and comprehensive details. This is evident in his *Res Gestae* in which he notably failed to clarify the full extent of his *imperium*.

²⁰³ For a valuable overview of the relevant literature, see Hoyos 1983: 5-57.

²⁰⁴ Stevenson 1997: 126. Refer also to Alföldi 1934: 1-118 and 1935: 3-158. These two latter texts were reproduced in 1970 in a work entitled as *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche*.

²⁰⁵ Judge 1987:6.

²⁰⁶ Kromayer 1888.

²⁰⁷ Kaerst 1898: 80 and 86. See also Last 1951: 94.

²⁰⁸ Syme 1939: 321. For a similar assessment, refer to Millar 1963: 29. Syme also questioned whether it was useful to engage in lengthy and intricate investigations of the nature of the so-called first constitutional settlement, because "the real complexity is discovered beyond the law and the constitution, in the things unspoken and undefined" (Syme 1946: 155).

constituents of Augustus' supreme authority originated from non-constitutional sources.²⁰⁹

Possessing similar concerns, von Premerstein challenged the previous overemphasis of many historians on the legal and constitutional foundations of Augustus' powers and focused on its extra-constitutional aspects, for example the client-patron relationships between subjects and emperor and the portrayal of Augustus as a father.²¹⁰ An approach which is more consistent with the extant ancient sources is to recognise that Augustus and his supporters fostered both of these types of portrayals of Augustus--constitutional and non-constitutional.²¹¹

This present chapter will focus on both approaches. Some of the non-constitutional features of Augustus' principate involve his roles as the provider of peace, saviour of Rome, restorer of Roman religion, restorer of Roman ethics, *pater patriae*, generous fatherly provider, possessor of supreme *auctoritas*, *Divus Augustus* and the incarnation of every virtue. Some of these latter matters will be dealt with more extensively later in his chapter. In one sense we can distinguish the legal or constitutional aspects of Augustus' new political system from the non-legal features of the same system. It is wrong, however, to suggest that they were two totally exclusive spheres of influence.²¹²

Tacitus provided representations which relate to both the legal and non-legal characteristics of the political career of Augustus. For example, when questioning the constitutional and ethical validity of Augustus' behaviour in turning his armies, without the

²⁰⁹ Syme 1958: 408.

²¹⁰ von Premerstein 1937. Comprehensive scholarly analysis of patronage during the Roman Republic and/or under the principate can be found in Gelzer 1969: especially 62-100; Badian 1958; Yavetz 1969; Bleicken 1972: 64f; Bleicken 1975: 244f; Rouland 1979; Meier 1966: 34ff; Fabre 1981; Saller 1982; Millar 1984: 17; Brunt 1988: 382-442; Wallace-Hadrill 1989b: 49-245; North 1990: 3-21; Konstan 1995: 328-342 and Damon 1997.

²¹¹ For this view, see Kunkel 1961: 360-361 and Charles-Picard 1968: 16-17. There were five titles used on official documents by Augustus referring to himself: *Pontifex Maximus*, *Consul*, *Imperator*, *Tribunicia Potestas* and *Pater Patriae* (Salmon 1968: 32), and out of these five, four had constitutional significance, but note that Augustus' non-constitutional titles were found also in other locations than official public documents.

²¹² For example, an inscription from Sion from the year 8/7 B.C. gave Augustus a title which mentioned him being *imperator*, son of the deified Caesar, Augustus, consul, (possessing) tribunician power for the 16th time, father of the fatherland, pontifex maximus and patron ([*Im*]p. *Caesari divi fi*[l] *A*]ugusto *cos. XI.*, *tribunicia potestate XVI.*, [*pa*]tri patriae, [*pont*]ifici maximo...patrono) (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* XII 136 =Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 6755). Some ancient inscriptions also referred to Augustus as *parenti patriae* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X 827 and III 6803 =Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 101 and Alfoldi 1971: 93).

Senate's approval, against the Senate-approved armies of Brutus and Cassius,²¹³ Tacitus depicted Augustus' military and political power partly in terms of the non-constitutional practical reality of Augustus' armies having eliminated all of Augustus' military and political opponents.²¹⁴ Tacitus also asserted that Augustus' power was also founded on non-constitutional things such as the cheapened corn he gave to the populace, the peace he provided from civil war, the wealth and offices he provided for the remaining Roman nobility and his opposition to the corrupt greedy activities of many Roman officials in the provinces.²¹⁵ Relevant to this, it can be reasonably argued that most of the population of the Roman Empire probably cared little about the constitutional standing of their emperors but instead focused on whether the emperors fulfilled their needs and wants.²¹⁶

Suetonius maintained that Augustus was willing to lie even in historical works to cover up his injustices.²¹⁷ Despite the fact that scholars can seriously question the reliability of Augustus' comments on the actual legal foundations of his principate,²¹⁸ we learn much about Augustus' public self-representations by studying Augustus' words and the words of other Roman writers about these same matters. The following section will compare Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' supposed fulfilment of constitutional precedents to the representations by Augustus and other Roman writers about the same.

3.2 Augustus' image as fulfilling all legal precedents

Scholars such as Last, Kolbe, Wirszubski, Loewenstein, Hammond, Kienast, Christ, Welwei and Bringmann have argued that Augustus fulfilled most or all aspects of the

²¹³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2 and 1.10.

²¹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

²¹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. See also Crooks' comments on other reasons for Augustus' power (Crook 1996: 114-116).

²¹⁶ Charlesworth 1937:105-133. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1981: 299.

²¹⁷ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.4.

²¹⁸ Raaflaub and Toher 1990; 36.

unwritten Roman constitution.²¹⁹ For example, Bringmann pointed out that Augustus employed the military power of the state to establish his single sovereignty, but unlike Julius Caesar, Augustus took seriously the traditions of the republic and the mentality of the governing class that was marked by the republic, and then anchored his overwhelming power won the civil war, in “the public legal structure of republican law” and endeavoured to link his rule to the ideal of the Roman *mos maiorum*.²²⁰

Because Rome did not have a written political constitution, Judge surmised that it was most misleading to attempt to identify the workings of political power in constitutional terms in the Augustan era.²²¹ Also, Judge conjectured that Augustus never reified the concept of a constitution inherited from the Roman past in the slightest way,²²² but note that in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus devoted much energy aiming to prove to his readers that all his previous political and military actions were based on just legal and constitutional precedents.²²³ For example, Augustus identified *imperium* and laws as the powers to authorise his actions as a propraetor, a consul and a triumvir.²²⁴ Also in *Res Gestae* 6, Augustus painted an image of himself as being a political leader who would always refuse to accept any power, which was offered to him by the Senate and/or people of Rome but was contrary to the political traditions of the Roman ancestors.²²⁵ When Tacitus claimed that the prudent supporters of Augustus emphasised that Augustus did not institute a *regnum*, Tacitus was depicting these supporters as claiming that Augustus did not act contrary to the *mos maiorum* and associated unwritten constitutional traditions at Rome.²²⁶

²¹⁹ Last 1951: 94; Kolbe 1969: 73-89; Wirszubski: 103 and 109; Loewenstein 1969: 560-561; Hammond, 1940: 24; Kienast 1984: 136; Christ 1984: 53; Welwei 2004: 36.

²²⁰ Bringmann 2002a: 410. See also 411-412.

²²¹ Judge 1974: 288.

²²² Judge 1974: 305.

²²³ Ramage 1987: 86-89.

²²⁴ *Res Gestae* 1.2. See also Ramage 1987: 39.

²²⁵ Similarly, Nikolaus of Damascus highlighted an image of the supposed legal nature of Augustus' early political status (*FGH* 130.53, 113, 122 and 131-132).

²²⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9.

Augustus boasted that the Roman people gave him numerous honours in recognition of his justice,²²⁷ this partly relating to his supposed adherence to Roman legal precedents. Also, in his *Res Gestae* 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 25 and 34, Augustus highlighted the supposed scrupulous legality of his political status at all times and the supposed illegality of his opponents, this implicitly contrasting him with the previous political actions of Julius Caesar.²²⁸ In addition, Augustus depicted himself following the traditional *cursus honorum*, punishing the assassins of Julius Caesar in obedience to the law (in this case the *Lex Pedia*), receiving through the enactment of law the declaration that his own person was protected by religious sanction from being violated²²⁹ and legally being granted the tribunician power (*tribunicia potestas*) permanently for life.²³⁰ Augustus also noted that during his period of rule, other Romans were consuls²³¹ and five times at his request, the Senate granted that he have colleagues in the operation of the *tribunicia potestas*.²³² Augustus' concern about fostering the image of himself as always adhering to the *mos maiorum* and associated legal or constitutional precedents was also evident when he boasted about refusing the elected role as sole guardian of laws and ethical customs with the fullest power, rejecting the request for him to become Pontifex Maximus while the contemporary officeholder was still alive, and declining the offer of gold for crowns by the *municipia* and colonies of Italy.²³³ Also, because the Roman constitution was amended over the centuries to adapt to new emergencies and problems, this enabled Augustus to attempt publicly to justify his changes or precedents mentioned in *Res Gestae* 8.²³⁴

²²⁷ *Res Gestae* 34.

²²⁸ Ramage 1985: 228-229.

²²⁹ *Res Gestae* 1, 2 and 10. See also Ramage 1987: 33 and 87.

²³⁰ *Res Gestae* 4 and 10. Augustus possessed *tribunicia potestas* for 37 years from 23 B.C. to A.D. 14. For analysis of Suetonius' commentary on Augustus' *tribunicia potestas*, see Carter 1982: 124-125. For commentary on Augustus' *tribunicia potestas*, see Mommsen 1887-1888, 2: 870-873, Scullard 1982: 209 and 214; Hammond 1968: 79-84; Beranger 1953: 96-106; Kunkel 1961: 364; Last 1951: 93-110; Brunt and Moore 1967: 47; *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 86; Syme 1958: 409; Boak 1918: 24; Jones 1951: 115; Kolbe 1969: 90-94. Galinsky 2005: 26 and 39-44.

²³¹ *Res Gestae* 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 and 22.

²³² *Res Gestae* 6. See also Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3, 1.10 and 3.56.

²³³ *Res Gestae* 4, 5, 6, 10 and 21.

²³⁴ For commentary on precedents which Pompey the Great set, see Beard and Crawford 1999: 10-11. See also Crawford 1976: 216 and Weinstock 1971: 154, 184 n.5 and 197.

To foster his public image of supposedly scrupulously submitting to the ancient Roman legal or constitutional constraints and institutions, in his *Res Gestae* Augustus almost monotonously approvingly highlighted multiple examples of the Senate and/or people of Rome and/or equestrian order exercising authority in matters related to Augustus.²³⁵ These statements depicted Augustus as submitting to the authority of the Senate and Roman people in 43 B.C. and afterwards, but Wallace-Hadrill correctly noted that such displays of respect for the Senate and the people of Rome "sustained the illusion of the supremacy of those bodies."²³⁶ Similarly, later in 28 B.C., Octavian/Augustus stipulated that any unconstitutional behaviour by him previously as a triumvir was now invalid and he declared on a gold coin that that he had restored law and rights or justice to the Roman people (LEGES ET IURA P[opulo] R[omano] RESTITUIT).²³⁷ Augustus depicted particular perspectives which he wanted his readers to see,²³⁸ but some other Roman writers undermined these positive self-portrayals by Augustus by arguing that he had a very poor relationship with the Senate in 43 B.C. prior to him gaining control of it,²³⁹ he often did not submit to the Senate for a number of years from 43 B.C and he permitted his soldiers to coerce the Senate through threats of violence into making him a consul.²⁴⁰ Also, Augustus did not mention his approval of the murders of many Romans through proscriptions and without just trials. Even the generally supportive Suetonius exceeded Tacitus in the intensity of his criticism of Augustus' obviously illegal political murders.²⁴¹

²³⁵ Ramage rightly identified these examples as being: Senate only: *Res Gestae* 1.2, 1.3, 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 9.1, 10.1, 11, 12.1, 12.2, 13, 14.1, 20.4, 22.2, 34.2, 35.1; people only: 1.4, 10.2; Senate and people together: 6.1, 8.1, 14.1, 34.2; equestrians only: 14.2; Senate, equestrians and people together: 35.1 (Ramage 1987: 88, n. 209). Also, Augustus wrote approvingly of the supreme administrative authority of the Roman people (*imperio populi Romani*) twice and the commands of the Roman people (*imperia populi Romani*) once (*Res Gestae* 27 and 30).

²³⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 37.

²³⁷ Galinsky 2005: 23-24.

²³⁸ Ramage 1987: 33.

²³⁹ Appian 3.261-265, 3.334-340, 3.353-357, 361-363 and 371-376; Cassius Dio 46.40-41 and Velleius Paterculus 2.62.1-6.

²⁴⁰ Appian 3.361-388, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 26.1-2, Cassius Dio 46.39.2-46.47.3.

²⁴¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.

Augustus was a consul 13 times.²⁴² To portray himself, however, as submitting to all constitutional precedents and the associated *mos maiorum*, Augustus highlighted that he had turned down offers of repeated yearly consulships and the consulship for life, and he claimed that from 27 B.C. onwards he had no more power (*potestas*) than any other Roman magistrate.²⁴³ When Velleius asserted that Augustus was obliged to hold the office of consul 11 times consecutively, despite Augustus' many attempts to prevent this,²⁴⁴ Velleius was depicting Augustus supposedly as a strict adherent to Republican precedents and to the associated *mos maiorum*. This representation has a number of features in common with Augustus' portrayal in *Res Gestae* 5 and 6 of his own attitudes to consecutive and perpetual consulships and to the *mos maiorum*. Tacitus, however, treated all such public portrayals with disdain.

Tacitus was certain that unofficially Augustus had much more political and military power than was possessed by any consul, proconsul or magistrate under the *vetus res publica*,²⁴⁵ and that among Augustus' senatorial colleagues, solely he united in his own person the official powers of the tribunate, set free from old Republican time limitations, and of the consulate.²⁴⁶ In addition, Tacitus not once suggested that manifestations of senatorial decision-making, collegial operations of various Roman magistracies together with Augustus and limitations on the number of consulships held by Augustus, in any way diminished what Tacitus regarded as the façade of Augustus' absolute rule or *dominatio*.

In his *Res Gestae* 1, Augustus significantly claimed that the Roman Senate gave him *imperium*, thereby suggesting that all of the political and military authority, which he possessed, had been legally given to him by the Senate. Note, however, that Tacitus suggested that Augustus usurped *imperium* by pretending to be just a *princeps*, by usurping the power of

²⁴² *Res Gestae* 4.

²⁴³ *Res Gestae* 5 and 34.

²⁴⁴ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.4-5.

²⁴⁵ Carter 1970: 241. For a review of some of the earlier scholarship on *Res Gestae* 34.3 and for Adcock's own position, refer to Adcock 1952a: 10-12.

²⁴⁶ Bringmann 2002a: 415.

a praetor and by manipulating an unwilling Senate into appointing him as a consul.²⁴⁷ In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus avoided mentioning that he had exercised *imperium* over roughly half of the Roman Empire for about 40 years and had exercised *maius imperium* over the public provinces in the remainder of the Roman Empire.²⁴⁸ In addition, of all the consuls during Augustus' principate, only Augustus was declared permanently *sacrosanctus*, this resulting in him in one sense not being equal to his colleagues in the consulate.²⁴⁹ Also, contrary to Augustus' claim that he rejected the offer of the consulship for life,²⁵⁰ Cassius Dio argued that in 19 B.C., the Senate gave Augustus the authority of a consul for life, this providing him with continual consular *imperium* over Rome and Italy.²⁵¹

Hohl²⁵² astutely noted that Augustus' statement that he possessed no more power than any of his colleagues in any magistracy²⁵³ was neither the whole truth nor a complete lie. Considering Augustus possessed a combination of permanent, though nominally renewed, *tribunician potestas*, *imperium* over the best part of the Roman army and other very significant prerogatives, Augustus' claim in *Res Gestae* 34, that he possessed no more power than any of his colleagues in any magistracy, appears on the basis of other sources to have been such a blatant half-truth that only the uninformed in ancient times or the dogmatic in the contemporary era could have believed it.²⁵⁴ Tacitus contradicted Augustus' ambiguous self-representations in *Res Gestae* 34.3. Tacitus did this when he portrayed Augustus gradually

²⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and 1.10.

²⁴⁸ In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus did not record anything which matches Cassius Dio' claim that in 23 B.C., the Senate voted that Augustus hold the office of proconsul for life over many of the provinces of the Empire (Cassius Dio 53.32.5). For discussion of the relevant matters, see also Last 1947: 157-164, Jones 1970: 59-60 and Garnsey and Saller 1982: 3. Citing Cotton and Yacobson (2002, 196-197, including n.16), however, Cooley argued that the above hypothesis was founded on "a confused and exaggerated account in Cassius Dio (53.32.5) of Augustus' powers in 23 B.C." (Cooley 2009: 35). Note, however, that because of so many contradictions and much ambiguity in the relevant extant sources about Augustus' principate, it is virtually impossible to prove with certainty whether Cassius Dio was right and Augustus conveniently avoided mentioning any permanent proconsular power, just like he hid his monarchical power, or whether Cassius Dio invented these details for some other reason.

²⁴⁹ Bleicken 1990: 89.

²⁵⁰ *Res Gestae* 5.

²⁵¹ Cassius Dio 54.10.5. On the basis of very limited sources on the topic, it is difficult to determine whether Augustus or Cassius Dio was representing the truth about Augustus' supposed consular *imperium*.

²⁵² Hohl 1947: 114-115.

²⁵³ *potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri, qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt* (*Res Gestae* 34.3).

²⁵⁴ Wirszubski 1950: 110-111. See also Zanker 1988: 91.

uniting in himself the functions of all the magistrates and the Senate²⁵⁵ rather than Augustus possessing no more power than any of his fellow magistrates, and when Tacitus maintained that every Roman (including all magistrates) having been set free from equality, paid heed to the commands of the one particular *princeps*, Augustus.²⁵⁶ According to Tacitus' perspective, Augustus' claim that he had no more *potestas* than any of his colleagues in the magistracies was only true if Augustus really permitted this to occur.²⁵⁷ Tacitus also undermined Augustus' claim about possessing no more power than any other Roman magistrate when Tacitus referred to Augustus as the "aged *princeps*, the veteran power or controller who by means of power and/or military strength, made provision for even his successors for the sake of the State."²⁵⁸

In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus always portrayed himself as acting constitutionally through defending the Roman *res publica* from his Roman political and military opponents, this including Mark Antony, Brutus and Cassius, and Sextus Pompey respectively and their different groups of supporters.²⁵⁹ Also, Augustus represented himself as being elected by the Roman people as a consul and as a triumvir for establishing the constitution (*rei publicae constituendae creavit*).²⁶⁰ Note, however, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, Tacitus also attempted to undermine such claims. Also despite temporary dictatorships being legal in times of emergency during the *vetus res publica*, Augustus highlighted that he refused an offer of the dictatorship from the Senate and people of Rome.²⁶¹ It is reasonable to argue that Augustus probably did this because any acceptance of the dictatorship could have been taken as signifying he intended to institute a perpetual dictatorship like Julius Caesar's, the latter being illegal and unconstitutional. Augustus' public portrayal of himself rejecting the

²⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

²⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

²⁵⁷ Ramage 1987: 37.

²⁵⁸ *senem principem, longa potentia, provisus etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.8).

²⁵⁹ *Res Gestae* 1, 2 and 25.

²⁶⁰ *Res Gestae* 1. Vitruvius also used the expression *constitutionem rei publica* in relation to Augustus (Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 1.2).

²⁶¹ *Res Gestae* 5, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52, Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9 and Cassius Dio 54.1.3-5 See also Alföldy 1972: 1-12.

dictatorship was a masterpiece of political manoeuvring in front of the plebeians.²⁶² Despite mentioning that Augustus' supporters emphasised that Augustus did not institute a dictatorship, Tacitus countered this representation by accusing him of instituting a form of permanent despotism (*dominatio*).²⁶³

When in *Res Gestae* 2, Augustus boasted that he had driven the assassins of Julius Caesar into exile through the Roman processes of law, he did not mention that the tribunal which did this, was set up by Q. Pedius, the nephew or great-nephew and close supporter of Julius Caesar.²⁶⁴ Tacitus undermined Augustus' self-representation of scrupulous legality in these matters, by alleging that after Hirtius and Pansa died, Augustus appointed himself and Quintus Pedius as consuls, and by emphasizing that during the latter two consulships, Cicero was proscribed and murdered.²⁶⁵ Cassius Dio and Appian also presented very negative portrayals of Augustus' behaviour in these matters. Cassius Dio depicted what he believed were some of the corrupt and unjust aspects of this court of law.²⁶⁶ Appian claimed that when Augustus presided over the court, even Romans who had not been in Rome on the day of the assassination were condemned and the sole judge who voted for acquittal of the accused was later proscribed and murdered.²⁶⁷ Therefore, not only Tacitus criticised aspects of Augustus' political career.

Contrary to Tacitus, however, Cassius Dio depicted Octavian/Augustus as the founder of an indispensable monarchy²⁶⁸ but supposedly conforming in all respects to the political and other precedents handed down from earlier Roman times.²⁶⁹ Cassius Dio though contradicted this latter representation of Augustus by providing much evidence of there being present in parts of the previous historical tradition which he drew off, accusations of Octavian/Augustus

²⁶² Alföldy 1972: 9-10 and 12.

²⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3 and 2.59.

²⁶⁴ Velleius Paterculus 2.69.5. Suetonius claimed that Quintus Pedius was a grandnephew of Julius Caesar and received part of his estate after Caesar's assassination (Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 83.2).

²⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Dialogus De Oratoribus* 17.2-3.

²⁶⁶ Cassius Dio 46.48-49.

²⁶⁷ Appian 3.95.

²⁶⁸ Raaflaub and Toher 1990:156. Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus as the model of a good ruler for the Severan era in which he lived and for all other times (Rich 1990: 12-14).

²⁶⁹ Cassius Dio 53.1.1.

acting contrary to Roman legal or constitutional political precedents. Here are some obvious examples: Octavian thanked the Senate for appointing him consul as though they had voluntarily granted this as a favour without him applying any force to them, but Cassius Dio said this was all fictitious, because the Senate previously did not want to appoint him as consul and they had threatened to inflict penalties on him for gathering a private army without the Senate's approval.²⁷⁰ Also Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus as instituting many illegal and unjust laws during the period of factional strife and the civil wars, especially in his period of joint rule with Antony and Lepidus.²⁷¹ Cassius Dio also depicted Augustus as obtaining death sentences against many Romans who had not assassinated or even plotted against Julius Caesar, this including especially Sextus Pompeius because he opposed Octavian. Also, Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus obtaining approval for these trials, so that it would outwardly appear that he was acting according to a principle of justice.²⁷² Considering the contradictions and ambiguity in some significant parts of the extant sources, it is little wonder that there has been such intense unresolved debate among modern scholars about the legal and constitutional aspects of Augustus' political system.

On the basis of particular readings of Cassius Dio 53, Velleius Paterculus 2.89.1-5, Strabo 17.25.C840 and *Res Gestae* 34, it is possible to portray Augustus as engaging in two main constitutional settlements, one in January 27 B.C.²⁷³ and the other in 23 B.C., which supposedly demonstrated that Augustus was devoted to operating within the limitations of all previous Roman legal and constitutional precedents.²⁷⁴ Tacitus, however, undermined such portrayals by representing Augustus going against a major long-held precedent of the *vetus res publica* by willingly accepting permanent and virtually absolute military and political power. When referring to some changes to Augustus' constitutional status in 28-27 B.C.,

²⁷⁰ Cassius Dio, 46.47.1-3. See also 46.41.3-4 and 46.44.2-46.45.3.

²⁷¹ Cassius Dio 53.2.5.

²⁷² Cassius Dio, 46.48.2-3.

²⁷³ In his *Fasti* 1.587, Ovid provided the date of 13 January 27 B.C. as the commencement of the supposed first constitutional settlement.

²⁷⁴ Scholars such as Badian, Judge and Lacey have disputed the image of Augustus as the great negotiator at these two supposed major constitutional settlements (Badian 1982: 18-41, Judge 2009: 210-211 and Lacey 1996: Chapters 3 and 4).

Tacitus asserted that because in Augustus' sixth consulate, Augustus felt that his power was secure, he cancelled the commands of the Second Triumvirate, and gave the Romans laws under a *princeps*, while at the same time “consequently the chains (or things that restrict freedom) were more severe (or more harsh) (*acriora ex eo vincla*),” guards having been placed (*inditi custodes*) over them.²⁷⁵ In Latin, the word *custodes* referred to guards who kept prisoners in confinement, this word matching Tacitus' employment of the word *vincla*, which meant literally chains confining a prisoner's limbs or figuratively often referring to captivity or imprisonment. These comments are Tacitus' disapproving evaluative representation of both the so-called famous First Constitutional Settlement in January 27 B.C. and the *Lex Papia Poppaea*.

Later in *Annals* 3.56, Tacitus provided a brief analysis of one major aspect of the so-called Second Augustan Constitutional Settlement of 23 B.C., the *tribunicia potestas*.²⁷⁶ Augustus earlier claimed that the *tribunicia potestas* was given to him for life by an enactment of the law and that he had only used this power to administer those things which the Senate wanted him to do.²⁷⁷ Tacitus, however, undermined this representation by portraying Augustus' possession of *tribunicia potestas* as a deceitful unconstitutional cover for his maintenance of despotic pre-eminent power over all other authorities possessing *imperium*.²⁷⁸ Tacitus represented Augustus as coming to possess tribunician power (*tribunicia potestas*) annually and perpetually, described *tribunicia potestas* as the term of the highest

²⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28.

²⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.2 and 3.56. See also *Res Gestae* 4 and 6, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.5 and Cassius Dio 53.32.5-6. Velleius Paterculus asserted that the *imperium* which Augustus exercised had less authority than his *tribunicia potestas* (Velleius Paterculus, 2.99.1).

²⁷⁷ *Res Gestae* 4, 6 and 10. Augustus said in A.D. 14 that he was in his 37th year of his tribunician power (*Res Gestae* 4). In *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus revealed he believed that Augustus officially received the *tribunicia potestas* in 23 B.C., 37 years before Augustus' death. If there were no gaps in between, this means his tribunician power was granted in 23 B.C. Cassius Dio asserted that Augustus accepted the *tribunicia potestas* as a perennial political power but cleverly did not accept the specific magistracy of tribune of the plebeians (Cassius Dio 53.32.5-6). See also Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.5. There has been unresolved debate about the dating of the commencement of the operation of Augustus' *tribunicia potestas*. For example, see Last 1951: 93-110; Palmer 1978: 322-324; Lacey 1985: 59-60 and Cary and Scullard 1975: 317 and 319. Note Lacey also referred to the views of K. Fitzler, O. Seeck, A. Von Premerstein and E. Kornemann. See also Brunt and Moore 1967: 10-11.

²⁷⁸ *ne regis aut dictatoris nomen adsumeret ac tamen appellatione aliqua cetera imperia praemineret* (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.56). See Koestermann 1963: 528-529 and Kunkel 1961: 362ff. See Beranger for a useful analysis of *tribunicia potestas*, including Tacitus' comments in *Annals* 3.56.2 (Beranger 1953: 96-106). Refer also to Jones 1952: 139-140.

position or supreme rank (*summi fastigii vocabulum*) and portrayed Augustus as desiring a title of rank (*appellatio*) indicating he would be superior to all other political powers (*aliqua cetera imperia praemineret*) in the Roman state.²⁷⁹ In his *Annals* 15.65, Tacitus employed the similar expression *summum fastigium* to refer to having absolute power to rule the Roman Empire. By using in *Annals* 3.56 the perfect active indicative *repperit*, which meant "he found by enquiry or consideration" or "he devised" or "he invented", Tacitus suggested that Augustus wanted this title and did not just have it forced unwillingly on him by the Senate.²⁸⁰ In this passage, Tacitus further undermined Augustus' self-representation in which he denied unconstitutionally establishing some form of despotism or monarchy.

When referring to Tacitus' reference to Augustus' *tribunica potestas*, Jones insisted that the *tribunica potestas* provided very little power to Augustus and concealed the actual constitutional foundations of his power.²⁸¹ Similarly, attempting to undermine historians who argued that Augustus used his *tribunica potestas* "as the principal cloak for autocracy", Crook speculated that when Tacitus referred to Augustus' *tribunica potestas*, Tacitus regarded it "as a distinction rather than a power."²⁸² Crook cited as supposed proof of this conjecture, Tacitus' mention in *Annals* 3.56 of the fact that Augustus invented *tribunica potestas* as a title of supreme pre-eminence, in order to not assume the title of king or dictator. This argument is unconvincing, especially because just as the titles of "king" and "dictator" signified the possession of particular political powers, so too did the *title tribunica potestas*. Tacitus regarded *tribunica potestas* as being one of the most significant aspects of Augustus' powers.²⁸³ Tacitus represented *tribunica potestas* as a real political power, when he emphasised that the *tribunica potestas* gave Tiberius the power to veto motions of the

²⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.56. For commentary on this text, see Woodman and Martin, 1996, 415-416. See also Lacey 1979: 28-34 and Salmon 1956: 468-471 for more analysis of the *tribunica potestas* of Augustus.

²⁸⁰ After commenting on *Annals* 3.56, Garnsey and Saller astutely noted that Augustus' "career to this point had been marked by subtle choice and brilliant exploitation of names and titles" (Garnsey and Saller 1982: 2).

²⁸¹ Jones 1951: 16.

²⁸² *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 86.

²⁸³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

consuls in the Roman Senate²⁸⁴ and when Tacitus noted that Nero had the tribunician veto (*intercessio tribunica*) to overrule the decisions of the Senate.²⁸⁵ Tacitus underlined the fact that while Augustus wished to avoid the negative public images associated in many Romans' minds with the titles of king or dictator, Augustus desired some title which would indicate his superiority to the *imperium* of all other Roman political leaders. Tacitus implied that Augustus had found the appropriate title, one which ambiguously suggested his overruling authority with an accompanying "Republican" disguise and an associated pretence, that such supreme authority over all other Roman magistrates did not make him like a king or dictator. Note that in this context of *Annals* 3.56, Tacitus used the words *vocabulum*, *nomen* and *appellatio*, further reinforcing his frequent claim that Augustus played farcical games with words in order to deceive those whom he ruled. Brunt and Moore were close to Tacitus' perspective when they referred to Augustus employing *tribunica potestas* as "a useful Republican cloak to be used in disguising the reality of power."²⁸⁶

In the past, some scholars have imagined that they could work out precisely the details of Augustus' so-called constitutional settlements in 27, 23 and 19 B.C. by examining the representations of Augustus' attitudes and actions in relation to these events in the extant sources.²⁸⁷ For example, in 1998, Alston asserted that Augustus was not an absolute monarch, but was dependent on the goodwill of the Senate,²⁸⁸ and in 2010 while quoting parts of the *Res Gestae*, Cassius Dio and Suetonius as supposed evidence, Koortbojian provided an interpretation of these three constitutional settlements.²⁸⁹ Note, however, that such scholarly speculations do not adequately take into account Tacitus' (and also Cassius Dio's) portrayals

²⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.13.

²⁸⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.47. Suetonius revealed that *tribunica potestas* also gave an emperor of the authority to convene the Senate (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 23).

²⁸⁶ Brunt and Moore 1967: 13.

²⁸⁷ Millar rightly pointed out that the extant sources for the so-called first and second constitutional settlements in 27 B.C. and 23 B.C. are "notoriously brief and inadequate" (Millar 1966b: 156). For other commentaries on Augustus' supposed first settlement in 28-27 B.C., refer to Sattler 1960: 24-57, Lacey 1996: 77-99, Ferrary 2001: 101-154, Cotton and Jacobson 2002: 204 and 208-209; Gruen 2005: 34-35; Le Glay, Voisin and Le Bohec 2009: 215-216 and Swain and Davies 2010: 252-256.

²⁸⁸ Alston 1998: 17.

²⁸⁹ Ewald and Norena 2010: 266-267.

of Augustus' ambiguous self-representations. Carter argued that the constitutional foundations of Augustus' power were specifically his continuous possession of *imperium*, first consular and then *maius*, combined with his direct personal control of the strongest provinces in the Roman Empire, though not his *tribunicia potestas*.²⁹⁰ But even Carter admitted that "discussions of the 'essence' of the Augustan principate are by their nature inconclusive."²⁹¹ In cases where the extant sources agree with one another, scholars can make statements about Augustus' principate with various degrees of probability, but in matters in which ambiguity and contradictions are clearly evident in the sources, it is wiser to know the various alternatives but avoid being too definitive.

It is evident in this section that Tacitus' depictions of Augustus' political career in relation to legal or constitutional matters was very negative and sceptical compared with those provided by Augustus' *Res Gestae* and Velleius. In relation to constitutional issues, Cassius Dio presented partly contradictory but sometimes negative portrayals of Augustus' related behaviours, but these were not as critical as those of Tacitus.

The following section will examine Augustus' self representation as *Princeps* and especially Tacitus' negative response to this image.

3.3 Augustus' self-portrayal as *Princeps*

According to Tacitus, Augustus created a new Roman political system, which was led by a *princeps*.²⁹² In Latin, the word *princeps* had numerous meanings such as first in authority or dignity, the person in charge, leading citizen, leading member, one who is pre-eminent and

²⁹⁰ Carter 1982: 13.

²⁹¹ Carter 1982: 13.

²⁹² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and 3.28. For useful examinations of the concepts of *princeps* and *princeps senatus*, see Mommsen (Translated by Dickson) 1888, Volume 1: 323 and passim; Beranger 1953: 31-43; Wickert, "Princeps", *R.E. Pauly-Wissowa*, 22, Col. 1998-2295; Drexler 1958: 243-280; Hellegouarc'h 1972: 327-346; Syme 1939: 313-330. For valuable discussions of the principate, see Grenade 1961; Beranger 1973; R. Syme 1939: 313-330. See also Weber 1936; Wickert 1941: 12-23; Jones 1970: 62-77; Shotter 1991: 3263-3331 and Benario 1992: 328-334.

head. Under the old Roman *res publica*, the name of *princeps* did not signify an official position, but instead each *princeps* relied on their *auctoritas* which had been gained through their previous achievements.²⁹³ Also, the *principes* were the most important senators in the Senate and the most important leaders outside of the Senate in the city of Rome.²⁹⁴ The word *princeps* described the informal leadership role, which a member of the nobility took on within the sphere of his status and thus in the *res publica*,²⁹⁵ and was frequently employed prior to the Augustan era to refer to the leading men in Roman politics.²⁹⁶ The *princeps senatus* was the particular Roman senator, who had his name placed at the top of the official register when the Roman censors performed the *lectio senatus*, who therefore was always addressed first in the Senate and who intervened in serious conflicts which concerned the Senate and the city of Rome.²⁹⁷ Hellegouarc'h stated that the word *princeps* "was a very vague word whose etymological sense was simply 'one who takes the first place, the chief role'; grammatically, it is a very unclear word."²⁹⁸ It was because of this essential vagueness of the word *princeps* that Augustus, his officials and others were able to employ this term ambiguously to achieve his political aims. There were valid similarities and differences between the terms *princeps*, *princeps senatus* and *princeps civitatis*,²⁹⁹ but despite Tacitus obviously knowing this fact, he does not make any fine distinctions among these words when referring to Augustus, but instead referred to him simply as *princeps*.

Velleius portrayed Augustus' principate (*principatus*) in terms of Augustus innocently striving to be permitted to be (just) a citizen equal (*aequalis*) with other Roman citizens rather

²⁹³ For discussion on the political authority (*auctoritas*) of *principes civitatis* under the old Roman Republic, refer to Gelzer 1912: 35ff; Gwosdz 1933 and Levick 2010: 74.

²⁹⁴ Bonnefond-Coudry 1989: 709. See pages 687-690 for evidence from Livy and Cicero of the role of *principes* being not only within the Senate but also outside of the Senate in the city of Rome itself.

²⁹⁵ Bringmann 2002a: 408.

²⁹⁶ Hellegouarc'h 1972: 327-363. For example, Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 1.9.11 and Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 29. Velleius referred to the first man of the state (*civitatis princeps*) (Velleius Paternulus 2.6.1).

²⁹⁷ Bonnefond-Coudry 1989: 702. See page 704 for four examples from 208 to 84 B.C. of the role of the *princeps senatus* during the old Roman Republic. For Scipio, see Livy 34.44.4, 38.28.2 and 39.52.1.

²⁹⁸ Hellegouarc'h 1972: 327.

²⁹⁹ Adcock 1952b: 588, Jones 1970: 85, Scullard 1982: 210 and Lacey 1996: 133.

than being prominent or outstanding (*eminens*).³⁰⁰ By employing the imperfect subjunctive *liceret*, Velleius depicted Augustus striving to be allowed by the Senate and people of Rome to be *princeps*, rather than him assuming this role regardless of their responses. O'Gorman aptly noted that in his *Annals* Book 1, however, Tacitus was focused on "the realities of power (to the scorn of forms and names and all pretence)..."³⁰¹ For example in his *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus asserted that Augustus "who, by means of the name of *princeps*, he received or took in his control the whole exhausted by civil dissensions, under the supreme administrative authority."³⁰² In Latin, one of the main meanings of the word *nomen* is simply the name of a person or thing. Another primary meaning of *nomen* is a name used to disguise the true nature of a person or thing or a pretext. This latter meaning fitted in with many of Tacitus' other comments about Augustus and some other Roman emperors. Beranger defined the *imperium* of the emperor as essentially the right to command.³⁰³ In *Annals* 1.1, the word *accepit* has two main meanings, one being that Augustus received the whole Roman Empire after it was offered to him by the Roman Senate and people, and the other meaning being Augustus took possession or control of the thing (the whole empire) himself. It can be reasonably argued that someone like Tacitus, who noted the ambiguity in the phrases of a number of the Roman emperors, knew his readers could interpret *accepit* with these two meanings. But note immediately before he made this statement, Tacitus referred to Augustus using military force. By this clever use of juxtaposition, Tacitus implied his word *accepit* may be better interpreted in terms of the more dominating "he (Augustus) took into his possession or control" rather than the milder more passive interpretation "he (Augustus) received (the thing offered)." In

³⁰⁰ *ut potius aequalem civem quam eminentem liceret agere principem* (Velleius Paterculus 2.124.2). See also 2.89.6.

³⁰¹ O'Gorman 1995: 94. Fontana rightly concluded: "Tacitus presents a historical reconstruction of the political moral-intellectual determinants of imperial rule by exposing the traditional and accepted distinction between *princeps* and *rex*, a distinction originally valid and operative under the Republic, but one which Tacitus shows to be spurious, manipulative, and masking an underlying *dominatio*" (Fontana 1993: 27).

³⁰² *qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit*. For analysis on Tacitus' *Annals* 1.1 reference to the *princeps*, see Klingner 1969: 500 and Christ 1978: 470. Refer to Diesner's comments on façade, Tacitus' expression *qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit* in *Annals* 1.1 and relevant sections of Augustus' *Res gestae* (Diesner 1985: 35-42).

³⁰³ Beranger 1977: 337.

Tacitus' expression *qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit* in *Annals* 1.1, he brought together the words *princeps* and *imperium* with a touch of satire, which was directed at the *Res Gestae*, which uplifted Augustus' supreme status, but described it from the perspective of *auctoritas*, as though there was no underlying *imperium*.³⁰⁴ Tacitus was unimpressed by Augustus' implicit claims to being just a *princeps* without supreme *imperium*.

From a non-Tacitean paradigm, Loewenstein argued that as *princeps*, Augustus was neither outside nor above the unwritten Republican constitution.³⁰⁵ Arguing from a more Tacitean perspective, however, Kienast claimed that despite Augustus not wanting to portray himself as a monarch, he continuously aimed to make his unofficial position as *princeps* prominent but have monarchic substance in reality.³⁰⁶ Relevant to this, Tacitus employed the word *princeps* and the associated term *imperium* to refer to what he believed was the consolidation of the autocracy which emerged from the collapse of the old *res publica*.³⁰⁷

One aspect of the essential ambiguity of the word *princeps* was created by the convenient fact that because of the lack of the definite article in Latin, Augustus' designated title of *princeps* could mean the *princeps* or a *princeps*, the former inferring that there was only one person occupying this role and the latter implying that there were a number of *principes* in Rome at the time, with Augustus being only one of these.³⁰⁸ Significantly in his *Res Gestae* 12, Augustus implicitly reassured his Roman readers that he approved of the existence of other *principes* in Rome during his reign. Despite his seeming support of the *vetus res publica* practice of plurality of *principes*, Augustus, however, engaged in another form of ambiguous self-representation by continually promoting his own importance above all other Romans, including other *principes*. For example in *Res Gestae* 34, he said that in

³⁰⁴ Grenade 1961: 10, 104, 385.

³⁰⁵ Loewenstein 1969: 563-564. The unwritten Roman political constitution of the *vetus res publica* was based on many traditional precedents and allowed change to deal with contemporary emergencies and expedients, but never before permitted a permanent monarchy. See also Nicolet 1991: 15; Christ 1988: 115-117; Kunkel 1961: 369; Brunt 1988: 2.

³⁰⁶ Kienast 1982: 171-177.

³⁰⁷ Bringmann 2002a: 408.

³⁰⁸ Levick 2010: 74.

auctoritas he exceeded all others. Therefore, in one sense Augustus' use of the title of *princeps* made him appear to be part of the *vetus res publica*, which Julius Caesar's assassins had fought to defend,³⁰⁹ but then according to Tacitus, in another sense Augustus employed the term *princeps* to designate a role which gave him a superior level of *imperium* to all other magistrates and military generals in Rome, thereby meaning he had instituted a form of despotism or monarchy (*dominatio et regnum*).

Through the employment of statues, ceremonies and other similar phenomena, Augustus gave the impression that the history of the old Roman Republic was the history of a series of principates which had reached their peak in his principate.³¹⁰ Tacitus did not dispute that Augustus drew on the connotations of the word *princeps* from its roots in the *vetus res publica*, but Tacitus attempted to sever the validity of this assumed connection between the Augustan principate and the *vetus res publica*. When Tacitus asserted that in Augustus' reign, everyone looked to the commands of the *princeps*, he was making a significant accusation against Augustus. This is because under the *vetus res publica*, each *princeps* only gave advice to other Roman magistrates but not commands.³¹¹ The role of a *princeps* was officially backed by *auctoritas* but not *imperium*. Therefore, Tacitus was highlighting that Augustus had established a new monarchical type of rule for a *princeps* contrary to its previous function under the *vetus res publica*.³¹²

Gruen³¹³ asserted that despite Augustus referring to himself as a *princeps*³¹⁴ and Horace labelling Augustus "the greatest of *principes* (*maxime principum*),"³¹⁵ Augustus never began nor occupied a new official position called the principate, but instead Augustus functioned by a "new concept of power divorced from office." It is true that under the old Roman Republic, the role of *princeps* was an unofficial political function and was not a

³⁰⁹ Shotter 1978: 237.

³¹⁰ Kienast 1999: 173-174.

³¹¹ For limitations on *principes* during the old Roman Republic, see Cornelius Nepos, *Cato* 2.2.

³¹² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4. Earlier in the 30s B.C., Cornelius Nepos had recognised that like Mark Antony, Octavian desired to be *princeps* not only of the city of Rome but also of the entire world (Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 20.5).

³¹³ Gruen 2005: 34-35 and 42.

³¹⁴ *Res Gestae* 7.

³¹⁵ Horace, *Ode* 4.14.6. See also Horace, *Odes* 1.2, 1.12 and 4.15.

designated office to which any Roman was elected by the Roman people. Similarly, there is no evidence in the *Res Gestae* or in any other extant Roman source that Augustus claimed to have been elected or appointed to an official position of *princeps*. This, however, does not negate the fact that according to Tacitus (and for that matter and Cassius Dio as well), Augustus created a new unofficial role for himself in his new *res publica*, which was a disguise for his new form of monarchy or despotism and was therefore contrary to the foundational principles of the *vetus res publica*.

Cicero distinguished between a principate (*principatus*) and having a singular ruler (*singulis*).³¹⁶ According to this perspective, Augustus' later reign was an example of *singulis* rather than a *principatus*, but Augustus succeeded in promoting ambiguous self-representations which confused the boundaries between such concepts. One of the reasons Tacitus employed the word *principatus* about the principate in general,³¹⁷ this including Augustus' principate, was because he believed that Augustus was not like a *princeps* under the *vetus res publica*, but instead had changed the unofficial previous function of a *princeps* into being the main political role in a new type of political system which required new titles, such as *principatus*, to identify it. Tacitus maintained that instead of instituting a principate, like under the *vetus res publica*, Augustus introduced a monarchical type of principate, with the implication that this latter role was not based solely on *auctoritas*.³¹⁸ Tacitus believed that regardless of whether Augustus admitted he had begun a new political system, Augustus had done this.

Gruen characterized Tacitus' representations of Augustus as cynical and prejudiced.³¹⁹ Gruen's analysis of Augustus' reign, however, is founded on accepting the supposed "reliability" and "truth" of Augustus' frequently ambiguous self-representations virtually without question, while discarding competing portrayals of the same matters by Tacitus and

³¹⁶ Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.2.6-7.

³¹⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1,

³¹⁸ Welwei 1996: 493-494.

³¹⁹ Gruen 2005: 33.

without providing extensive logical argumentation as to why Augustus' self-depictions should be accepted as authoritative and those authored by Tacitus discarded. Tacitus was concerned about titles and the realities behind the titles of official positions, but he was also keen to analyse the realities behind the labels of powers divorced from official positions.

Tacitus precisely dated the legal establishment of Augustus as *princeps* to Augustus' sixth consulate in 28 B.C.³²⁰ Tacitus asserted that the main reason Augustus cancelled the previous commands of the triumvirate was because in 28 B.C. Augustus felt that his political and military power was secure and that he could now operate under the less threatening name of a *princeps* and could emphasise that he was providing the Romans with their need of peace.³²¹ Reflecting a primarily Tacitean perspective, Syme argued, however, that despite assuming the specious title of *princeps* and changing the definition of his authority, this made no difference to the source and facts of power of Augustus' reign.³²²

In *Agricola* 3.1, Tacitus claimed that Emperor Nerva was the only Roman emperor up until that time to have united *libertas* with principate. Also in *Annals* 4.6, Tacitus referred generally approvingly to what he believed was how Tiberius politically functioned in the early years of his principate. In *Annals* 4.6, Tacitus emphasised that for an optimum operation of the principate to occur, all public affairs and exceptional private affairs should be handled in the Senate, the leading senators must be given freedom of speech and the *princeps* should permit no political sycophancy (*adulatio*) towards him to occur. Tacitus argued that it was also necessary that the consuls and the praetors possess their old prestige (presumably that possessed in the *vetus res publica*), the minor magistracies still be in operation, and the laws have proper force. The main importance of these comments is they signified that these operations in various ways prevented the *princeps* from having absolute power. Another

³²⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28. Note Syme 1958, Volume 1: 409, n.7. Cassius Dio also noted that at the completion of the census in 28 B.C., Augustus was given the title *prokritos tes gerousias* which is a Greek synonym for the Latin *princeps senatus* (Cassius Dio 53.1.3).

³²¹ *potentiae securus, quae triumviratu iusserat abolevit deditque iura quis pace et principe uteremur* (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28). For commentary, see Woodman and Martin, 1996: 257-259.

³²² Syme 1939: 2.

significant condition which Tacitus insisted must be fulfilled was that if the *princeps* had a dispute with a private citizen, the case needed to be solved in an independent court of justice and not by the *princeps* himself. This latter comment encapsulates a major part of Tacitus' political philosophy in that it reveals he did not approve of any *princeps* being the final arbiter of all legal matters.

The followers of Augustus decided to solve the major problem of how to portray the political status and power of Augustus as *princeps* by representing his position as being extraordinary in every manner, through every possible institutional and symbolic means, these including visual images, mythology, cult and literature, many of which were undergirded by ambiguities and contradictions.³²³

This section has added cumulative evidence to the thesis argument that Tacitus' representations of Augustus' political career were mostly more negative and sceptical than Augustus' *Res Gestae* and Velleius' text. The following section will examine the portrayals of Augustus as a sharer of power with the Senate and Roman people.

3.4 Representations of Augustus as the sharer of power with the Senate and people

There has been much previous scholarly debate about the validity of representations of Augustus sharing some real and/or pretended political power with the Roman Senate and people.³²⁴ Scholars such as Galinsky, Willrich, Buchan and Kunkel adopted what can be described as anti-façade representations of Augustus' relationships with the Senate, based

³²³ Scheid in Ando 2003: 134-135.

³²⁴ For worthwhile discussions of Augustus' relationships with the Senate, see Marsh 1927: 230; Sattler 1960; Chapter V "Imperial and Senatorial Jurisdiction in the Early Principate" in Jones 1960: 69-98; Lacey 1974: 176-184; Nicolet 1976: 30-38; Nitschke 2006. For commentary on the relationships between the Senate and Octavian/Augustus and the other two members of the Second Triumvirate, and later the Senate and Octavian/Augustus as sole triumvir, see Bleicken 1990: 85. Refer also to Nicolet 1984: 89-128.

explicitly and/or implicitly upon the assumptions found in especially Augustus' *Res Gestae* and the texts of Suetonius and Velleius.³²⁵

In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus portrayed himself as the humble servant of the Senate³²⁶ and referred respectfully to the Senate and/or Roman people having the power to make political decisions while he was the *princeps*. Suetonius and Velleius portrayed Augustus' relationship with the Roman Senate in more positive terms than did Tacitus. For example, Velleius depicted Augustus restoring dignity or sovereignty to the Senate (*restituta...Senatui maiestas*),³²⁷ and Suetonius created the image of Augustus restoring or returning the Senate to its ancient glory or splendour (*pristinum splendorem redegit*).³²⁸ Similarly, when commenting on the division of the provinces between Augustus and the governors, Suetonius provided an account, which was basically favourable to Augustus or at least innocuous, containing none of Cassius Dio's accusations that Augustus engaged in some type of façade.³²⁹ Also Suetonius depicted Augustus as possessing the power to remove senators from the Senate,³³⁰ but having a few minor limitations imposed on him by the Senate. Two of these limitations occurred when the Senate did not permit him to have two consuls as partners in the consulate and when the Senate decreed that Roman knights could not be engaged in scenic or gladiatorial performances, despite Augustus having previously employed them to do so.³³¹ Tacitus would have almost certainly regarded such claims as this as evidence that when Augustus so chose, he could pretend to submit to the decisions of the Senate in order to foster a particular ambiguous public image of himself, despite him in actual terms having unlimited military and political power.³³²

³²⁵ Tacitus almost certainly regarded Velleius as one of the sycophantic historians whom he heavily criticised in two of his prefaces (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 1.1).

³²⁶ *Res Gestae* 1, 20, 34 and 35.

³²⁷ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3.

³²⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 35.1.

³²⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 47.

³³⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 35.

³³¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 37 and 43.3.

³³² Like Tacitus, Cassius Dio believed that many aspects of Augustus' relationship with the Senate were a façade (Cassius Dio 52.31.1-2).

Galinsky argued, however, that, as evidenced in Augustus' comments in his *Res Gestae* 34.1 on the transfer of the *res publica* in 28-27 B.C., Augustus did not treat the transaction between himself and the Senate as a sham, but instead engaged in real negotiations and compromise with the Senate.³³³ Similarly, Buchan argued that despite the consular, pro-consular and tribunician authority of Augustus, the Senate was a substance and not a shadow, having weighty though clearly defined executive roles.³³⁴ Likewise, Kunkel claimed that Augustus basically kept his promises to limit his power and to accept the sovereignty of the Senate and the Roman people.³³⁵ Brunt and Mackay however, adopted more Tacitean positions. Brunt maintained that under the rule of Augustus, the Senate "did little more than acquiesce in his decisions," because each senator owed his rank and promotion to Augustus' favour and the senators collectively could make no important decision without his sanction or being supposedly in agreement with his wishes.³³⁶ Similarly, Mackay concluded that the seeming independent powers of the Roman Senate were actually a sham.³³⁷

Cicero maintained that his Roman ancestors had established that all Roman magistrates should be guided by the authority of the Senate and act as servants of this council.³³⁸ Tacitus instead portrayed the image of Augustus as the master and not the obedient servant of the Senate.³³⁹ Suetonius approvingly depicted Augustus showing great respect for

³³³ Galinsky 1996: 67. Referring to Augustus, Willrich argued, "the emperor, as soon as he was in control, was concerned as far as possible to further not only the Senate's reputation but also its capacity to work. He would gladly have shared the endlessly growing burden of administration with the Senate, but that body worked in such a slipshod manner that the emperor had to take one branch of service after another into his own hands for the tasks to be properly completed" (Willrich 1927: 63).

³³⁴ Buchan 1937: 147.

³³⁵ Kunkel 1961: 369-370.

³³⁶ Brunt 1988: 4. Brunt asserted that Augustus worked in appearance through the Senate and sometimes ascribed legal powers to the Senate to act on its own authority, but in reality employed the Senate as the means to obtaining his own plans (Brunt 1984: 423) and in reality all things were under his control (Brunt 1988: 35). Alston referred to the inherent contradictions in the so-called constitutional settlement of 28-27 B.C., of Augustus providing freedom and power to the Senate and him still being pre-eminent (Alston 1998: 16). See also Bringmann 2008: 173.

³³⁷ Mackay 2004: 251.

³³⁸ Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 137.

³³⁹ Plutarch created a similar image when he said that during the despotic rule of the consul Cinna in 85 B.C., there was only a semblance of a Senate operating in Rome (Plutarch, *Sulla* 22).

the senators when he met them in the Senate and when he was leaving the Senate,³⁴⁰ but Tacitus asserted that the relationship between the emperors, including Augustus, and the senators was one of the master and a group of slaves.³⁴¹ Tacitus' view that the Senate was the slave of its masters, the emperors, was highlighted when Tacitus noted that he was going to comment on any decree of the Roman Senate which was new in sycophancy or servile flattery or worst in submission (*tamen silebimus, si quod senatus consultum adulatione novum aut patientia postremum fuit*) during the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors, starting with Augustus.³⁴² As noted previously, Tacitus asserted that after 28-27 B.C. when Augustus cancelled the orders of the triumvirate and gave the Romans laws under a *princeps*, instead of him giving the Roman people (this including senators) a greater share of power, he instead then tightened the chains on them, guards having been placed over them, watching over them as prisoners in captivity. In other words, Tacitus depicted that the reality was that after the replacement of the Second Triumvirate and of Augustus' period of post-Actium absolute sole rule by the principate, Augustus tightened the chains on the Roman people and senators as though they were all his captive slaves.

Tacitus referred to Nero early in his reign allowing the Senate to exercise some authority over the public provinces, but note Tacitus implied this only occurred because the emperor, the holder of absolute political power, permitted this to occur.³⁴³ Tacitus also approvingly referred to the former liberty of the Senate under the old Roman *res publica* to confirm or change political decisions and laws related to Roman provinces.³⁴⁴ He, however, criticized any attempt by an emperor to permit the Senate only an outward imitation of their

³⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 53.3.

³⁴¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2, 1.7, 1.8 and 14.49. Similarly, Cassius Dio said that in 43 B.C., a year after Julius Caesar's assassination, Augustus conciliated the soldiers and reduced the Senate to slavery (*edoulosato*) (Cassius Dio 46.48.1).

³⁴² Tacitus, *Annals* 14.64.

³⁴³ Tacitus, *Annals* 13.4.3-5.1.

³⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.60.3.

past when the emperor submitted the claims of the provinces to the discussion of the senators, while at the same time tightening his grip on the power of the principate.³⁴⁵

In his *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus highlighted the supposedly collective nature of his rule in conjunction with the Roman magistrates. Also in the same passage, Augustus employed the words *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli* to refer to his political dealings with the Roman Senate and Roman people in January 27 B.C. This expression has a long history of being interpreted in many different ways, which is not surprising considering its essential ambiguity, with the latter probably originally being intended by Augustus. One of the main possible interpretations of these words was that Augustus began to share political and military power with the Roman Senate and people from January 27 BC. Despite not mentioning these specific earlier comments by Augustus, Tacitus undermined these representations of Augustus' relationship with the Roman Senate. Tacitus did not deny that Augustus delegated some political authority to the Roman Senate and to the Roman senators, but he portrayed such delegation as always being under Augustus' overarching absolute authority and being able to be overridden by him at any time. Tacitus provided an example of how Augustus knew how to manipulate the Senate into doing what he strongly desired³⁴⁶ and Tacitus labelled the Senate as powerless in the early parts of Tiberius' reign,³⁴⁷ this being a carry-over from Augustus' reign.

Throughout the *Res Gestae*, Augustus painted the image of there being two separate political identities in Rome working together in mutual agreement, in harmony (*concordia*) and with ongoing reverence for the institutions of the old Roman Republic. The first was the Senate and people of Rome continuing to operate daily in normal Republican ways by

³⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.60.1. Millar argued strongly for the case that it has been a serious scholarly error to label some provinces in the Roman Empire from the time of the Emperor Augustus onwards as "senatorial provinces" rather than "the provinces of the Roman people (*provinciae populi Romani*)" (Millar cited Strabo, *Geography* 840, *ILS* 91, *ILS* 140.II. 10-11, *Res Gestae* 26.1, 27.1, Velleius Paterculus 2.39.3, Tacitus, *Annals* 13.4.3, Ovid, *Fasti* 1.589-590 and Gaius, *Institutiones* 1.1.6 as evidence, and argued that there are reasons for discounting seemingly contrary comments in Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 25.3 and Cassius Dio (Millar 2002: 314-320). Millar identified ambiguity in the language of the relevant sources as one of the main reasons for modern scholarly disagreement about this issue (Millar 2002: 318).

³⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6.

³⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.46.

decreeing, commanding and electing, and the second was Augustus at the same time manifesting his supreme *auctoritas*.³⁴⁸ Tacitus asserted that the mutual agreement and harmony between the Senate and the Roman people and Augustus was a façade or sham and a product instead of Augustus fostering an environment in which the Senate and Roman people would submit to him because of fear of punishment and of their desire to obtain rewards and benefits from him.³⁴⁹

Tacitus wrote that after Augustus laid down his title as a triumvir and proclaimed himself a consul content with the legal rights of a tribune of the plebeians,³⁵⁰ Augustus began step-by-step to unite in his person the functions of the Senate, the magistracy and the legislature.³⁵¹ By the latter statement, Tacitus was partly creating the image of Augustus gradually finding new politically acceptable outward forms through which to express his absolute political and military power. Rather than depicting Augustus returning any real power to the Senate, Tacitus portrayed Augustus actually gradually taking over all the previous functions of the Senate and of all its magistrates--consuls, praetors, tribunes of the plebeians and so on.³⁵² Tacitus also represented Augustus causing the Senate and the Equestrian Order to deteriorate so profoundly that by the very beginning of Emperor Tiberius' reign, the consuls, senators and knights rushed into political slavery, and were devoted to hypocrisy and sycophancy.³⁵³

In *Annals* 4.33, Tacitus again undermined Augustus' public self-representation as the magnanimous sharer of power with the Senate and Roman people. Tacitus did this indirectly by saying that every nation or city is governed by the people or by the nobility or by individuals (*singuli*), and by him then emphasising that all previous attempts to have political systems, which shared political power and authority among the people, the nobles and

³⁴⁸ Ramage 1987: 52, Richardson 1978: 260-272 and Fears 1981b: 885-886.

³⁴⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2 and 4.

³⁵⁰ *ad tuendam plebem tribunicio iure contentum* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2).

³⁵¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. Tacitus referred to the concentration of all legal and magisterial functions in the person of the *princeps* re-occurring in Claudius' principate (Tacitus, *Annals* 11.5).

³⁵² Syme astutely pointed out that no contemporary could doubt that Augustus' power was absolute (Syme 1939: 520).

³⁵³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7, 12 and 14.

individual one-man rulers, were easier to commend than to operate and had only brief durations.³⁵⁴ Tacitus was here referring to political systems which were centred around any type of permanent one-man ruler, but which also at the same time tried to provide some actual or pretended level of political authority to the nobles (for example through a Senate) and to the people collectively. In the same context, Tacitus emphasised that in recent times, the Roman world had become a form of *unus imperitet*. In other words, Tacitus insisted that the principate, as first developed by Augustus, was a form of government by individuals (*singuli*) and not a supposed real sharing of power among the people, the nobles and individual rulers.

It is possible to imagine that in *Annals* 4.33, Tacitus was referring to the old Roman *res publica* being a blend of government by the Roman people through the Assemblies of the People, by the Roman nobles through the Senate and by the consuls who were virtually kings. There, however, are two reasons why this is an incorrect interpretation. First, Tacitus said that the duration of constitutions based on a blend of government by the people, nobility and individuals was brief, but note that the old Roman Republic lasted for over 400 years, a period which could hardly be described as brief. Second, Tacitus referred to government by individuals (*singuli*) and not by two consuls with equal power. When referring to individuals (*singuli*), Tacitus meant permanent one-man rulers such as kings and emperors, not dual temporary authorities such as two consuls. Therefore, Tacitus was not saying that the old Roman Republic in some of its earlier forms was an unworkable form of government. Also, Tacitus was not here referring to what Polybius recorded was the division of political power among the two consuls, the Senate and the various assemblies of the people under the Roman Republic.³⁵⁵

Scholars have argued *ad nauseam* about the precise constitutional characteristics and scope of Augustus' *imperium* and principate.³⁵⁶ Such constitutional debates have some

³⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.33.1. See Taifacos 1981: 273-276.

³⁵⁵ Polybius 6.11.1-6.18.8

³⁵⁶ For example, see Greenidge 1901: 386; McFayden 1921: 34-37 and 39-45; Boak 1918: 23; Kunkel 1961: 362-363; Scullard 1982: 210-217; Hammond 1968: 25-47 and 54-87; Grant 1949:102 and 104-106; Last 1947:

usefulness, but because of the limitations, ambiguities and contradictions of the extant sources, these disputes can never be fully resolved and can therefore never totally explain all the foundations of Augustus' powers. Also these debates leave unexplored the non-constitutional foundations of Augustus' powers.

The following section will examine, compare and contrast the views of Tacitus, the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and a few other ancient sources about various non-constitutional aspects of Augustus' principate. It will be evident that out of these sources, Tacitus had the most negative, critical and sceptical perspectives towards the Augustus' principate.

3.5 Portrayals of the non-constitutional aspects of Augustus' principate

It can be argued that there were a number of non-constitutional phenomena which were also the basis of Augustus' political and military powers. For example, the *Res Gestae*, Cassius Dio, Suetonius and numerous other Roman sources portrayed Augustus as father of the nation (*pater patriae*) or simply father (*pater* or *parens*) of all Romans and even non-Roman subjects.³⁵⁷ For example, Strabo depicted Augustus as being a one-man ruler, who was like a father expressing love to his children, when he dealt with his subjects.³⁵⁸ Alfoldi argued strongly that "the attribution of the title *pater patriae* soon became a sort of

157-164; Adcock 1959: 84-85; Jones 1951: 112-119 (Reprinted in Jones 1960: 1-17); Jones and Sidwell: 110; Millar 1977: 313; Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 13-14; Elsner 1996: 32-53; Girardet 2000. See also Brennan 2004: 36-42. Ehrenberg described *imperium* as "the right and power to give orders (military or otherwise) to free citizens" (Ehrenberg 1974: 119). Drogula, however, described *imperium* as "the right to exercise military command--outside the pomerium--and no more" and wrote that *imperium* was possessed by very few magistracies and could even be given to a private citizen who had no magistracy at all in particular exceptional circumstances (Drogula 2010: 426, 430 and 434). See also Richardson 1991: 1-9.

³⁵⁷ *Res Gestae* 34 and 35, Cassius Dio 57.8.1-2, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 58.1-2, Horace, *Odes* 1.2.50; *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 96 (6/5 B.C.) and 101; *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.823; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.127-133, Ovid, *Tristia* 2.38-40, 2.574, 4.4.12-13 and 17-20, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.858-860, Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.10.3, Florus 2.34.65-66, Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 1.6.

³⁵⁸ Strabo 6.4.2. Seneca the Younger made similar assertions (Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.14.1-3 and 1.15.3). Despite criticizing Augustus' earlier cruel murders and involvement in civil wars, Seneca praised Augustus' later restrained (*moderatus*) and merciful (*clemens*) behaviours and claimed that Augustus later deserved to be called father (*parens*) (Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.10.3 and 11.1-2). Cassius Dio argued that the usage of the word "father" about various Roman emperors, possibly signified the authority with Roman fathers once had over their children (Cassius Dio 53.18.3).

‘republican’ legitimization [legalization] of the principate by the supreme body...Thus the paternal authority of the ruler maintained the senatorial imprint of the much discussed *auctoritas*.”³⁵⁹ One of Octavian/Augustus’ main political aims was that his newly created public image as the benevolent merciful fatherly Augustus, would erase many Romans’ memories of the cruel manipulating tyrannical triumvir Octavian striving for absolute power.³⁶⁰ The imagery of the *paterfamilias* was also suitable for Augustus and his supporters to use to divorce his public images supposedly from that of Hellenistic monarchies.³⁶¹ Because of the exceptional *potestas* of the *paterfamilias* of each Roman family, a case can be made for arguing that Augustus’ role as *Pater Patriae* was the main indication of his (supposedly non-Hellenistic but actual) monarchical standing.³⁶² To some extent, the title *pater patriae* possessed an “appropriate vagueness”,³⁶³ which could be employed by Augustus in his creation of public self-images.

The representation of Augustus as the *pater patriae* was firmly rooted in the familiar role of the Roman *paterfamilias*, the male who possessed usually absolute *auctoritas* in his family and almost unlimited *potestas* to punish erring family members, who manifested at least in theory loving devotion to his family, who provided for the needs of each of his family members, who was the most honoured and respected person in the family and who had a close connection to the Roman gods through his veneration of the *genius* of the family.³⁶⁴ It can be

³⁵⁹ Alföldi 1971: 96. Alföldi also remarked that the veneration of Augustus as a paternal saviour of Rome was linked to him being the father of his country or *pater patriae* (Alföldi 1971: 48). Strothmann asserted that Augustus’ role as *pater patriae* was related to patronage (Strothmann 2000: 74).

³⁶⁰ Yavetz 1984: 6 and Mellor 1989: 27. Severy noted that in his initial self representations as a military victor and leader, Octavian/Augustus did not depict himself in terms of what could be described as a family model of government (Severy 2003: 33 and 44).

³⁶¹ Gradel 2002: 136.

³⁶² Salmon 1956: 477.

³⁶³ Gradel 2002: 138. For valuable contributions to the discussion about Augustus’ public representations as *Pater Patriae*, refer to Ziegler 1925: 1-105; Von Premerstein 1937: 166f; Kornemann 1938: 91; Alföldi 1971: 74-76, 80-111 and 112-138; Ramage 1987: 104-110; Stevenson 1992: 421-436; Stevenson 1993: 27-46; Strothmann 2000: 73-80; Schniebs 2002: 139-166; Eder 2005: 28-32; Starr 2010: 296-298. For commentary on *pater patriae* in *Res Gestae* 35, see Cooley 2009: 273-275. For an extensive examination of the nature and significance or meaning of the title *pater patriae* in its historical development, see Ziegler 1925: 1-105. See also Stevenson 1998: 257-268 and Marino 2004-2005: 215-240.

³⁶⁴ Ramage 1987: 108. Seneca the Younger said that the title “the Father of his Country (*Pater Patriae*)” expressed the fact that Roman emperors had been entrusted with the Roman father’s power (*potestatem patriam*) (Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.14.2-3).

reasonably argued that by either deliberately fostering or at least passively permitting other Romans to create the image of himself as the *paterfamilias* or *Pater Patriae* of the whole Roman nation, Augustus was able cleverly to institute a virtual despotic monarchy with him possessing unlimited *potestas* and absolute *auctoritas*, despite the fact that he continually always insisted he was not a king or despot. It was the inherent hypocrisy of such contradictory public images which stirred the ire of Tacitus. As will be later further demonstrated in Chapter 4, Tacitus appraised Augustus' political behaviour not in terms of loving fathers with their children,³⁶⁵ but instead in relation to masters dealing with their slaves. Also, note that Tacitus described as sycophancy the attempts by senators to bestow the titles of Parent of Her Country and Mother of Her Country (*parentem...matrem patriae*) on Livia, Augustus' wife.³⁶⁶ Tacitus almost certainly would have been aware of Cicero's warning about particular Romans oppressing their fellow-citizens through becoming their supreme ruler or despot (*dominus*) or king (*rex*) and then receiving the illustrious title of "Father (*parens*)."³⁶⁷ Rather than depicting Augustus as the father of the country (*pater patriae*), Tacitus portrayed Augustus as a deceitful individual with a lust for despotic power.

Another one of Augustus' primary self representations in his *Res Gestae* was of him being the generous fatherly provider of all of the needs of his subjects, a representation which was closely connected to his public image as *pater patriae*. To achieve this created image, Augustus spent an enormous amount of his "own" money, which primarily seemed to have come from confiscating the riches of the Romans whom he had executed in the proscriptions, from ransacking conquered Egypt and other countries, and from his inheritance, which originated from Julius Caesar ransacking other nations and from Julius Caesar stealing the

³⁶⁵ Normally arguments from silence have no validity, but when Tacitus totally ignored the very popular political image of Augustus' as *pater patriae*, this was significant. There is an element of truth in Pitcher's argument that Tacitus' style "relies more on what is not said than what is said, and demand(s) from the reader an attention to the subtext as close as to the text itself" (Pitcher 2000: 5).

³⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.14. See also Suetonius, *Tiberius* 50.

³⁶⁷ Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.21.83.

revenues from the Romans' sacred Treasury when he conquered Rome.³⁶⁸ As evidenced in his *Res Gestae* 15-23, Augustus spent 2,199,800,000 sesterces on the Roman plebeians and on discharged soldiers, spent massive sums of money restoring Roman temples, monuments and buildings, and spent large sums on eight shows of gladiators, in which in total 10,000 men fought, athletics competitions, games, hunts of about 3500 African wild animals and a massive spectacle of a naval battle.³⁶⁹ Similarly, Suetonius highlighted that Augustus demonstrated generosity (*liberalitas*) to all the different orders of Romans when the opportunity arose³⁷⁰ and Velleius praised Augustus for all of the supposed exceeding benefits he gave to Romans and others.³⁷¹

Tacitus, however, portrayed Augustus' generosity far more negatively, attempting to undermine this image of Augustus as the great fatherly provider of the needs of Augustus' Roman "children." For example, Tacitus alleged Augustus seduced or won (*pellexit*) the Roman army by gifts and the populace with cheapened corn,³⁷² thereby asserting that Augustus' wealth was at least one of the foundations of his political power.³⁷³ Tacitus also employed the personae of Augustus' opponents to argue that it was from a selfish lust for despotism that he aroused the veteran Roman soldiers through gifts or bribes³⁷⁴ to support his rise to monarchical power. Closely linked to these accusations, Tacitus maintained that one of Augustus' other secrets of despotism (*alia dominatio arcana*) was to ensure that he always

³⁶⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 22.1, 25.1, 54.1-3, Velleius 2.39.2-3, Florus, 2.13.21 and Appian 3.20. Velleius asserted that the amount of money which Julius Caesar obtained from the sale of spoils of war totalled just over 600 million sesterces, a massive fortune (Velleius 2.56.2).

³⁶⁹ Tacitus gave one indication of Augustus' personal riches when he recorded that at Augustus' death, the latter left 43,500,000 sesterces to the Roman nation and people, 1000 sesterces to every soldier in the Praetorian Guard, 500 sesterces to all urban soldiers and 300 sesterces to legionaries and cohorts (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.8).

³⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 41.1.

³⁷¹ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.1-2.

³⁷² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. See Earl 1968: 164. Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. There is debate about the meaning of Tacitus' verb *pellexit* in *Annals* 1.2. Grant translated it as "seduced", Reinhold and Millar as "enticed", and Lacey as the less emotive "won" (Grant 1971: 32; Reinhold 1978: 11; Miller 1959: 101; Lacey 1996: 137). Brunt conjectured that Augustus' control of the Roman state was founded on the army and not on his inheritance of Julius Caesar's *clientela* (Brunt 1988: 438-439). Syme, however, argued that the plebeians of Rome were Augustus' *clientele* whom he inherited from Julius Caesar, fed with doles and promised to protect against oppression (Syme 1939: 322).

³⁷³ Beranger 1966: 151.

³⁷⁴ *ceterum cupidine dominandi concitos per largitionem veteranos* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10).

had total control of the rich province of Egypt and its grain supplies.³⁷⁵ Tacitus also depicted Augustus seducing the Roman nobles into being his slaves by providing them with political offices and wealth.³⁷⁶ Tacitus portrayed Augustus as a deceitful individual who was willing to bribe many others in the Roman Empire in order to gain their support for his uniting in his own person of all the powers of the Senate, magistracy and legislature.

Any proper analysis of representations of Augustus must incorporate an understanding of Augustus' employment of the concept of *auctoritas*.³⁷⁷ In *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus presented an image of himself possessing greater *auctoritas* than any other living Roman. In Latin, the word *auctoritas* had numerous meanings, depending partly on the relevant literary context.³⁷⁸ Beranger, Grant, Syme and Charles-Picard noted the numerous meanings, vagueness and difficulties in defining the word *auctoritas*.³⁷⁹ Cooley rightly pointed out that *auctoritas* was "a fuzzy concept," was not constitutionally defined and had an unlimited scope.³⁸⁰ Because of its lack of clear definition, partial ambiguity and almost infinite range of application, it was suitable for Augustus to use in his creation of public self-representations. Salmon characterised Augustus as emphasising the power (*potestas*) of his role as *pater patriae* more than his *auctoritas*,³⁸¹ but this is debatable and probably a product of another one of Augustus' partly ambiguous self-portrayals.

³⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.59. For Cassius Dio's account of Augustus using the stolen treasures of Egypt to maintain the support of his army and Roman people, see Book 51.17.1 and 6-8, and 51.21.4.

³⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. See also Brunt 1978: 154.

³⁷⁷ For commentary and debate about the nature of the Roman concept of *auctoritas*, see Heinze 1925: 348-366; Staedler 1943: 384-393; von Premerstein 1937: 176f; A. Magdelain 1947; Scullard 1982: 214; Grant 1944: 444; Salmon 1956: 459 and 477; Earl 1968: 71; Canali 1973: 170-173; Syme Volume 1, 1958: 413; Levick 2010: 71 and 92; Ehrenberg 1965: 587; Crook 1953: 12; Heinze 1972: 43-58; Syme 1986: 2; Lacey 1998: 17; Levi 1992: 189-190; Brunt 1988: 322 n.105; Bonnefond-Coudry 1989: 683 and 709; Scott 1925: 87; Ramage 1987: 43; Kienast 1982: 72-73; Kienast 1999: 84-85; Galinsky 1996: 12; Bourdieu 1991: 192; Galinsky 1996: 10-41; Crook 1996: 113-146; Lauer 2004: 422-445; Lowrie 2005: 42; Wirszubski 1950: 114 and 118; Grant 1949: 104. For a comparison of *auctoritas* and *potestas*, see Ricca-Barberis 1954: 129-131. For a discussion of *potestas*, see Von Lubtow, *RE*, 21.2: 1040-1046.

³⁷⁸ Beranger 1953: 114-132 and Hellegouarc'h 1972: 295-320.

³⁷⁹ *Auctoritas* can mean the right or power to authorise or sanction, authority, command, controlling influence, dignity, reputation for leadership, prestige, position of authority, authority of speech and personal ascendancy. See Beranger 1953: 116; Grant 1949: 98; Syme 1939: 3; Charles-Picard 1968: 175.

³⁸⁰ Cooley 2009: 271.

³⁸¹ Salmon 1956: 477.

Through his frequent usage of titles which included combinations of the expressions *Imperator, Caesaris divi filius Augustus, Pontifex Maximus* and *tribunicia potestas*, Augustus constantly reminded the populace of the Roman Empire of his supposed supreme *auctoritas*.³⁸² The concept of *auctoritas* was also inherent in the concept of Augustus being the parent or father (*parens*) of the Roman people.³⁸³ The religious aspects of Augustus' *auctoritas* were partly demonstrated in his *sacrosanctus*, his occupancy of the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, his taking of the auspices and the numerous other religious honours which he delineated in his *Res Gestae*.³⁸⁴

In all of his extant texts, Tacitus employed the word *auctoritas* 60 times. Tacitus referred to an important characteristic of *auctoritas* when he mentioned Roman men gaining *auctoritas* or influence in the Senate through their oratory, resulting in the Senate and people of Rome been willing to do the orators' will.³⁸⁵ Tacitus demonstrated that *auctoritas* was not just an attribute of a *princeps senatus* under the old republican system or of a Roman emperor.³⁸⁶ Significantly in his *Annals*, Tacitus only once used the word *auctoritas* to refer to Augustus.³⁸⁷ In this situation, he ascribed to Emperor Nero a mention of Augustus' *auctoritas*, but Tacitus rightly knew that any comment by the almost totally corrupt sinister individual, whom Tacitus depicted Nero as being, would not be a good advertisement for Augustus.³⁸⁸ Tacitus' personal view of the concept of the *auctoritas* of Augustus is evident when he condemned the union of *auctoritas* and sycophancy, which he said was an evil which had long been rooted in the Roman state.³⁸⁹ Tacitus never referred approvingly to the *auctoritas* of

³⁸² Ramage 1987: 52.

³⁸³ Alföldi 1971: 46.

³⁸⁴ Ramage 1987: 51. His *sacrosanctus*: *Res Gestae* 10; his occupancy of the office of *Pontifex Maximus*: *Res Gestae* 7; his taking of the auspices: *Res Gestae* 4.2, 26.5 and 30.2; and his numerous other religious honours: *Res Gestae* 7.

³⁸⁵ Tacitus, *Dialogus* 36.4-7.

³⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.19.2, 1.42.2, 1.76.3, 1.83.3, 1.87.2, 2.12.1, 2.44.2, 2.65.2, 3.4.1, 3.15.1, 3.20.1, 4.53.1, 5.16.3, *Annals* 1.60.1, 2.34.1, 2.77.1, 4.14.3, 4.20.2, 4.35.5, 5.3.1, 6.13.1, 13.4.1, 15.26.3, 16.21.3, 16.32.3, *Germania* 42.2 and *Agricola* 9.3, 16.5.

³⁸⁷ Syme incorrectly claimed that Tacitus never used the word *auctoritas* in his *Annals* (Syme, *Tacitus*, Volume 1, 413, n.4). See also Christ 1978: 470.

³⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.55.2.

³⁸⁹ *quorum auctoritates adulationesque retuli ut sciretur vetus id in re publica malum* (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.32.2).

the emperors,³⁹⁰ but instead demonstrated that *auctoritas* could sometimes be employed for sinister purposes.³⁹¹

Augustus and his supporters aimed to portray his earlier career as Octavian the despotic cruel triumvir, who engaged in proscriptions of political opponents and various illegalities, as being almost a totally different person from Augustus the benevolent fatherly constitutional *princeps*.³⁹² For example, Suetonius mostly depicted an image of the semi-divine Emperor Augustus, who was supposedly often accompanied by miraculous signs,³⁹³ being largely a different person from the sometimes rash and cruel Octavian. Suetonius criticised Octavian's earlier atrocities against a Roman knight, a consul elect and a praetor, and rebuked Octavian for his keen support for political murders through proscriptions.³⁹⁴ Similarly, Cassius Dio claimed that after Augustus possessed undisputed supreme power, he revealed his supposed real disposition which was contrary to his previous actions when he was the younger Octavian the triumvir.³⁹⁵ Also, Seneca the Younger distinguished between Augustus' hot-headed angry behaviour as a young man, for example when he engaged in proscriptions, and his later mildness or clemency (*mansuetudo*).³⁹⁶ Syme astutely pointed out: "So well did he succeed that in later days, confronted with the separate persons of Octavianus the Triumvir, author of the proscriptions, and Augustus the *Princeps*, the beneficent magistrate, men have been at a loss to account for the transmutation, and have surrendered their reason to extravagant fancies."³⁹⁷

³⁹⁰ Syme 1958, Volume 1: 412.

³⁹¹ Syme 1958, Volume 1: 413. For example, see Tacitus, *Annals* 1.24.2, 12.25.1, 13.2, 14.20 and 14.39.1. For Tacitus' attitude to Polyclitus, see *Histories* 2.95.

³⁹² Syme 1939: 2. For a similar assessment, refer to McDermott 1980-1981: 28. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1989a: 159.

³⁹³ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 94-97.

³⁹⁴ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1-4.

³⁹⁵ Cassius Dio 47.7.2-5.

³⁹⁶ Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.11.1-2.

³⁹⁷ Syme 1939: 2. Fears posited that "Octavian-Augustus matured from portrayals as *dux* into *princeps* into *pater patriae*," (Fears 1981a: 56), while Ramage asserted that in *Res Gestae* 25-35, the progression was from representations as *dux* at Actium (25.2) to *princeps* (30.1) to Augustus (34.2) to *pater patriae* (35.1) (Ramage 1987: 25). There is some validity in interpreting the *Res Gestae* according to these perspectives of Fears and Ramage, but note that in the *Res Gestae* and also in Tacitus' *Annals*, these different representations have some areas of overlap and therefore were not mutually exclusive. Syme noted that there was a particular unity in the character and policy of Augustus as *triumvir*, *dux* and *princeps* (Syme 1939: 3).

Severy asserted that Octavian's first refashioning of his public image occurred when he re-established law and order at the time he supposedly restored the *res publica* in 27 B.C.³⁹⁸ This refashioning happened at the same time that Octavian began to be transformed into "Augustus."³⁹⁹ It can be debated whether this was Octavian's first remoulding of his public representations, but it was at least one of his transformations. Some scholars have noted a certain amount of ambiguity in the name "Augustus" in the sources.⁴⁰⁰ The meaning of the word "Augustus" seemed to have changed as it incorporated the ideological characteristics of the particular context in which it was being used.⁴⁰¹ Tacitus employed the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10 and his own role as a rival narrator to undermine any seeming approval of the elements of divinity attributed to Octavian through the usages of the two titles "Augustus" and "the deified Augustus." Augustus' *prudentes* opponents asserted that Augustus left little room for the worship of the Roman deities when he claimed to be adored in temples and in the image of godhead by flamens and by priests.⁴⁰² Also, Tacitus referred cynically to a senatorial decree which endowed Augustus with a temple and divine rights, and to Tiberius and the senators praying to Augustus at the latter's funeral.⁴⁰³

Contrary to Augustus' attempt to remodel his public image away from being the despotic triumvir Octavian who proscribed many Romans without fair trials and ruthlessly eliminated political rivals, Tacitus insisted that Vespasian was the only *princeps* who improved as a person after becoming emperor.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, Tacitus did not support the idea that Augustus changed for the better after he became *princeps* compared to his previous

³⁹⁸ Severy 2003: 33. For valuable analyses of Octavian's portrayal of himself from 30 to 27 B.C., refer to Sattler 1960: 24-57 and Zanker 1988: 79-100.

³⁹⁹ *Res Gestae* 3, Ovid, *Fasti* 1.609-612, Velleius Paterculus 2.91.1-2, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 7.2, Florus 2.34.66, Cassius Dio 53.16.8, 56.37.6-7 and 56.38.1. For valuable discussions on the name of Augustus, refer to Pelham 1911: 109-113; Ferguson 1912: 29-47, Haverfield 1915: 249-250, Taylor 1918: 158-161; Ernout 1922: 234-238; Dessau 1924: 37-38, Meier 1980: 267 and Zecchini 1996: 129-135.

⁴⁰⁰ Scheid in Ando 2003: 134 and Gradel 2002: 114. Thom argued that Horace consistently employed the title "Augustus" ambivalently (Thom 2004: 67-72).

⁴⁰¹ Powell 1992: 27.

⁴⁰² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10.

⁴⁰³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10-11. See also a similar reference in *Annals* 1.43 when Germanicus prayed to his deceased grandfather Emperor Augustus.

⁴⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.50.4.

behaviour from 44 to 31 B.C.⁴⁰⁵ Despite Octavian/Augustus' aim to distance himself from the memories of the Second Triumvirate, with its extraordinary powers, by being willing from 27 B.C. to receive the consulship year by year through the votes of other Romans and to approve of provinces being administered by governors delegated by the Senate, Tacitus depicted the reality as being the *princeps* Augustus had chained the Roman people even more than did the triumvir Octavian.⁴⁰⁶

Kloft referred to the concentrated effort of the (Roman) panegyrists to extol the *princeps* as the incarnation of every virtue.⁴⁰⁷ Immediately before claiming that he had supremacy in *auctoritas*, Augustus boasted of the Golden Shield which was awarded to him by the Senate in recognition of his supposed bravery or virtue, clemency, justice and piety.⁴⁰⁸ Augustus presented these four virtues inscribed on the golden shield (*clupeus aureus*) and the titles of Augustus and *Pater Patriae* as foundational characteristics of the ideology of the Augustan principate⁴⁰⁹ and as providing some of the foundations of his *auctoritas*.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ On the basis of a false interpretation of Tacitus *Annals* 6.51, it has been argued that Tacitus believed that a person's character was predetermined at birth and could not later change, and that any apparent changes were not real changes but instead were evidence of the person previously disguising his/her real character (Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 37-40 and Martin 1994: 105-106. For relevant discussion, see also Hands 1974: 316-317; Gill 1983: 469-487; Luce 1986: 152-157 and Woodman 1989: 197-205). In his *Historiae* 1.50 and *Annals* 6.48, however, we see that Tacitus did not believe that the character of the person was totally predetermined and could not change.

⁴⁰⁶ See Tacitus *Annals* 1.2-3 and 3.28. For commentary on the relevant part of *Annals* 3.28, see Woodman and Martin, 1996: 257-259. See also Bleicken 1990: 83, 84 n. 230, 85 and 89.

⁴⁰⁷ *Das angestrenzte Bemühen der Panegyriker, den princeps als Inkarnation aller Tugenden zu preisen* (Kloft 1970: 181). See also Charlesworth 1937: 105-133 and Markovski 1936: 109. For attempted refutations of some of the views of Charlesworth and Markovski about emperors' virtues, see Wallace-Hadrill 1981: 300-307. Refer also to Classen 1988: 289-302.

⁴⁰⁸ *virtus, clementia, iustitia, pietas* (*Res Gestae* 34). See Syme 1958, Volume 1: 414 for Syme's comments on the history of the usages of the words *pietas* and *clementia* on the Golden Shield by leaders and parties in the civil wars. For useful discussion of the Golden Shield, see also Seston 1954: 286-297 and Cooley 2009: 266-269. On the historical and political background of the various honors which Augustus received in 27 B.C., refer to Alföldi 1980. On the honour of the laurels given to Augustus (*Res Gestae* 34), see Alföldi 1973.

⁴⁰⁹ Ramage 1987: 73. See Ramage on Augustus extensively employing the golden shield on his coins, on altars of the *Gens Augusta* and *Lares Augusti* in every ward the city of Rome, and in some cities in the Western section of the Roman Empire (Ramage 1987: 74). Refer also to Traut 1911: 317-320, Alföldi 1971: 72, 77, 91 and 95; Bengtson 1981: 290-291, Wallace-Hadrill 1981: 298-323 and Classen 1991: 17-39 for analyses of the virtues *virtus, clementia, iustitia* and *pietas*, inscribed on the golden shield as recorded in *Res Gestae* 34. For an examination of Augustus' supposed virtue of *clementia*, see Dunston 1969: 9-19 and Cooley 2009: 270-271.

⁴¹⁰ Salmon 1956: 461 and Ramage 1987: 47. Markowski argued that in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus provided the ethical bases of his *auctoritas* in the virtues inscribed on the gold shield (Markowski 1936: 125).

Throughout his *Res Gestae*, Augustus provided much supposed evidence of his manifestations of these four virtues.⁴¹¹

One of Tacitus' main aims in his *Annals*, however, was to refute the popular idea that Emperor Augustus surpassed other Romans in virtue and therefore deserved to exceed all other Romans in *auctoritas* and to reign as monarch. In his *Annals*, Tacitus presented mainly critical representations of Augustus and no extolling of Augustus' supposed *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*.⁴¹² Tacitus was suspicious of any terms linked to imperial propaganda and if he used such terminology, he tended to employ them with irony and spite.⁴¹³ This tendency of Tacitus is evident in his dealing with the virtue of *pietas*. In *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus attributed to Augustus' supporters praise of Augustus' *pietas*, but in *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus ascribed to Augustus' opponents the viewpoint that Augustus employed the concept of *pietas* merely as an excuse (*obtentai sumpta*) to justify him initiating a civil war against his fellow Romans. Also the latter *prudentes* attacked Augustus' assertion about his *pietas* by insisting that through approving of the adoration of himself in temples and in the image of the Godhead, Augustus had actually reduced the worship of the Roman gods. Tacitus' own frequent personal implicit attacks on the worship of emperors and worship of members of their families, also indirectly undermined Augustus' claim about his *pietas*.

In *Res Gestae* 2, Augustus specifically mentioned his supposed *iudiciis legitimis* in punishing the assassins of Julius Caesar. Tacitus, however, employed the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10 to attack this notion of Augustus' justice, with the *prudentes* emphasising Augustus' assumed illegalities such as seducing the legions of a consul, usurping the magistracy of praetor, forcing the Senate to make him a consul, turning Roman armies against the *res publica* despite these armies having been assigned to him by the Senate, assigning the land of

⁴¹¹ To demonstrate his virtue of *pietas*, Augustus highlighted the fact he had been Pontifex Maximus for 40 years, had held many other religious offices, had replaced the ornaments which Mark Antony had taken from temples in the province of Asia, had restored 82 old temples in Rome, had built new temples, provided offerings to the Roman gods, and had punished the Romans who had assassinated his father Julius Caesar (*Res Gestae* 2, 7, 19-21, 24, 29 and Summary).

⁴¹² For example, Syme noted the almost complete absence of the word *iustitia* from the pages of Tacitus' *Annals* (Syme 1958, Volume 1: 416).

⁴¹³ Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 156.

other Romans and Italians to his soldiers without proper compensation, and disobeying supposed divine ethical law (*fas*) by putting personal hatreds against Brutus and Cassius above the general public welfare by initiating a civil war against them. Both Tacitus, through his own persona in *Annals* 1.2 and the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10, also challenged Augustus' claim to being rich in clemency by stressing Augustus' approval of the many murders which occurred through the proscriptions.

In the context of examining relevant modern scholarship and ancient sources on various theories about Augustus' political activities, this chapter has provided comprehensive evidence that Tacitus mostly had more negative, critical and sceptical attitudes towards Augustus' political career, than did Velleius, the *Res Gestae*, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

Despotism, slavery, liberty, "good" *principes* and Tacitus' disclaimers

4.1 Introductory comments

This chapter will focus primarily on Augustus' principate but will also refer to some relevant characteristics of Augustus' earlier political career.

In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus never once portrayed himself as a king or despotic ruler of the Roman people. Neither did he explicitly depict the Roman people as his slaves with him being their political master. Velleius also avoided these images of Augustus. Despite the fact that some of Suetonius' images of Augustus contain some elements of ambiguity and contradiction about to what degree Augustus possessed and manifested absolute power, Suetonius never represented Augustus as operating a form of despotism during his principate. Cassius Dio rejected the image of Augustus as a tyrant, but contrary to Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius and Suetonius, Cassius Dio insisted that Augustus was a king and monarch.⁴¹⁴ Coming from a different perspective, however, Tacitus represented Augustus' principate partly in terms of his understandings of the concepts of *dominatio*, *regnum*⁴¹⁵ and *libertas*. This chapter will explore these particular aspects of Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' political career, thereby providing further evidence that Tacitus' representations of Augustus were mostly far more negative and sceptical than those found in the writings of the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. This present chapter will also examine the theory that

⁴¹⁴ Cassius Dio 56.43.4.

⁴¹⁵ For discussions of the Latin words *regnum* and *dominatio*, refer to Bessone 2004-2005: 305-324; Suerbaum 1977: 1-429, Rawson 1975: 148-159; Bruno 1966: 236-259; Murray 1965: 241-246; Benario 1964: 99-106; Guarino 1963: 346-355; De Francisci 1944: 150-166.

Tacitus did not especially oppose the principate, originally instituted by Augustus, but instead only opposed supposed "bad" *principes*. This chapter will also look at Tacitus' clever use of disclaimers.

4.2 Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus instituting a form of monarchy and despotism

This section will provide an extended analysis of Tacitus' portrayal of Augustus instituting a form of monarchy and despotism (*dominatio et regnum*) in Roman politics. To understand fully Tacitus' more negative and sceptical evaluations of Augustus' political career, it is essential to explore his commentary on *dominatio* and *regnum* in relation to Augustus and in connection with the foundational political practices which Augustus' successors imitated to a large extent. The *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, however, did not employ the terminology of *dominatio* and *regnum* in relation to confirming or denying Augustus instituted these in the Roman political system. Despite this, a small number of relevant comments by Augustus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio will be included in this and/or the next section.

In ancient Rome, the word *dominatio* referred to despotism, the position of being an arbitrary or absolute ruler, a king or a tyrant. The word *regnum* had a range of meanings, some of the main ones being the office or power of a king, the sphere in which someone is supreme, political control, monarchy, a kingdom ruled by a king or queen, despotic or autocratic government and tyranny. Walser's assertion that *regnum* is equivalent to *dominatio* seems close to the truth.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ Walser 1955: 364. See also Bessone 2004-2005: 305-324.

Cassius Dio and Seneca the Younger argued that the rule of a king was the best form of government.⁴¹⁷ Tacitus, however, only supported the rule of one person as a temporary expedient.⁴¹⁸ In his early texts, *Agricola*, *Germania* and *Dialogus*, Tacitus does not explicitly accuse Augustus of engaging in *dominatio* and *regnum*, but in his *Annals*, Tacitus accused Augustus of this. Tacitus represented Augustus as being motivated by a desire to institute a form of *dominatio*, with Augustus as the ultimate slave master and the Romans as his slaves.⁴¹⁹ Contrary to Tacitus' portrayal, Cassius Dio approvingly depicted an image of the Romans being Augustus' subjects but not his slaves.⁴²⁰

Brutus accused Octavian/Augustus of instituting a *regnum* and a *dominatio*⁴²¹ and said similar things about the triumvirate, this including Octavian. This is one of the images which Augustus and his supporters fought hard against throughout his reign.⁴²² Despite his clever, ambiguous and often contradictory self-representations during his political career, Augustus in the long term failed to convince many of his fellow Romans that he was not a monarch. For example, Strabo, Asinius Pollio, Florus, Appian and Cassius Dio all stated or implied that Augustus possessed absolute power and/or instituted a monarchy.⁴²³

Despite believing that Augustus combined the functions of the Senate, the magistrates and the legislature, Mommsen argued that Augustus' principate was not a form of

⁴¹⁷ Cassius Dio 44.2.1-4. Also, Seneca the Younger justified rule by kings by arguing "For nature subjects (or subordinates) the weaker to the stronger (*Naturae est enim potioribus deteriora summittere*)" and by saying that the first men, who supposedly "were following nature (*naturam sequebantur*)" entrusted themselves to the control (*arbitrio*) of one person as being better than themselves (Seneca the Younger, *Epistle* 90.4). Likewise, Seneca asserted that "the best (or noblest) constitution of the state may be under a just king" (*optimus civitatis status sub rege iusto sit*) (Seneca the Younger, *On Benefits* 2.20.2). For comprehensive analysis of Seneca the Younger's political views, see Griffin 1976: 182-255 and Jal 1957: 242ff.

⁴¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁴¹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1-3.

⁴²⁰ Cassius Dio 56.43.4.

⁴²¹ Cicero, *Ad M. Brutum* 25.6.

⁴²² *Res Gestae* 1 and 5, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52 and 53.1-2 and Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9. Compare to Cassius Dio 54.1.4-2.3 about Augustus' refusals of the dictatorship and censorship. It can be argued that from the Augustan era onwards, probably the majority of Roman citizens did not regard the removal of despotic rule and the return to the consular constitution as being of central importance in the re-establishment of the Roman *res publica* (Bringmann 2002b: 119). This is possible, but with limited sources it is difficult to prove conclusively.

⁴²³ Strabo 6.4.2, 17.3.25, Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.21, Appian, Preface 6 and 14. Florus referred to Augustus as Perpetual Imperator (*imperator perpetuus*) (Florus 2.34.66). Similarly, Ovid provided his own simplistic representation of Augustus' political roles when he asserted that Augustus Caesar is owning (*Caesare habet*) all that exists beneath the canopy of the chief Roman god Jove (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.138). In his *De Clementia* 1.3.1-1.14.3, Seneca the Younger made comments which implied that the political system which Nero inherited from Augustus was a monarchy.

monarchy.⁴²⁴ Luce rightly noted that Tacitus focused on the characteristics of autocracy as demonstrated in the Roman principate.⁴²⁵ Two of the foundational themes of Tacitus' *Annals* were despotism or absolute rule (*dominatio*) and monarchy (*regnum*).⁴²⁶ Duff maintained that Tacitus' account "provides a compelling analysis of despotism, of how power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, and how all are trapped by the realities of monarchical rule, even the ruler himself."⁴²⁷ In *Annals* 1.2 and 11.5, Tacitus employed the word *munia* meaning the actual functions of political offices.⁴²⁸ Tacitus was interested in the real functions of the political role of the principate rather than what Tacitus deemed the pretentious names given to it by Augustus and others. O'Gorman rightly pointed out that sceptical historians, like Tacitus, aimed to identify false appearances based on lies and euphemisms and on words used to veil the truth.⁴²⁹

Syme underestimated the intensity of Tacitus' opposition to *regnum* and *dominatio* when Syme said that Tacitus was a monarchist in his life and politics because of his insightful despair of human nature.⁴³⁰ Tacitus, however, did not approve of any form of permanent one-man rule.⁴³¹ The only type of one-man rule which Tacitus tolerated was a temporary form in a time of emergency.⁴³² Martin asserted that Tacitus accepted "the necessity of the rule of one man", but opposed the tendency towards absolutism in emperors and sycophantic servility in

⁴²⁴ Mommsen 1887-1888: II.2: 748-749

⁴²⁵ Luce 1982, Volume 2: 1025. An abiding theme of Tacitus' *Annals* was "the nature and development of imperial power and of its growth over time" (Luce, Volume 2, 1982: 1024).

⁴²⁶ Syme, *Tacitus*, Volume 1: 348. In his analysis of the usages of *regnum*, *rex* and associated words in Propertius, Tibullus, Virgil and Horace, Murray demonstrated that even in political contexts, these Roman poets from the Augustan era did not employ these words with wicked connotations (Murray 1965: 241-246). This was highly significant considering that contrary to these authors, Tacitus used these words with evil significations.

⁴²⁷ Duff 2003: 101. Boesche argued that Tacitus presented the highest quality political analysis of despotism of any writer in the ancient world (Boesche 1987: 189). Referring to Tacitus, Levene observed "one has the consistent sense of a powerful mind seeing beneath specious appearances and fair words, and setting out instead the realities of power..." (Levene 1997: Introduction xii). Von Stackleberg noted that Tacitus' historical works have upset dictators and inspired many who wished to see the overthrow of dictators (von Stackleberg 1960: 36-55).

⁴²⁸ Kloft evaluated Augustus' principate in terms of how Augustus concentrated power and official functions in his own person (Kloft 1984: 308-310).

⁴²⁹ O'Gorman 2000: 3.

⁴³⁰ Syme 1939: 516-517.

⁴³¹ Cato Major, one of Tacitus' seeming mentors, had an intense dislike of kings, insisting metaphorically that the animal known as king is by nature carnivorous (Plutarch, *Marcus Cato* 8.7-8).

⁴³² Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1.

senators.⁴³³ Tacitus, however, saw little, if any, difference between any type of rule by one man and political absolutism, and regarded sycophantic political slavery as a frequent product of any form of one-man rule.

Grant may have been close to the truth when he asserted that possibly the central conviction of Tacitus' philosophy was the evils of rule by one man.⁴³⁴ In this thesis, the phrase "one-man rule" will refer to all forms of autocracy, absolute monarchy, despotism and rule by emperors. Adcock asserted that Augustus' principate was not an autocracy considering Augustus did not solely control every decision of his government.⁴³⁵ In one sense, expressions such as "one-man rule", autocracy, absolute monarchy, despotism and tyranny are inaccurate because all autocracies, absolute monarchies, despotisms and tyrannies have one person in primary command, but have many other political advisers, officials and frequently members of their own family exercising delegated authority to help the main leader continue to rule. Tacitus employed some unnamed commentators at the funeral of Germanicus to supposedly identify one of the aspects of the principate of Augustus, when they referred to the possibility if, like Augustus and Tiberius, Germanicus had been "the sole controller or ruler of affairs with kingly authority and title."⁴³⁶

Syme conjectured that in his *Annals*, Tacitus aimed to depict the principate of Augustus as a tyranny.⁴³⁷ Despite portraying Emperor Tiberius a tyrant (*tyrannus*),⁴³⁸ Tacitus, however, did not label Augustus as a tyrant. Walker suggested that in his *Annals*, Tacitus presented the figure of the tyrant as his most important type-character and similar in many ways to the cliché of the tyrant of the declamations.⁴³⁹ Such analysis, however, fails to do justice to many of the nuances and fine distinctions found in Tacitus' evaluations of the

⁴³³ Martin 1981: 234-235.

⁴³⁴ Grant 1956: 19.

⁴³⁵ Adcock 1952b: 589. Christ insisted that Augustus' political system was involved the rule of the *domus principis* or "the family and dynasty of the ruler, his women, children, advisers, stewards and intimates" (Christ, *The Romans*, 1984: 65).

⁴³⁶ *si solus arbiter rerum, si iure et nomine regio fuisset* (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.73).

⁴³⁷ Syme 1939: 5. Similarly, Beloch claimed: "the imperial rule was one of power, a tyranny..." (Beloch 1970:102).

⁴³⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.6.

⁴³⁹ Walker 1952: 204-214.

exercising of political power by Roman emperors such as Augustus. In English, the word "tyrant" usually refers to a harsh oppressive and/or cruel absolute ruler. In Latin, the word *tyrannus* has a broader range of meanings, varying from an ordinary monarch or sovereign, to an absolute ruler who governs outside of the law, through to any ruler who employs power in an oppressive or cruel way. Also note that one of the extreme meanings of the words *regnum* and *dominatio* was a tyranny. This thesis will not concentrate on the concept of tyranny partly because of possible confusion resulting from differences between the English and Latin words and because of Tacitus' extremely limited usage of the relevant Latin word.

Among modern scholars, there is an almost endless list of alternative explanations of the nature of Augustus' principate, some of which refer to monarchy, autocracy and despotism. For example, Montesquieu said that Octavian/Augustus conducted the Roman people gently towards servitude and began a one-man government which was aristocratic in civil affairs and monarchical in military affairs.⁴⁴⁰ Dessau⁴⁴¹ and Gelzer⁴⁴² postulated that the constitutional changes in 27 B.C. instituted a monarchy for Augustus. Kolbe, however, claimed that it was not until 23 B.C. that reforms to the Roman constitution resulted in the end of the old Roman Republic and the beginning of a monarchy.⁴⁴³ Scullard postulated that Augustus was not a military despot, an autocrat or tyrant, but was instead a constitutional monarch.⁴⁴⁴ It is possible to argue reasonably for and against each of these interpretations of Augustus' rule because of the limitations in the extant sources and because of the partly ambiguous and contradictory self-representations which Augustus and his supporters provided for the Roman people.

Eder argued that scholars should be hesitant to describe the Augustan *res publica* as a monarchy because of the tendency of historians in ancient Rome, for example Cassius Dio, Suetonius and Plutarch, to label it a monarchy the longer the period between when Augustus

⁴⁴⁰ Montesquieu 1965: 121-123.

⁴⁴¹ Dessau 1924: 39ff.

⁴⁴² Gelzer 1923: 147-195.

⁴⁴³ Kolbe 1969: 72-99.

⁴⁴⁴ Scullard 1982: 208 and 212.

ruled and they wrote.⁴⁴⁵ Note, however, that when writing about any form of absolute rule, it is more likely that historical accuracy will occur when the writers live sufficiently later to ensure that they will not be severely punished by the despotic rulers or their nearest successors for attempting to speak the truth about the characteristics of these rulers' reigns.

Tacitus took the stance that under the title of *princeps*, Augustus received all things under his *imperium*.⁴⁴⁶ In this context, Tacitus employed the word *imperium* to refer to supreme political and military authority and not just some type of delegated limited military authority. Tacitus made these comments in the context of emphasising that Sulla and Cinna did not create a lasting *dominatio*, Pompey and Crassus lost their political and military power (*potentia*) to Julius Caesar, and Lepidus and Antony forfeited their military powers to Augustus. By combining all these statements together, Tacitus depicted that Augustus was able to institute a new form of despotism (*dominatio*) through his use of military and political *imperium*. Therefore, Tacitus was arguing that the real basis of Augustus' power was his victorious armies.⁴⁴⁷ There were 28 colonies of veteran soldiers in Italy and a larger number in the provinces, who all honoured Augustus as their patron, protector and paymaster, and these veterans were the strongest foundation of Augustus' military monarchy.⁴⁴⁸ Significantly in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus boasted that about 500,000 Roman citizens had bound themselves to him by a military oath and he rewarded them with lands and money, and that before the Battle of Actium the whole of Italy voluntarily took an oath of allegiance to him

⁴⁴⁵ Galinsky 2005: 15.

⁴⁴⁶ *cuncta...nomine principis sub imperium accepit* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1). For a discussion of Tacitus' Preface in his *Annals*, refer to Marincola 1999b: 392-404.

⁴⁴⁷ Brunt asserted that the *Lex de provinciis* of 27 B.C., mentioned in Cassius Dio 53.12.1 and 53.21.1, was the legal basis for Augustus' new monarchy because it recognised Augustus' command of most of the Roman army (Brunt 1977: 96). See also Mommsen 1996: 63-114; Ronald Syme 1939: 352, 376 and 404; von Premerstein 1937: 99-100; Buchan: 139 and 150-151; Earl 1968: 66 and 71; Walbank 1969: 7-8; Cartledge 1975: 33; Ridley 2005: 48 and 75. Campbell asserted that Augustus instituted "an absolute monarchy backed by the Army, but hedged in by various traditions and a worn-out Republican framework," he had various limitations and obligations imposed on him (Campbell 1984: 427).

⁴⁴⁸ Syme 1939: 352 and 404. Millar provided significant evidence of how Roman emperors promoted strong bonds between themselves and the Roman legions (Millar, 1982: 1-23). Santosuosso observed that in his *Res Gestae* 15, 26 and 30, Augustus employed the phrases "my soldiers (*milites mei*)," "my fleet (*classis mea*)" and "my army (*exercitus meus*)," indicating that he believed that the Roman army and fleet belonged to him rather than to the Roman people collectively (Santosuosso 2004: 90).

and demanded he be their leader (*ducem*).⁴⁴⁹ Tacitus, however, demonstrated that he regarded oaths of allegiance to Roman emperors as being expressions of political slavery (*servitium*) and sycophancy (*adulatio*).⁴⁵⁰

Suetonius noted that in an address to the Roman Senate, Tiberius stated that the Senate had given unlimited power to the *princeps*, this referring to Augustus himself, that the *princeps* should be the servant of the Senate always, of the Roman people often and of even individual Romans sometimes, and that each of the senators were his kind, just and indulgent masters (*dominos*).⁴⁵¹ This statement depicted some of the contradictions of the principate which Augustus had instituted: a principate which possessed absolute military and political power, but pretended to be the servant of the Roman Senate and the Roman people collectively, who were supposedly the masters of the *princeps*. The fact that Suetonius could make such comments without attempting in any way to analyse the political realities of power behind such statements, is partly indicative of the quality of Suetonius' analyses of the principate.

Stockton suggested that Augustus did not set up a *regnum*⁴⁵² and Eder asserted that Tacitus did not explicitly label Augustus' reign as a monarchy despite Tacitus fully understanding the authoritarian nature of Augustus' rule.⁴⁵³ Note, however, that when referring to Augustus' family, Tacitus described it as the royal or reigning household (*domo regnatrice*).⁴⁵⁴ Galinsky argued that the particular mixture of the principate, which Augustus formulated, was part monarchy and part republic,⁴⁵⁵ but note Tacitus regarded such a combination as a façade, which deceitfully hid an absolute form of a monarchy. While

⁴⁴⁹ *Res Gestae* 3 and 25. Cassius Dio asserted that despite the fact in 27 B.C., a small number of Roman legions were put under the authority of proconsuls in public provinces, the majority of legions were under Augustus' control (Cassius Dio 53.12.2-3). See Herrmann 1969 for an analysis of oaths of allegiance to Emperors Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula.

⁴⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7.

⁴⁵¹ *bonum et salutarem principem, quem vos tanta et tam libera potestate instruxistis, senatui servire debere et universis civibus saepe et plerumque etiam singulis* (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 29).

⁴⁵² Boardman, Griffin and Murray 1988: 154.

⁴⁵³ Eder 1990: 81.

⁴⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

⁴⁵⁵ Galinsky 1996: 71.

maintaining that Augustus did not regard his new government as just a revival of the old Roman Republic, Ramage postulated that Augustus' new government comprised two aspects, the first being the old Roman Republic under the authority of the Senate and Roman people and the second being the completely separate element of the emperor possessing supreme *auctoritas* while respecting old Republican traditions.⁴⁵⁶ While this sounds a neat description, it is also contrary to how Tacitus regarded the new government.

Crook argued that in modern scholarship there have been two contrasting answers given by historians as to how far Augustus moved political decision-making in Rome along the path towards autocracy.⁴⁵⁷ He suggested that one historical perspective was that Augustus brilliantly utilized the old Republican unwritten constitution and its terminology and rejected offers of political power which were formerly inconsistent with these things. Crook maintained that the second historical view, employing the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*,⁴⁵⁸ Strabo 17.3.25, Suetonius' *Gaius Caligula* 14.1⁴⁵⁹ and some other primary sources as evidence, asserted that Augustus "had, all the time, in the most formal sense, total constitutional power."⁴⁶⁰ Crook claimed that there is no compatibility between these two different historical perspectives.⁴⁶¹ Note, however, that Tacitus accommodated parts of both views. Tacitus does not portray Augustus fully restoring the Roman Republic, but instead he asserted that Augustus had absolute military power from the time he disposed of Lepidus and Antony up until Augustus' death,⁴⁶² and in 28 B.C. when he laid down his title as triumvir, he began step-by-step to unite in his person all the functions of the Senate, the magistracy and the legislature, accompanied by some elements of the old Roman Republic.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁶ Ramage 1987: 53-54.

⁴⁵⁷ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 118.

⁴⁵⁸ This was obviously the bronze tablet inscription describing the constitutional powers conferred on Emperor Vespasian.

⁴⁵⁹ Suetonius stated *ius arbitriumque omnium rerum* was given to Caligula at the start of his principate.

⁴⁶⁰ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 118-119.

⁴⁶¹ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 119.

⁴⁶² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1-2.

⁴⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. Reflecting a basically Tacitean analysis, Bleicken noted: "the sum of the institutions and legal privileges which the one in power (Augustus) combined in his person," and Augustus' ability to suppress all possible areas of political decision-making power held by other office-holders" (Bleicken 1990: 112).

Galinsky claimed that in *Res Gestae* 1, Augustus rejected *dominatio* as an unacceptable type of political rule,⁴⁶⁴ but Cotton and Yakobson argued that a significant ideological characteristic of Augustus' principate was its ongoing ambivalent attitude towards the concept of rule by one person.⁴⁶⁵ Tacitus asserted that despite the fact that some Romans, who supported Augustus' rule, portrayed Augustus as despising *regnum*, Augustus actually consolidated his despotism (*dominatio*).⁴⁶⁶ Also, Tacitus referred to Augustus participating in the other secrets of despotism (*alia dominationis arcana*),⁴⁶⁷ thereby depicting Augustus as hiding many actual manifestations of his despotic rule. Relevant to this, when referring to Augustus' principate Percival argued that Tacitus believed *dominatio* was bad enough but *dominatio* masquerading as freedom was even worse.⁴⁶⁸

Tacitus also suggested that Augustus put out different public messages to the Roman people about the characteristics of his principate, including the following three: The first was his political system had many features in common with the old Roman Republic, for example ensuring that the officials still carried the old Republican names.⁴⁶⁹ The second was that through functioning according to the limitations of an old Republican *princeps* or *princeps senatus* and a consul,⁴⁷⁰ he had magnanimously agreed to have particular restrictions on his political and military power, thereby making his political system different from a monarchy, a temporary dictatorship or a *dominatio*. The third was that despite the first two, he potentially always had unlimited military and political power from the time of the Battle of Actium. Tacitus portrayed Augustus as never once surrendering any of his real powers, but instead gradually taking over all major functions of political power in the Roman world.⁴⁷¹ Tacitus was more interested in the realities of power than what he regarded as political showmanship.

⁴⁶⁴ Galinsky 1996: 76.

⁴⁶⁵ Cotton and Yakobson 2002: 195.

⁴⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3. Salomons correctly noted: "Dominatio is Tacitus' favourite expression to describe Augustus' position of power. Cf. Ann. 1.3; 2.59" (Salomons 1999: 84).

⁴⁶⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.59.

⁴⁶⁸ Percival 1980: 120.

⁴⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3.

⁴⁷⁰ *Res Gestae* 4 and 7 and Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1-2.

⁴⁷¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2 and *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Second Edition, Volume 10, 1996: 113.

Tacitus' portrayal of Augustus' permanent form of one-man rule in Rome can be gauged partly from his specific employment of the Latin words *dominatio*, *regnum* and *rex* and their cognates. The next section will engage in further analysis of Tacitus' usages of these words.

4.3 More analysis of Tacitus' usage of the language of *dominatio* and *regnum*

Tacitus' strong opposition to *dominatio* is evident in his *Annals* 4.1.1, 4.57.3, 5.3.1, 6.42.2, 6.45.3, 6.48.2, 13.1 and 15.69.1 and in his *Histories* 2.38 and 4.73.3.⁴⁷² Similar to Livy,⁴⁷³ Tacitus asserted that there is a binary opposition between *libertas* and *dominatio*.⁴⁷⁴ Tacitus never equated but instead distinguished between temporary dictatorship (*dictatura*) under the old Roman Republic and *dominatio*.⁴⁷⁵ Just as Livy had insisted that kingship was a temporary expedient in Rome before the commencement of the old Roman Republic, Tacitus said that dictatorships were taken in terms of a particular (temporary) period of time in Rome,⁴⁷⁶ thereby implying any permanent dictatorship was wrong. Unlimited permanent *imperium* was the opposite of *libertas* and was a primary component of *dominatio*.⁴⁷⁷ Note, however, Tacitus did not support unlimited *libertas*. He opposed both the political extreme of

⁴⁷² Tacitus' hatred of *dominatio* was probably partly founded on Cicero's attitudes to the same. Cicero maintained: "But boundless and worthless (or empty) passionate desires...for despotic power are indeed illnesses of the mind (*Animi autem morbi sunt cupiditates immensae et inanes...dominationis...etiam voluptatum*)" (Cicero, *De Finibus* 1.18.59).

⁴⁷³ Livy 3.39.7.

⁴⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.46.3 and *Histories* 4.73.3. See Leeman about the antagonism between *libertas* and *dominatio* in Tacitus' *Annals*' prologue (Leeman 1973: 197).

⁴⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1. Velleius noted that the office of dictator had been obsolete for 120 years prior to Sulla's dictatorship and had only been last used in the year after Hannibal's departure from Italy and that the dictatorship was employed only to save the Roman nation in times of extreme danger (Velleius Paterculus 2.28.2).

⁴⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁴⁷⁷ Fontana 1993: 28.

permanent *dominatio* by kings, dictators, emperors, oligarchies and political factions, and its opposite--*licentia* or "the extreme in liberty (*ultimum in libertate*)."⁴⁷⁸

Boesche perceptively noted that the Romans believed that *dominatio* was in every way opposed to *libertas*, but he did not recognise that Tacitus equated almost all forms of the principate with *dominatio*, except possibly the one associated with Emperor Nerva.⁴⁷⁹ Tacitus referred to the tyrannical Emperors Nero and Vitellius as both *princeps*⁴⁸⁰ and as exercising *dominatio*,⁴⁸¹ but Tacitus also labelled the more moderate Emperor Augustus as both *princeps* and as exercising *dominatio*. In *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus attributed to the *prudentes* the accusation that Augustus had a lust for acting as a despot (*cupidine dominandi*) throughout his political career. Tacitus' references to Nero being a *princeps* occurred from the beginning of his reign through to near its end and not just in his supposedly less despotic earlier ruling period.

Bleicken claimed: "The Roman aristocracy, whom he had stripped of their power, characterized Octavian's rule as *regnum*, *dominatio* or *tyrannis*..."⁴⁸² Tacitus, however, disapprovingly noted in *Annals* 1.2 that the majority of the Roman nobles left alive after the civil wars and proscriptions, submitted to slavery (*servitium*) to Augustus and supported the Augustus' new form of rule. If Tacitus was correct, this would mean that only a minority of the Roman nobles would have classified Augustus' principate as a form of *regnum* and *dominatio*.

Pliny the Younger argued: "*Dominatio* and principate are diametrically opposed (*diversa natura*)..."⁴⁸³ but when referring to the principate in a general sense, Tacitus labelled

⁴⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.3. Similarly, Cicero believed that the Roman people should be given a moderate liberty (*modica libertas*) rather than excessive licence (*nimia licentia*), excessive liberty (*nimia libertas*) or extreme liberty (*maxima libertas*) which some classified wrongly as *libertas* (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.44.68 and 2.31.55).

⁴⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1. See also Boesche 1987: 190. Roberts aptly observed that Tacitus often used the term *dominatio* to denote the principate (Roberts 1988: 127). Keitel correctly argued that Tacitus regarded the reigns of all the Julio Claudian emperors as *dominationes* from the beginning (Keitel 1984: 306). For more discussion of *dominatio* and *principatus*, see also Benario 1964: 97-106.

⁴⁸⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.11, 13.51, 14.20, 14.48, 14.49, 14.51, 15.36, 15.38, 15.73, 16.10, 16.13, 16.14, 16.17, 16.18 and 16.31 and *Histories* 3.38.

⁴⁸¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 12.4 and *Histories* 2.36.

⁴⁸² Bleicken 1978: 9.

⁴⁸³ Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus*, 45.3-6. Benario asserted a similar opposition between *dominatio* and principate (Benario 1964: 101).

it as a *dominatio*.⁴⁸⁴ It is erroneous to interpret Tacitus' linking of *principatus* with *libertas* in relation to Emperor Nerva's reign to mean that Tacitus employed *principatus* in opposition to *dominatio*.⁴⁸⁵ Tacitus' understanding of the concept of *principatus* is evident in *Agricola* 3.1 when Tacitus used the word *principatus* to refer to the political roles adopted by the Emperors Augustus to Trajan. Considering that except in the case of the Emperor Nerva, Tacitus portrayed *libertas* and *principatus* as being incompatible, Tacitus was therefore saying that all forms of *principatus*, except possibly that of Nerva, were the opposite of *libertas* and therefore expressions of *dominatio*.

It can be reasonably argued that at the time of writing his earlier *Agricola*, Tacitus believed in the possibility of a rare combination of *libertas* and principate in the activities of the Roman state, but by the time of authoring his later *Annals*, Tacitus demonstrated that he no longer believed that this union was possible, but instead concluded that the principate and *libertas* were always antitheses. Another possibility was that Tacitus always actually believed that Nerva operated a mild form of *dominatio*, but Tacitus at the time of authoring his *Agricola* was not confident enough to label all forms of the principate as *dominatio*.

To understand fully Tacitus' attitudes to the principate originally began by Augustus, it is also necessary to examine Tacitus' representations of the principates of a number of Augustus' successors, who ruled prior to the period during which Tacitus wrote his texts. Tacitus referred to all the emperors from Augustus onwards, except possibly Nerva and maybe even Trajan, as being political masters (*dominantis*).⁴⁸⁶ Tacitus included Tiberius,⁴⁸⁷ Caligula⁴⁸⁸ and Vitellius,⁴⁸⁹ three *princeps* he strongly disapproved of, as examples of *dominatio*. Tacitus also maintained that Lucius Arruntius rightly confirmed that Tiberius had operated a form of despotism, had inflicted servitude on the Roman people and that Caligula's

⁴⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 12.8.

⁴⁸⁵ Benario 1975b: 129.

⁴⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1.

⁴⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.12, 5.3.1 and 6.45.

⁴⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.45.

⁴⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.63.

reign would inflict an even "more harsh slavery (*acrius servitium*)" on the Roman people.⁴⁹⁰ Tacitus also referred to other despotisms (*alia dominationes*) in Rome, referring to those *principes* who came before Nero's principate.⁴⁹¹ Tacitus either equated or closely associated the Latin words *dominatio*, *regnum* and *rex*, and depicted many of the Roman emperors before his time in such terms.⁴⁹² For example, when portraying the principate in a general sense, Tacitus said it was a monarchy (*regnum*).⁴⁹³ Tacitus also described both Claudius and Nero operating a monarchy or autocracy (*regnum*).⁴⁹⁴ Also, Tacitus referred to Nero engaging in the delights of kingship (*oblectamenta regia*)⁴⁹⁵ and to both Nero and Galba having a royal court or throne (*aula*).⁴⁹⁶ Tacitus mentioned impending *dominationes*, partly referring to Nero's future reign.⁴⁹⁷ Tacitus also depicted the possibility of a change of monarchies or despotisms (*mutatio regnis*) during Nero's reign.⁴⁹⁸ Tacitus satirically evoked the image of the Emperor Claudius giving a speech in which he advised Meherdates, a claimant to the Parthian throne, that he should not exercise a *dominatio* with the Parthian people as his slaves (*servi*).⁴⁹⁹ This was despite the fact that Tacitus labelled Claudius as a king, this obviously being a form of *dominatio*, and Tacitus saying that all of the legal and magisterial functions of Rome were concentrated in the person of Claudius, the *princeps*.⁵⁰⁰ By describing the principates of these many Roman emperors in the ways listed in this paragraph, Tacitus confirmed his emphatic belief that the principate which Augustus inaugurated was a form of

⁴⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.48. Tacitus attributed the following rhetorical question to Arruntius, Tiberius' friend: "Or, when after much experience of political affairs, Tiberius was convulsed and changed by the power of absolute rule (or despotism) (*An, cum Tiberius post tantam rerum experientiam vi dominationis convulsus et mutatus sit*)," would Gaius Caesar, hardly out of boyhood, ignorant or nurtured among the worst, be a better leader under the oversight of Macro? Relevant to this, Suetonius maintained that when Caligula later became emperor he declared, "it is permitted to me to do anything to anybody (*omnia mihi et in omnis licere*)" (Suetonius, *Caligula* 29).

⁴⁹¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 13.1.

⁴⁹² Tacitus, *Annals* 4.1.1-3, 11.8-9, 12.7, 12.30. See also Tacitus, *Annals* 13.2.2 and 14.2.2 in which Tacitus wrote critically of Agrippina the Younger desiring *dominatio*.

⁴⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.1.

⁴⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 13.14.1 and 13.17.1 and *Histories* 1.22.1.

⁴⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.16.

⁴⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.7.

⁴⁹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 12.4.

⁴⁹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.22.

⁴⁹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 12.11.

⁵⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 11.5.

dominatio and *regnum* and was led by men whom he regarded as monarchs, autocrats, despots and masters of slaves.

Tacitus' attitude to the Augustan principate was also evident in his representations of the derogatory gossip of the majority of Romans about the possibility of either Agrippa or Tiberius replacing Augustus as the masters (*domini*) of these same Romans.⁵⁰¹ In the same context, Tacitus significantly contrasted being ruled by either of these *domini* with the possibility of there being a restoration of the blessings of *libertas*. By referring to Agrippina and Tiberius as *domini*, Tacitus was reiterating his strong belief that the type of governmental system which Augustus had instituted was primarily founded on a master-slave relationship between the reigning *princeps* and the Roman people.

In his *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus wrote of Augustus' supporters insisting that even though Augustus did not supposedly institute any form of monarchy, an autocracy or despotism (*regnum*) or a dictatorship (*dictatura*), the sole remedy for the problems of the Roman state was government by one man (*uno regetur*). By attributing these words to Augustus' supporters, Tacitus depicted what he believed was the contradiction in and hypocrisy of the political ideology of Augustus and his supporters. The third person singular imperfect passive subjunctive *regetur* when combined with the ablative singular masculine adjective *uno* means "it (the Roman state) might be ruled or governed by one (man)." By employing this phrase, Tacitus was sending the emphatic implicit message to his Roman readers that *uno regetur* was a form of *regnum*. Earlier in *Histories* 1.1, Tacitus similarly referred to power being concentrated in the hands of one man (*omnem potentiam ad unum conferri*) after the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., this obviously referring to Augustus and confirming that Tacitus agreed with the *prudentes* that his principate was a form of rule by one man.

Despite not admitting that he had instituted a form of *dominatio* or *regnum*, in his *Res Gestae* 34 Augustus claimed that prior to January 27 B.C., through universal consent he had

⁵⁰¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

absolute control of affairs.⁵⁰² After making this statement, Augustus made comments which had ambiguous meanings, leaving the reader in doubt as to whether Augustus meant that he still had absolute control of affairs after he supposedly transferred the *res publica* to the control of the Roman Senate and people or whether he only had limited political powers after these events. Despite Augustus' ambiguous self-portrayals, Tacitus represented Augustus as a despot and Tacitus never accepted that there was any real reduction in Augustus' powers up until the time of Augustus' death. One of Tacitus' favourite expressions was *rerum potiri* or forms of this. This expression was closely related to Augustus' employment of the phrase *potitus* (*potens?*) *rerum omnium* mentioned in *Res Gestae* 34. Contrary to Augustus' ambiguous inference that after January 27 B.C., he no longer had the universal control of Roman affairs, Tacitus employed the phrase *rerum potiri* to argue that Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius Caligula, Nero, Vespasian and other unnamed Roman emperors were always actually absolute rulers.⁵⁰³ Also in *Annals* 1.2, Tacitus also obviously accused Augustus of instituting a form of despotism or monarchy when he said that Augustus gradually (*paulatim*) united in his own person all the functions of the Senate, the magistracy and the legislature of the Roman state. Similarly, Tacitus depicted the principate of Augustus as involving the safety of power (or the ability to exercise control over others) (*potentiae securus*).⁵⁰⁴

This and the previous sections confirm the case that Tacitus portrayed Augustus' political career mostly more negatively and disapprovingly than did Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. The next four sections on *libertas* can only really fully be understood with background knowledge of the present and previous sections.

⁵⁰² *per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium*. Because of the recent discovery of a new fragment of *Res Gestae* 34, Cooley (2009, 257) argued that the phrase *potitus rerum omnium* should actually be *potens rerum omnium*, resulting in a partial change in meaning. For more details, see Seyfarth 1957: 305-323; Botteri 2003: 261-267; Drew-Bear and Scheid 2005: 217-260; Lebek 2004: 60.

⁵⁰³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.5.4, 1.33.2, 4.71.1, 5.1.4, 6.11.2, 12.42.2, 13.3.2, 13.21.5 and *Histories* 5.25.1. For example when referring to Gaius Caligula initially becoming emperor, Tacitus said Gaius Caesar obtained control of or made himself master of affairs of state (*rerum potitus est*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.1).

⁵⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28.2. Refer Syme 1958, Volume 1: 413.

4.4 *Libertas*, Tacitus and Augustus' principate

This and the following three sections will provide strong evidence that Tacitus portrayed Augustus' principate as not providing any substantial level of *libertas* to the Roman Senate and Roman people. Also, Tacitus' depictions will be contrasted to commentary in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and other Roman texts on the same matter. Before this can be achieved, however, the meanings of the word *libertas* need to be explored.

Modern scholars have provided many different and sometimes conflicting descriptions of the meanings of the word *libertas* among ancient Romans.⁵⁰⁵ In different contexts, some of the meanings which the Romans attributed to the word *libertas* were the civil status and rights of a free person,⁵⁰⁶ freedom from physical restraint, freedom to act as one wants, freedom as a personified virtue, freedom in opposition to captivity or slavery, the political status of a group of people with sovereign power, independence, freedom of speech, licence, lack of self-restraint or excessive freedom.⁵⁰⁷ The Romans, however, did not regard *libertas* as precisely the equivalent of Roman citizenship,⁵⁰⁸ did not enshrine the concept of *libertas* in a written constitution or some type of bill of rights, and did not include total freedom of religion or absolute freedom from all human restraints in their notion of *libertas*.⁵⁰⁹ Wirszubski argued in some contexts that the word *libertas* can mean

⁵⁰⁵For examinations of the concept of *libertas* in ancient Rome, see also Webster, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1934; Hans Kloesel, *Libertas*, Dissertation, University of Breslau, 1935; Syme 1939: 155; Jens 1956:331-352; Momigliano 1951: 146-148; Wirszubski 1950, especially 1-11 and Chapter 4 "The Augustan Principate in Relation to *Libertas*": 97-123 and Chapter 5 "*Principatus et Libertas Res Olim Dissociabiles*": 124-153; Wickert 1969: 94; Hammond 1963: 93-113; Straub 1971: 9-22; Stylow 1972; Hellegouarc'h 1972: 542ff; *R.E. Pauly-Wissowa*, Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, 22, 2080f; Welwei 1973: 29-41; Mannsperger 1974: 327-335; Syme 1977: 8-15; Johnson 1980; Fears 1980b; Brown 1981: 11-15; Brunt 1988: 281-350; Morford 1991: 3420-3450; North 1989: 156; Millar 1995b: 102; Hose 1998: 297-309; Cairns and Fantham 2003: 3; Welwei 2004: 32; For works which specialize in analysis of *libertas* in the era of old Roman Republic, see Bleicken 1962: 1-20; Weinstock 1971: 133-142; Bleicken 1972; Nicolet 1980: 317-341; Brunt 1988: 281-350; Ritter 1998: 608-614; Fantham 2005: 210; and Arena 2007: 49-73.

⁵⁰⁶Livy referred to the right of liberty (*ius libertatis*) (Livy 3.56.8).

⁵⁰⁷The Romans also worshipped *libertas* as a goddess (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 29.5) and Julius Caesar used the word *libertas* to refer to the political freedom of Gaul from Roman rule (Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 7).

⁵⁰⁸Earlier, other Italians possessed *libertas* without possessing Roman citizenship.

⁵⁰⁹Brunt 1988: 296, 297, 303, 308 and 317-318.

republicanism, or a combination of both republicanism and personal and civic rights,⁵¹⁰ but political terminology in English sometimes confuses the issue.

One of the foundational meanings of *libertas* in Rome during the late Republic and early principate was the legal, civil and personal rights related to freedom from being under the authority of a master.⁵¹¹ In Roman legal writings, the word generally referred to the status of someone who was not a slave.⁵¹² Pertinent to this, the Romans commonly regarded *libertas* as protection from arbitrary coercion and punishment by Roman magistrates and a guarantee of some measure of involvement in political power.⁵¹³

Noting the complexity, Syme maintained that during the civil wars, every political party and every political leader in Rome claimed to be defending the cause of *libertas* and peace.⁵¹⁴ Similarly, Wickert argued that the term *libertas* became ambivalent under the principate, sometimes describing the old Republican liberty and at other times the alleged liberty of the *res publica* supposedly restored by Augustus.⁵¹⁵ Because of the ambiguity of usages of the word *libertas* among Romans, Augustus would have often been able to employ

⁵¹⁰ Wirszubski 1950: 125.

⁵¹¹ Wirszubski 1950: 1-11. For relevant comments, see also Cicero, *Res Publica* 2.43, Cicero, *Philippics* 3.11.29 and Livy, 3.39.7.

⁵¹² Brunt 1988: 283. As Roller rightly noted (Roller 2001:220 n. 11), Brunt's chapter "*Libertas* in the Republic" (Brunt 1988: 281-350) is the best on the word *libertas*, partly because it commences by analysing legal definitions and the sociology of chattel slavery (283-291) and because it continually roots its discussion of *libertas* in the parent domain of chattel slavery and of other words and images from that parent domain, especially on pages 308-317. We see evidence in Cicero's writings of the fact that at least some Romans fundamentally regarded *libertas* as freedom from being a slave of a master. Cicero referred to Mark Antony being an absolute ruler (*dominatus*) in Rome (Cicero, *Philippicae* 5.16.44), Antony's behaviour resulting in a slavery of the Roman people (Cicero, *Philippicae* 4.1.3) and Antony's defeat being the provision of *libertas* (Cicero, *Philippicae* 5.17.46).

⁵¹³ Brunt 1988: 297, 313 and 331. Marshall defined *libertas* in Republican Rome as "the sovereignty of the people" (Marshall 1997: 54).

⁵¹⁴ Syme 1939: 9 and Fears, 1981b: 869-875. For similar analyses about late Republican political opponents employing *libertas* as a ideal or slogan, see Mannsperger 1974: 329 and Mouritsen 2001: 9. For examples of various Romans using *libertas* in these ways, refer to Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 51.109 and Cicero, *De Domo Sua* 42.110-43.111 and 51.130, Cicero, *Brutus* 58.212, Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 10.35.1, Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 76.1, Julius Caesar, *De Bello Civili* 1.3.5, 1.9.5, 1.22, 3.91, Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 8.52.4, and Cassius Dio 43.44.1, 43.45.1-2, 47.42.3-4 and 47.43.1. Brunt claimed that Brutus and Cassius regarded *libertas* as the freedom of a few and representing oligarchic domination, and this is why it had little attraction to the masses of ordinary Romans (Brunt 1978: 143). Similarly, Yavetz asserted that the urban plebeians in Rome had no loyalty to Cicero's definition of *libertas* (Yavetz 1984:12).

⁵¹⁵ Wickert 1969: 98.

the word without precise definitions with success when communicating with various Roman audiences.⁵¹⁶

Wirszubski rightly also pointed out the ambiguity of the word *libertas* and the difficulties involved in determining precisely what the word meant in some contexts,⁵¹⁷ but note that the scope of the meanings of the word *libertas* was not unlimited.⁵¹⁸ Syme argued that among Romans, the word *libertas* was always flexible, changed with the times and was a vague notion,⁵¹⁹ but Ste. Croix argued that the majority of usages of the word in the ancient Latin sources were not vague but instead were specific meanings which were "capable of expressing very different and even contradictory notions."⁵²⁰ Contrary to Wirszubski, Syme and Ste. Croix, Roller, however, maintained that the word *libertas* did not have vague or many different and sometimes contradictory meanings, but in all cases basically meant "the (desirable) condition of not being a slave."⁵²¹ In one sense, Roller was correct, in that the latter was the fundamental core meaning of *libertas* in all situations, but because of its usages in different contexts, the word *libertas* also had different applications of this core meaning, some of which were occasionally even in opposition to each other. It is impossible to understand Tacitus' applications of the word *libertas* to Roman politics, if the word is regarded as separated from its parent domain, which was based on the institution of slavery.⁵²²

Wickert asserted that during Augustus' principate, the majority of the population did not regard *libertas* as having the sense it had been given in what Wickert classified as Republican times, but instead defined it in terms of legal certainty and security of

⁵¹⁶ Mackie 1986: 322.

⁵¹⁷ Wirszubski 1950: 125. Similarly, Nicolet highlighted that "The content and overtones of the term might vary greatly according to political allegiance and circumstances" (Nicolet 1980:321).

⁵¹⁸ Mackie 1986: 306.

⁵¹⁹ Syme 1958, Volume 2: 558 and Syme 1939: 155.

⁵²⁰ De Ste. Croix 1981: 368. Wirszubski and Hellegouarc'h provided numerous examples of contradictory employments of the word *libertas* by various groups and individuals in ancient Rome (Wirszubski 1950: 103-104, Hellegouarc'h 1972: 551-558).

⁵²¹ Roller 2001: 228. Roller alleged that the extensive studies of the word *libertas* and its cognates in Roman political contexts by scholars such as Wirszubski and Hellegouarc'h treated political *libertas* as largely divorced from its original parent domain (Roller 2001: 219).

⁵²² Roller 2001: 219-220.

individuals.⁵²³ Tacitus, however, contrasted *libertas* to political slavery (*servitio*).⁵²⁴ Tacitus emphasized that the principate by its very nature, as originally instituted by Augustus, produced political slavery among the Roman people in general. In his introduction to his *Agricola*, Tacitus asserted that the Roman principate in general sought to destroy *libertas* and that even though Nerva provided new room for *libertas*, the question arose about whether the Romans, who had been so long engaged in *servitus* to the principate since the time of Augustus, could actually live under real *libertas* again.⁵²⁵

Jens argued that in his *Annals*, Tacitus divided history into two main parts, the first involving *libertas* and the second from the time of Augustus' principate involving only *dominatio*.⁵²⁶ Note, however, that in *Annals* 1.1 when Tacitus provided a brief history of political power in Rome from the time of the Roman kings to the Emperor Nero, one of Tacitus' main points was that during this era, *libertas* in a broad sense was not provided by the forms of *res publica* manifested under the governments of the Roman kings, the rare temporary dictatorships during the Republican era, the Decemvirs, Cinna, Sulla, Pompey, Crassus, Julius Caesar, the Second Triumvirate, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius or Nero, even though many sycophantic historians wrote falsified accounts of these latter five emperors' reigns.⁵²⁷

The writings of Cicero, Sallust and Livy were reflections of the attitudes of some Romans in the late *vetus res publica* and provide relevant background to Tacitus' views of *libertas*. Cicero referred to *libertas* coming to the Roman *res publica* through Lucius Brutus.⁵²⁸ Cicero also maintained that a *res publica*, which was a monarchy, was deprived of *libertas*, and that *libertas* never involved serving a just master (or a just supreme ruler) (*iustus*

⁵²³ Wickert 1969: 133.

⁵²⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.24 and 13.34.

⁵²⁵ Jens 1956: 333.

⁵²⁶ Jens 1956: 346-347.

⁵²⁷ For useful analysis of Tacitus' comments on *libertas* in *Annals* 1.1, see Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 88. For a valuable analysis of reader reception of Tacitus *Annals* 1-2, see Rutledge 1998:141-159.

⁵²⁸ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.25.46.

dominus), but instead involved serving no supreme ruler at all.⁵²⁹ Here Cicero employed the words *libertas* and *dominus* in political contexts with reference to their primary domain of chattel slavery. Sallust and Livy asserted that the end of the earlier monarchy in Rome was the commencement of *libertas*.⁵³⁰ Livy also maintained that by nature a free state and a king were enemies or hostile to (or incompatible with) each other⁵³¹ and Livy represented despotism (*dominatio*) and freedom (*libertas*) as opposites.⁵³² Building on similar foundations, Tacitus insisted that *libertas* was provided solely by and symbolised the old Republican political system, which was instituted by Lucius Brutus and linked with the consulate,⁵³³ except, as will be explained in the next section, possibly in the case of Emperor Nerva. Tacitus asserted that the expulsion of the Roman kings signified the commencement of *libertas* in Roman politics.⁵³⁴ To Tacitus, *libertas* was a synecdoche for the *vetus res publica*.

In *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus did not use the word *consulatus* to relate solely to the Senate. This is because the political system instituted by Brutus had its consuls elected by the Roman people in the *comitia centuriata*. Also Tacitus did not suggest that *libertas* and the consulate had similar meanings, but instead showed that they were linked. Later in the same context, Tacitus referred to Cinna and Sulla each creating a despotic government (*dominatio*), something which was the antipathy of *libertas*, but note that during these two despoticisms, particular Romans still operated as consuls. Therefore, Tacitus did not regard just having magistrates labelled as consuls, operating during what he regarded as the *dominatio* of

⁵²⁹ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.23.43. Similarly, Livy also stated that when the Romans were ruled by their early kings, they had not tasted of the sweetness of *libertas* (Livy 1.17.3-4).

⁵³⁰ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 7.3 and Livy 1.60.3 and 2.1.1-2. Both Sallust and Livy maintained that Rome's political *libertas* began when Rome's executive political functions changed to being yearly and involved having colleagues in each magistracy (Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 6.7 and Livy 2.1.7 and 4.24.4). Livy also approvingly had the Roman tribune Icilius insist that the two defences or strongholds of freedom (*arces libertatis*) were the power of Roman tribunes of the plebeians and Roman citizens' right of being able to appeal (*provocatio*) to an Assembly of the Roman People (Livy, 3.45.6-11). Livy referred to the privilege of individual Romans being able to appeal to Assemblies of the Roman People as another defence or stronghold (*praesidium*) of *libertas* (Livy 3.55.4-6) or one champion or defender (*vindex*) of *libertas* (Livy 3.56.6). For relevant analysis, see Nicolet 1980: 320.

⁵³¹ *natura inimica inter se esse liberam civitatem et regem* (Livy 44.24.1-2).

⁵³² Livy 3.39.7 and 3.56.13.

⁵³³ Compare to Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 11.25.

⁵³⁴ Tacitus, *Historiae* 3.72. Oakley highlighted that Tacitus also focused on the questions of what constitutes *libertas* and whether *libertas* is real or pretended (Oakley 2009: 187). See also Syme 1939: 5 and Koestermann 1961: 332.

Augustus, as being evidence of a real *libertas*.⁵³⁵ Stanton unconvincingly argued that Tacitus' expression *libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit* in *Annals* 1.1 did not mean that "Brutus created the consulate and free Republican institutions in general, but that he brought in (for Roman aristocrats, primarily) political freedom, a significant part of which was freedom to compete for the consulship."⁵³⁶ Tacitus' view on liberty was not so parochial.

The following section will compare and contrast Tacitus' view of the relationship between *libertas* and Augustus' principate with the portrayals of Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio of the same.

4.5 Tacitus' view contrasted to the perspectives of Velleius, Suetonius and Dio

Tacitus' view about whether *libertas* existed at any time during the principate has been discussed by many scholars in the past,⁵³⁷ but note that there is significant evidence in Tacitus' *Annals* that he argued that *libertas* for the Senate and *libertas* in a broader sense did not exist during Augustus' principate.⁵³⁸ For example, he noted that in the lead-up to Augustus' death, some Romans began to discuss the possibility of a return to the blessings of *libertas*,⁵³⁹ and Tacitus highlighted that years after Augustus' reign, many Romans believed Drusus had intended to restore liberty (*libertatem redditurus*) to Rome, if he had succeeded to

⁵³⁵ Similar to Tacitus, when referring to the restoration of *libertas* after the expulsion of the despotic Decemvirs, Livy contrasted a real restoration of appeals by the Roman people to the tribunes of the plebeians and to Assemblies of the Roman People against injustices of Roman magistrates, to a pretended restoration of the same. Livy labelled the latter as "having been displayed ostentatiously merely by hollow (having appearance without reality) forms (*ostentata tantum inanibus litteris*) (Livy 3.56.13).

⁵³⁶ Stanton 1998: 289. Miller argued more convincingly that in *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus used *libertas* to refer to "political freedom, especially freedom from monarchical rule" (Miller, 1959: 97).

⁵³⁷ For example, refer to Chapter "Seine Einstellung zum Prinzipat" in Flach 1973b: 196-224; Wickert 1969: 127-130; Jens 1956: 341-346; Meijer 2004: 16. Moles maintained that Tacitus' *Annals* "dramatises and enacts...the restrictions upon liberty imposed by monarchy..." (Moles 1998: 176).

⁵³⁸ Brunt mirrored Tacitus' perspective when he asserted that Augustus "destroyed political liberty" (Brunt, 1961b: 79).

⁵³⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

the principate.⁵⁴⁰ Related to the latter, Tacitus also attributed to some other Romans the view that Drusus and Germanicus had their lives cut off for no other reason than they intended to restore *libertas* and to embrace or welcome the Roman people with equal rights⁵⁴¹ and that fathers ruling as kings or enjoying supreme rule (i.e. Roman emperors) were offended by sons with such civil inclinations.⁵⁴² Tacitus' phrase *civilia filiorum ingenia* implied that Drusus and Germanicus had dispositions which inclined towards more focus on the political authority of citizens as a collective unit than was acceptable under the monarchy which Augustus had previously instituted. One of Tacitus' main emphases was the conflict between *libertas* and the type of principate (*principatus*) originally instituted by Augustus.⁵⁴³ Coming from a partly Tacitean viewpoint, Ramage argued that *libertas* was "adapted, extended and in many ways superseded by the Augustan ideology of the principate," and that as evidenced in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus gave *libertas* only a limited function under his reign.⁵⁴⁴

Tacitus' employment of the phrases *inani iactatione libertatis* in *Agricola* 42.3 and *falsa species libertatis* in *Histories* 1.1 reveals that he believed that there were particular types of expression of *libertas* which were empty displays or false. Also, Tacitus attributed a speech to the Roman general Cerialis, through whom Tacitus made the accusation that every person who intended to establish a despotic form of rule (*dominatio*) employed the word *libertas* and other "outwardly impressive names (used to disguise the actual nature of the person or thing) (*speciosa nomina*)" as pretexts: "no man has ever been ambitious to enslave another or to win dominion for himself without using those very same words."⁵⁴⁵ Because Tacitus later accused Augustus of instituting a form of *dominatio*,⁵⁴⁶ it is logical to argue that Tacitus believed that

⁵⁴⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.33.

⁵⁴¹ *neque ob aliud interceptos quam quia populum Romanum aequo iure complecti reddita libertate agitaverint* (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.82).

⁵⁴² *displicere regnantibus civilia filiorum ingenia* (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.82).

⁵⁴³ For example, Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1 and *Annals* 1.1-4. See also Shotter 1988: 225.

⁵⁴⁴ Ramage 1987: 72.

⁵⁴⁵ *nec quisquam alienum servitium et dominationem sibi concupivit ut non eadem ista vocabula usurparet* (Tacitus, *Histories* 4.73).

⁵⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3 and 12.59.

Augustus used the word *libertas* and other outwardly impressive or appealing names (*speciosa nomina*) as pretexts so that he could gain support for his intended *dominatio*.⁵⁴⁷

Tacitus' perspective, about the degree that Augustus permitted *libertas* during his reign, was significantly different from the viewpoints of Cassius Dio, Velleius and Suetonius about the same matter. Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus as being a strong supporter of liberty (*eleutheria*) for the Roman people, depicted Augustus asserting in 27 B.C. that his rule would be based on liberty,⁵⁴⁸ and claimed that even though Augustus set up a monarchy, he treated the Roman citizens as though they were free.⁵⁴⁹ Cassius Dio positively portrayed Augustus as combining monarchy (*monarchia*) with democracy (*demokratia*), and providing the Roman people with what he called "a liberty of moderation," in which the Romans *avoided slavery to him and* were free from the licence of a democracy but also free from tyranny.⁵⁵⁰ Cassius Dio asserted that it was only under the rule of a monarchy that true democracy and enduring freedom were possible.⁵⁵¹ Velleius depicted Augustus just restoring a limited freedom from anxiety.⁵⁵² Horace similarly approvingly claimed that Augustus put a restraint on licence or freedom to act as one pleases when straying from the ethically right order (*ordinem rectum evaganti frena licentiae*).⁵⁵³ Note, however, that even though Tacitus did not approve of what

⁵⁴⁷ Commenting on Augustus' claim that he championed "the liberty of the Republic" against the oppressive "tyranny of a faction" in *Res Gestae* 1, Wells wrote with well-founded cynicism: "'Liberty' and 'faction' are stock words of the political vocabulary. I am always for liberty, you are always a faction. Like 'democracy' today, 'liberty' could mean anything you wanted it to mean, and nobody was ever against it" (Wells 1984: 13).

⁵⁴⁸ Cassius Dio 53.6.2-3. Benario hypothesised that Augustus restored to the Roman populace a form of *libertas* with a changed definition (Benario 1964: 99 and Benario 1975b: 131).

⁵⁴⁹ Cassius Dio, 52.1.1, 52.40.1-41.2, 53.17.1-11 and 53.33.1.

⁵⁵⁰ Cassius Dio 56.43.4. For more assertions about Augustus' supposed attitudes to being "democratic," see Cassius Dio 53.33.1, 55.4.1-2, 56.43.4 and 57.8.3. We cannot equate the Greek word *demokratia* with the old Roman Republic (*vetus res publica*) in the sense which Tacitus referred to the latter in *Annals* 1.7. The word *demokratia* was ambiguous (Rich 1990: 138).

⁵⁵¹ Cassius Dio 47.39.4-5. Dio's comments are in some measure a reflection of one of his own major aims in writing his history: his intention to present Emperor Augustus as a role model for emperors in his own era after Dio experienced the tyrannical principates of Emperors Commodus, Septimus Severus and Caracalla (Reinhold and Swan 1990: 155-173).

⁵⁵² Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3-4.

⁵⁵³ Horace, *Ode* 4.15.9-10. Milnor's interpretation of Horace's comments would have been more nuanced if she had distinguished between excessive liberty as *licentia* and appropriate liberty as *libertas*, just as Tacitus did in *Histories* 2.10 (see Milnor 2007: 14-15).

he labelled “the extreme in liberty (*ultimum in libertate*)”⁵⁵⁴ and he distinguished between licence and liberty (*licentia ac libertas*),⁵⁵⁵ he believed that Augustus went far beyond the suppression of licence to the removal of *libertas* from the Roman people and Senate.

Despite the fact that Suetonius presented a mostly very favourable portrayal of Augustus' principate, like Tacitus he did not support the image of Augustus fully restoring *libertas* to the Roman people. Even though Suetonius did not always use the word *libertas* with the same meaning,⁵⁵⁶ his usage of the phrase *restituendam libertatem* in *Tiberius* 50.1 is strong evidence that he did not believe that Augustus fully restored *libertas* to the Roman people. Suetonius also portrayed various failed attempts to restore *libertas* during and after Augustus' reign, but Suetonius never explicitly revealed whether he approved or disapproved such attempted failed restorations, despite him seemingly approving to some extent in *Divus Augustus* 98.2 of Augustus' self-representation as the provider of liberty.⁵⁵⁷

In his comments on Emperor Nerva, Tacitus said that the uniting of principate and *libertas* in Rome had been incompatible or irreconcilable before the present time (*olim dissociabiles*).⁵⁵⁸ In other words, Tacitus was saying that during the reigns of Emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, there had been no actual practical uniting of the political institution of the *principatus* with the Roman political concept of *libertas*. This comment is significant considering Tacitus was implying that Emperor Vespasian, someone whom Tacitus praised in different ways, did not combine principate and *libertas* either. By this, Tacitus sent a number of implicit messages to his Roman readers. First, he was suggesting that a Roman emperor could have many worthwhile characteristics, despite the fact that he did not unite principate and *libertas*. Second, Tacitus' praising usages of the Latin word *libertas* on almost all other

⁵⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.3. Tacitus' *Dialogus De Oratoribus* 40.3-4 may prove that he did not approve of the democratic political systems found in Athens and Rhodes, because he believed that these political systems were run solely by the people collectively.

⁵⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.10.

⁵⁵⁶ For example, see Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 54 and 98.2. For worthwhile discussion on Suetonius' opinions about *libertas*, see Baldwin 1983: 324-337.

⁵⁵⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 110.

⁵⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1.

occasions, in addition to the praising tone of his comment that Emperor Nerva had united principate and *libertas*, suggested to his Roman readers that the combining of principate and *libertas* in Roman politics was highly desirable. Shotter asserted that Augustus in theory but not in practice united principate and *libertas*,⁵⁵⁹ but Tacitus did not approve even of this option.

Furneaux argued that in *Agricola* 3.1, the word *libertas* in the expression *principatus ac libertas* meant the "freedom from the unlimited despotism of a Nero or Domitian."⁵⁶⁰ Also, Syme asserted that the word *libertas* was invoked against unpopular emperors in order to classify their power as illicit or *dominatio*, not *principatus*.⁵⁶¹ Tacitus' view, however, was not just limited to such considerations. Tacitus regarded the principates of all emperors, including Augustus' and possibly except Nerva's principate, as *dominatio* and devoid of real and significant *libertas*.

The next section will demonstrate that Tacitus argued that *libertas* was more than freedom of speech and freedom of the Senate.

4.6 Tacitus believed *libertas* was more than freedom of speech and of the Senate

A key aspect of any analysis of Tacitus' understanding of *libertas* must involve the recognition that he distinguished between freedom of the Senate, a broader freedom of speech for all Roman citizens and an even broader freedom for Roman citizens, and he believed that real *libertas* among Romans included all three.

Before examining Tacitus' viewpoint that *libertas* was more than freedom of speech and freedom of the Senate, it is necessary to compare Tacitus' attitudes with the perspectives

⁵⁵⁹ Shotter 1978: 237-238.

⁵⁶⁰ Furneaux 1961: 44.

⁵⁶¹ Syme 1939: 516.

of Suetonius, Seneca the Elder and Cassius Dio about whether Augustus permitted any form of freedom of speech during his reign. Suetonius and Seneca the Elder used the word *libertas* to create an image of Augustus permitting a certain level of freedom of speech for Romans during his reign,⁵⁶² and Cassius Dio claimed that at Augustus' funeral, Tiberius asserted that the Senate enjoyed freedom of speech and freedom of voting under Augustus' rule.⁵⁶³ Partly consistent with this, Tacitus employed Cremutius Cordus to refer to Augustus permitting some Roman historians, such as Livy and Asinius Pollio, and other writers and poets, a certain amount of freedom of speech to support Augustus' political opponents or to criticise Augustus.⁵⁶⁴ Regardless, however, of whether Augustus actually legislated to limit freedom of speech, Tacitus asserted that the nature of monarchy or despotism resulted in sycophantic Roman historical writing and the production of falsified histories until the time of the Emperor Nerva.⁵⁶⁵ Wallace-Hadrill rightly noted that during the reigns of Augustus and other emperors, *libertas* "was only what the autocrat voluntarily conceded to his subjects," and that from the time of the execution of Cicero, no Roman had been free to speak against a triumvir or emperor possessing the power to execute whomever they wished, except to the degree that the ruler allowed such freedom.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶² Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 51, 54, 55 and 56 and Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 2.4.13. Suetonius recorded that during the reign of Augustus, the rhetorician Gaius Albucius Silus of Novara narrowly escaped being punished for declaring that Marcus Brutus was "the author and defender or champion of our laws and liberties (*legum ac libertatis auctorem et vindicem*)" (Suetonius, *De Rhetoribus* 6 (30)). Tacitus, however, recorded the historian Crematius Cordus depicted Augustus as being tolerant of Livy for lavishing praises on Pompey (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.34), but note that Augustus' tolerance of praises of Pompey suited Augustus' aim to represent himself as being in some ways a strong supporter of the old Roman Republic and of supposed Republican heroes like Pompey. Augustus depicted himself as a fervent enemy of both Brutus and Cassius (*Res Gestae* 2). Therefore, to praise Brutus in the way which Albucius Silus did, was to imply that Augustus was a deceitful liar who actually opposed *libertas* and had unjustly waged war on the author and champion or defender of Rome's laws and *libertas*. Seneca the Elder suggested that during the latter part of his reign, Augustus began to engage even in the suppression of free speech, when he condemned and exiled Cassius Severus and had the writings of Titus Labienus destroyed (Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 1.72.3 and 10 Praef. 4-8. See also Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 16.1).

⁵⁶³ Cassius Dio 56.40.3.

⁵⁶⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.34. Moles provided an extensive largely convincing analysis of Tacitus' *Annals* 4.32-35 and a judicious critique (Moles 1998: 102-105) of Woodman's and Martin's analyses of *Annals* 4.32-35 found in Martin and Woodman 1989:169-184 and Woodman 1988: 160-196.

⁵⁶⁵ Brunt 1984: 444. See Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1 and *Annals* 1.1. On the issue of which historical writers Tacitus criticised in these passages, refer to Klingner 1958: 194-206 and Timpe 1987: 65-95. For a discussion of some of Tacitus' views on *libertas* in his Introduction to his *Histories*, see Christes 1995:133-146.

⁵⁶⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 38. For evidence of Wallace-Hadrill's claim, see Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.21.

Syme claimed that in Tacitus' view, the most important aspect of *libertas* during the principate, which needed to survive from the old Roman Republican era, was freedom of speech.⁵⁶⁷ In sections of his earlier works *Agricola* and *Histories*, Tacitus made statements, which if taken alone, could support Syme's conclusion,⁵⁶⁸ but there are many other comments by Tacitus in his *Histories* and especially in his later *Annals*, which demonstrated that he believed that the type of *libertas*, which needed to be restored to Rome, was much more than just freedom of speech.⁵⁶⁹ Even in Tacitus' *Agricola* 3.1-3, Tacitus seemed to be implying that *libertas* also included freedom from unjust executions by rulers with unlimited political power.

A foundational aspect of the *vetus res publica* was what Tacitus described as the liberty of the Senate (*libertas senatus*), something which Tacitus strongly supported.⁵⁷⁰ *Libertas senatus* basically referred to the significant concerns of state being brought before the Senate and individual senators having freedom of speech to voice their points of view and to debate without being coerced.⁵⁷¹ Tacitus contrasted the *libertas* of a senator with the political slavery (*servitium*) and sycophancy (*adulatio*) of other senators.⁵⁷² Also, Tacitus criticised many for being willing to become sycophantic slaves of Roman emperors and to abandon their *libertas*.

Gartner argued that Tacitus searched for *libertas* above all in the relationships which the Senate and individual senators had with the *princeps*.⁵⁷³ Similarly, Brunt claimed that the type of liberty which Tacitus wanted to be restored to the Roman state was mainly or exclusively the right of men of high rank to be able to write or speak with freedom and to

⁵⁶⁷ Syme 1970: 136.

⁵⁶⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola* 1.2-2.3 and *Histories* 1.1.

⁵⁶⁹ Livy referred to a situation during the despotic rule of the Decemvirs in which *libertas* went no further than speech (Livy 3.41.4).

⁵⁷⁰ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.2. Tacitus insisted *libertas senatus* did not exist under the rule of Emperor Domitian (Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.2). For a discussion of *libertas* in Tacitus' *Agricola*, see Liebeschuetz 1966: 126-139. For more recent analysis of Tacitus' *Agricola*, see Clarke 2001: 94-112 and Rutledge 2000: 75-95. Tacitus also referred to Roman senators being pressured to give up their senatorial liberty, which they briefly enjoyed at the beginning of the reign of supposedly moderate Emperor Vespasian (Tacitus, *Histories* 4.44).

⁵⁷¹ Wirszubski 1950: 137.

⁵⁷² Tacitus, *Annals* 14.49.1. See also *Annals* 14.12.

⁵⁷³ Gartner 2000: 102.

engage in public affairs without being dominated by the emperor.⁵⁷⁴ The gist of what Gartner and Brunt argued was important to Tacitus, but Tacitus was also very concerned about the *libertas* of all Roman citizens. This was partly evident when Tacitus maintained that the supreme authority or sovereignty of the Roman people equalled liberty (*populi imperium iuxta libertatem*).⁵⁷⁵

Tacitus' view that *libertas* was not a concept related solely to the Roman Senate and senators, had foundational roots in the views of Romans like Cato, Cicero and Livy. For example, Cato maintained: "It is right (or it must surely be the case), that all share alike indiscriminately in legal rights (or justice), law, liberty and the republic."⁵⁷⁶ Similarly, Cicero referred to "common or universal liberties (*communi libertatis*)" of all Romans⁵⁷⁷ and to the liberty of the Roman people (*libertas populi Romani*).⁵⁷⁸ Cicero also distinguished the liberty of the people (*libertas populi*) from arrangement by the direction of the Senate, and the liberty of the Roman people (*libertas populi Romani*) from the authority of the Senate (*senatus auctoritas*).⁵⁷⁹ One of Livy's key expressions was "the liberty of the Roman people (*libertas populi Romani*)".⁵⁸⁰

Because of the predominantly aristocratic nature of the extant sources, in some other previous studies of this topic, too little account had been taken of evidence demonstrating that the term *libertas* referred not just to the concerns of the Roman oligarchic nobles, but also to

⁵⁷⁴ Brunt 1988: 10-11.

⁵⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.42. Wirszubski equated *libertas* with Roman citizenship (*civitas*) (Wirszubski 1950: 2-4), but Brunt and Roller convincingly challenged such an absolute identification (Brunt 1988: 296-297 and Roller 2001: 232, n.33). Even though Tacitus did not approve of *libertas* for all slaves and for all foreign nations, we can see in some of his comments that he believed that *libertas* was a much broader concept than merely Roman citizenship. Tacitus referred to non-Romans possessing *libertas*: the *libertas* which the Romans had given to the foreign town Cyzicus in Phrygia (Tacitus, *Histories* 4.36), and Germans, Gauls and Thracians possessing *libertas* if they were not conquered militarily (Tacitus, *Germania* 37.3-4 and *Annals* 2.46.3, 3.45 and 4.50). See also Livy 24.15.8, Tacitus, *Annals* 4.27 and 4.46.

⁵⁷⁶ *Iure, lege, libertate, republica communiter uti oportet* (Cato fragment 252 Malcovati/ 231 Cugusi).

⁵⁷⁷ Cicero, *In Verrem* 2.5.66.169.

⁵⁷⁸ Cicero, *Philippicae* 3.15.39.

⁵⁷⁹ Cicero, *De Domo Sua* 50.130. Also, in his *Philippicae* 5.17.46, Cicero twice distinguished the liberty of the Roman people (*libertas populi Romani*) from the authority of the Senate (*senatus auctoritas*).

⁵⁸⁰ Livy 2.15.2.

the interests of ordinary Romans.⁵⁸¹ As a result, there is a temptation to imagine that when Tacitus referred to *libertas*, he was solely or almost totally concerned about the *libertas* of the Senate and of nobles.⁵⁸² For example, Oakley argued that in *Agricola* 3.1, Tacitus was referring to the *libertas* of the Senate rather than a broader *libertas* for all Roman citizens.⁵⁸³ In this literary context, Tacitus mentioned *libertas* by itself, the *libertas* of the Senate and the utmost excesses of *libertas*.⁵⁸⁴ Tacitus here employed the word *libertas* with three different meanings, but his usage of *libertas* by itself in this context, while including the more specific meaning of the *libertas* of the Senate, also meant more than this.⁵⁸⁵ The fact that *Agricola* 3.1

⁵⁸¹ Brunt 1988: 282. Brunt argued strongly that the idea that *libertas* began in Rome after the expulsion of the Roman kings was an aristocratic perspective, because there was only a small amount of political rights given to the people of Rome (Brunt 1988: 330). Note, however, that some modern scholars have provided some contentious evidence from the limited and sometimes unreliable available sources that during particular periods of the old Roman *res publica*, the government of Rome included a certain amount of democracy rather than being solely an oligarchy of nobles. There has been much debate especially since the 1980s about the political characteristics of the old Roman *res publica*, initiated mainly by Fergus Millar (See, for example, Millar 1984: 1-19; Millar 1986: 1-11; Millar 1989: 138-150; Millar 1995a: 91-113). See Holkeskamp 2010, 1-22, with bibliography of relevant texts from 1990 to 2006 written by scholars with conflicting views about the relevant issues (10, n. 35). Part of this debate has involved disputes about to what degree the old Roman *res publica* was oligarchic or democratic. Appian argued that after the Romans threw off rule by kings, they were ruled by an aristocracy (*aristokratia*) (Appian, *Preface* 6), but Polybius and Cicero claimed that the old Roman *res publica* was a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (Polybius 6.5.11.1-13 and Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.45.69 and 2.23.42-43). For awareness of at least some Romans of some elements of democracy, see also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.2.2.169 and 182-183 and 19.2.3.187-189. On the debate about to what degree Rome was oligarchic or democratic during the *vetus res publica*, refer to Gelzer 1912; Taylor 1960; Nicolet 1980; Brunt 1982a: 1-17; Paterson 1985: 21-43; Grieve 1985: 278-309; Vanderbroeck: 1987; North 1990b: 277-287; Harris 1990: 288-294; North 1990a: 3-21; Burckhardt 1990: 77-99; Gruen 1991: 252-267; Jakobson 1992: 32-52; Mackie 1992: 49-73; Di Gennaro 1993: 545-565; Jehne 1995; Jakobson 1995: 426-442; Gruen 1996: 215-225; Gabba 1997: 266-271; Marshall 1997: 54-72; Hall 1998: 15-30; Wiseman 1999: 537-540; Mouritsen 2001; Chapters 3-6 of Millar 2002: 85-182; Jakobson 2010: 282-302. (Note in footnote 6 on page 284, Jakobson also provided a list of scholars who have also contributed to this debate). For a useful overview of this debate about whether the old Roman Republic was oligarchic or democratic or a mixture of both, see Jehne 2006: 3-28.

⁵⁸² Similar to Tacitus, one of Livy's key expressions was "the liberty of the Roman people (*libertas populi Romani*)" (Livy 2.15.2). See Luce on his, Burck's and Ogilvie's analysis of Livy's Book 2 and *libertas* (Luce 1977: 244). Livy also wrote approvingly of the concept of the liberty of the plebeians (*libertas plebis*) (Livy 2.23.2, 3.55.2, 3.56.1, 5.2.4, 10.9.4). In his *The Speech of Macer, Tribune of the Plebeians to the Plebeians*, Sallust provided a supposed account of Macer's attack in 73 B.C. on the oligarchical rule of the nobles in Rome. Macer focused on *libertas* as an expression of the Roman plebeians' rights (*iura*), which were provided by their Roman forefathers, and was strongly contrasted to the infamous political slavery (*servitium*) previously imposed on the Roman plebeians by Sulla (Sallust, *The Speech of Macer, Tribune of the Plebeians to the Plebeians*, 1 and 9). In his *Histories*, Sallust employed forms of the expression *libertatem repetere* a number of times and Livy used forms of the same expression many times in episodes when the rights of people were the focus (Sallust, *Histories* 1.51.1, 1.55.6, 3.48.28, *The Speech of Macer* 27, Livy 3.38.10, 3.49.1-2, 3.53.4, 3.53.10, 24.22.5, 35.36.7 and 39.25.17).

⁵⁸³ Oakley 2009: 194. For debate among scholars about the meaning of Tacitus' comment about Nerva combining the principate with *libertas*, see Liebeschuetz 1966: 133; Benario 1968: 46; Flach, 1973: 197; Shotter 1989: 4; Hillard et al 1998: 293; O'Gorman 2000: 183; Boatwright, Gargola and Talbert 2004: 365; Haynes 2006: 151, n.7.

⁵⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.2 and 3.1.

⁵⁸⁵ Moles 1998: 177.

is part of Tacitus' preface or introduction (*exordium* or *praefatio*) is significant.⁵⁸⁶ Genette argued that one of the main functions of prefaces is to ensure that the book is read "properly" according to the intentions of the author.⁵⁸⁷ Tacitus' comments in *Agricola* 3.1 and also in *Agricola* 2.3 lay foundations for a broader understanding of Tacitus' purposes for the whole of his text.⁵⁸⁸

Galinsky asserted that Tacitus was an exemplification of the aristocratic tradition, which focused on the *libertas* of the Senate and which was hostile to Augustus.⁵⁸⁹ This view of Tacitus' perspective is based on the false assumption that Tacitus followed some type of extreme version of late Republican politics by being mostly or almost wholly concerned with senatorial *libertas* and having little concern about the *libertas* of the plebeians and other broader aspects of republican *libertas*. Tacitus, however, expressed no support for the narrowly aristocratic political views of Sulla and of *principes* such as L. Marcius Philippus.⁵⁹⁰ Also, Tacitus referred approvingly to the ordinary Roman population protecting their *libertas* against aristocratic factions in the Roman Senate.⁵⁹¹ Appian recorded that Sulla had plenty of friends among the Roman aristocrats,⁵⁹² but Tacitus described Sulla as that most cruel of nobles and Tacitus condemned Sulla's despotism (*dominatio*) and destruction of the *libertas* of the Roman people.⁵⁹³ Also considering his opposition to monarchy, it is significant that Tacitus insisted that there was little difference between the despotism of a few (*paucorum dominatio*) and the whim of a monarch.⁵⁹⁴ Tacitus' attitudes in *Annals* 1.1 to the oligarchic

⁵⁸⁶ Cicero said that an oration is to be arranged in the following appropriate order: exordium, narrative, partition, confirmation, refutation and peroration (Cicero, *De Inventione* 1.14.19).

⁵⁸⁷ Genette 1997: 197.

⁵⁸⁸ See Mellor 1993: 24 on Tacitus' purposes in the prologue of his *Agricola*.

⁵⁸⁹ Galinsky 1996: 56.

⁵⁹⁰ See Sallust, *The Speech of Philippus in the Senate*.

⁵⁹¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.27.

⁵⁹² Appian 1.81.

⁵⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 2.38.

⁵⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.42. Tacitus here partly voiced his disapproval of Rome being governed solely by a small group of nobles. Tacitus' viewpoint is partly mirrored in Livy's similar opposition to Rome being ruled solely by nobles, as expressed when Livy approvingly labelled the Romans ridding themselves of the despotic oligarchical rule of the Decemvirs as "freedom having been restored (*restitutam libertas*)" (Livy 3.54.7-8) and "the recovery of liberty (*libertatis receptus*)" (Livy 3.64.7). Note also that Tacitus' expression *paucorum dominatio* was mirrored in a similar expression which Sallust ascribed to the tribune Macer about the despotic oligarchical government by Roman nobles during the late *vetus res publica*. Macer portrayed the Roman nobles as a political

despotism of the Decemvirs had some of their foundations in Livy's previous disapproving comments on the Decemvirs. Livy emphasised that the Roman people believed it was essential that they rid themselves of the despotism of the oligarchic Decemvirs in order to recover their *libertas*.⁵⁹⁵

Tacitus believed that two crucial aspects of *libertas* involved both the freedom of Roman senators to discuss any political matter and the freedom of elected tribunes of the plebeians to veto any legislation or political decrees, without being manipulated by any explicit or implied threats by any other person, including by Roman emperors.⁵⁹⁶ Tacitus, however, believed that Roman emperors could permit types of freedom of speech to senators and the usage of the veto by the tribunes of the plebeians, which were false “phantoms of liberty (*simulacra libertatis*).”⁵⁹⁷

It is almost be certain that the type of *libertas*, which Tacitus maintained that Nerva combined with principate, was more than freedom of speech. This is because in his *Histories* 1.1, Tacitus said that the Emperors Nerva and Trajan had provided the rare privilege of freedom of thought, opinion and feeling and freedom of speech,⁵⁹⁸ but in *Agricola* 3.1, Tacitus wrote that only Nerva had combined principate with *libertas*.⁵⁹⁹ Therefore, Tacitus

faction (*factio*) of wicked men who had set up the despotism of a few men (*paucorum dominationem*) (Sallust, *The Speech of Macer, Tribune of the Plebeians to the Plebeians*, 3-4 and 6) and who were self-styled defenders of *libertas* (Sallust, *The Speech of Macer, Tribune of the Plebeians to the Plebeians*, 22). These comments may explain why many Roman plebeians refused to support Brutus and Cassius in the defence of the latter's version of *libertas* against the Second Triumvirate. The rest of his speech contains numerous mentions of the despotism of the ruling nobles and political slavery of the Roman plebeians (Sallust, *The Speech of Macer, Tribune of the Plebeians to the Plebeians*, 9, 11, 21, 23, 26 and 27). Sallust used forms of words *dominatio* and *dominus* when referring to the ruling faction of nobles.

⁵⁹⁵ Livy 3.38.10 and 3.49.1-2.

⁵⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.77. Tacitus was not like most of the nobles during and immediately after Sulla's era, who desired the permanent abolition of the power of veto of the tribunes of the plebeians. An example of this was the leader of the Roman nobles, L. Marcius Philippus (Sallust, *The Speech of Philippus in the Senate*). While Tacitus criticised Romans whom he regarded misused the office of the tribune of the plebeians and supported the *libertas* of the Senate (Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.2 and *Annals* 3.27), Tacitus never stated or implied that he believed this magistracy should be totally abolished, and he also supported the *libertas* of the Roman people as a whole (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.27). Tacitus almost certainly shared Livy's belief that the power of tribunes of the plebeians was a fortress or defence (*munimentum, arx*) of *libertas* (Livy 3.37.5, 3.45.8).

⁵⁹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.77. See also Tacitus, *Annals* 13.49.1 for another mention of senatorial freedom.

⁵⁹⁸ *rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet*. The present infinitive *sentire* and the present subjunctive *sentias* relate to having or expressing thoughts, feelings, opinions and attitudes.

⁵⁹⁹ Writing in a similar vein to Tacitus during Nero's despotism, Lucan maintained that from the time Julius Caesar won the Battle of Pharsalus there has been a conflict between *libertas* and the Caesars in Rome (Lucan,

suggested that the type of *libertas*, which Nerva provided for Romans, was more comprehensive than the freedom of speech, opinion and thought which Trajan provided. Pliny the Younger asserted that Trajan had restored liberty (*reddita libertatis*) to the Romans, just like when the kings were expelled from Rome and servitude ended,⁶⁰⁰ but Tacitus never claimed that Trajan united principate with liberty in the same way that he said Nerva supposedly did.⁶⁰¹

The next section will examine Tacitus', Augustus' and other Roman writers' attitudes to whether Augustus restored *libertas* to the Roman people.

4.7 Augustus' self representation as the restorer of *libertas* to Rome

In his *Res Gestae* 1, Augustus employed the opposition *libertas-dominatio*⁶⁰² when claiming that in 43 B.C. at the age of 19 he restored *libertas* to the Roman *res publica*.⁶⁰³ Augustus asserted that the Roman people had been oppressed by the despotism (*dominatio*) of a political faction, the latter by implication being the political grouping led by Mark Antony. Tacitus, however, used the same binary opposite *libertas-dominatio* when contrasting the *vetus populus Romanus*, with its accompanying *libertas* and *consulate*, to various forms of despotism or *dominatio* instituted by Cinna, Sulla, Pompey the Great, Crassus, Julius Caesar, the triumvirs Antony, Augustus and Lepidus, and finally by Augustus alone.⁶⁰⁴ Similarly,

7.691ff). Luce argued that it is possible but unlikely that Tacitus really believed that Nerva had combined principate with *libertas* (Luce 1982: 1009).

⁶⁰⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus* 58.3-4.

⁶⁰¹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1.

⁶⁰² Ceașescu 1974: 189.

⁶⁰³ When referring to the words *rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi* in *Res Gestae* 1, Walser claimed Augustus saw himself in the role of the champion or defender of liberty (*adsertor libertatis*, *vindex libertatis*) (Walser 1955: 353-355). For a discussion of the relevant first sentence in *Res Gestae* 1, see Braunert 1974: 343-358. Dudley argued that in the *Res Gestae*, Augustus perfected the art of skilfully using names to disguise political realities (Dudley 1960: 124). Chilver argued that despite Augustus devising political institutions to try to distinguish his principate from kingship and the dictatorship, it was solely in moments of extreme optimism that Romans could consider the principate as being compatible with liberty (Chilver 1957: 76).

⁶⁰⁴ Tacitus' *Annals* 1.1. Tacitus' comments here are mirrored in Livy's contrasting of *libertas* and political despotism (*dominatio*), with the latter being described as unjust (*iniusta*) (Livy 3.39.7). In 1912, Haverfield

Tacitus also argued that in Emperor Nero's reign, it was commonly believed that there was a contrasted choice between *libertas* and being ruled by an emperor.⁶⁰⁵

Despite the fact that the *Res Gestae* was first made available to the Roman public just after Augustus' death, it can be reasonably argued that at least most of its contents were a manifestation of the types of self-representations which Augustus had engaged in for many years before his death, with possible some slight modifications. Augustus never again explicitly mentioned *libertas* in his *Res Gestae* in relation to any of his especially political or military activities after 43 B.C., for example his victory at Actium in 31 B.C. or his assumed political settlements in 27 and 23 B.C. There, however, is limited evidence in the sources that some of Augustus' supporters attributed *libertas* to some of his political behaviour up till 28 B.C. For example, Propertius mentioned the freedom signs (*libera signa*) of Octavian associated with the Battle of Actium⁶⁰⁶ and Walser noted the labelling of Augustus on a coin in 28 B.C. as “the Defender or Champion of Liberty” (*Vindex Libertatis*).⁶⁰⁷ Also, Virgil depicted Augustus' victory at the Battle of Actium as being for the sake of *libertas*,⁶⁰⁸ and Suetonius stated that the passengers and crew of an Alexandrian ship, which had just arrived at the gulf of Puteoli, praised Augustus for having enabled them to enjoy their *libertas*.⁶⁰⁹ Augustus also boasted that he had rebuilt the temple of Jupiter *Libertas*,⁶¹⁰ this implying a great devotion to *libertas*.

Tacitus nowhere disputed the claim that Mark Antony engaged in political dominatio, but Tacitus never once credited Augustus with providing any type of *libertas* for the Roman

pointed out that previous scholars generally believed that Tacitus evidenced no knowledge of Augustus' *Res Gestae* (Haverfield 1912: 197). O'Gorman, however, rightly noted that despite Tacitus never explicitly referring to Augustus' *Res Gestae*, the influence of this latter work implicitly pervades Tacitus' comments on Augustus and manifests as echoes and parodies (O'Gorman, 1995: 101. See also Schmitt 1983: 178-186).

⁶⁰⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.52.4.

⁶⁰⁶ Propertius, *Elegies* 4.6.62.

⁶⁰⁷ Walser 1955: 353-364. For other examinations of Augustus' public image as the champion of liberty, see Scheer 1971: 182-188 and Mannsperger 1973: 381-404 and Chapter “Augustus als *Vindex Libertatis*” in Welwei 2004: 217-229. Augustus' image as *vindex libertatis* probably included the representation of him sheltering Roman citizens from foreign tyrants and liberating foreigners from the despotism of kings and tyrants (Walser 1955: 364).

⁶⁰⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.648.

⁶⁰⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 98.2.

⁶¹⁰ *Res Gestae* 19.

people.⁶¹¹ Tacitus believed that up until his time, no *princeps*, including Augustus and except possibly Nerva, had in reality and not just in pretence, restored any substantial degree of *libertas* to the Roman people.⁶¹² Tacitus' usage of the words "things long incompatible (*res olim dissociabiles*)" in *Agricola* 3.1 indicated this. Tacitus extolled Emperor Nerva for being the only emperor who had united principate with *libertas*, a comment that may have been genuine, but such praises do not detract from Tacitus' deep and abiding opposition to the institution of the principate, as first instituted by Augustus.

It can be reasonably argued that by highlighting in *Res Gestae* 1 that his first major political and military action was supposedly restoring *libertas* to the *res publica* and eliminating the *dominatio* of the political faction led by Mark Antony, Augustus was implying that right from the beginning, his political and military exploits were based on old Republican precedents, that his motives were not self-interest but the collective good of the Roman state, and that his political rule was founded originally on the restoration of *libertas*.⁶¹³ Right at the beginning of his *Annals* (Books 1-4), however, Tacitus countered Augustus' claims by insisting that what Tacitus regarded as fully fledged *libertas* was only provided under the old Roman republic as instituted initially by Lucius Brutus, and that like Cinna and Sulla and by implication similar to the triumvirs Pompey, Crassus and Julius Caesar, Augustus had instituted his own *dominatio* after his armies had defeated those of Mark Antony. Relevant to Tacitus' statement about the first triumvirs, Josephus recorded that after the assassination of the Emperor Caligula, a Roman senator spoke in the Senate saying that it was 100 years earlier (in the time of the despotic First Triumvirate of Julius Caesar, Crassus and Pompey the Great) that the Romans had lost their liberty and had not regained it.⁶¹⁴ Morstein-Marx and Rosenstein rightly argued that in the early chapters of *Annals*, Tacitus strongly contrasted the

⁶¹¹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1 and *Annals* 1.33. Mirroring Tacitus' analysis, Syme concluded that after Augustus established the principate, *libertas* was gone from Rome (Syme 1939: 2) and that Augustus' claim to have restored *libertas* to the Roman people was a fraud (Syme 1939: 516). Gibbon accused Augustus of being "a subtle tyrant" who aimed to deceive the Roman people by creating a pretended image of civil liberty for them (Gibbon 2000: 76-77).

⁶¹² For comments, see Willrich 1927: 57.

⁶¹³ Ramage 1987: 33.

⁶¹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.2.2.169, 182-183 and 19.2.3.186-189.

traditional Republic to any form of personal *dominatio* regardless of whether it was "cloaked by formal legitimisation."⁶¹⁵

Welwei, Mannsperger and Ramage discussed the theory that Augustus' reference in *Res Gestae* 34 to his supposed transferral of the *res publica* from his power to the control of the Senate and people of Rome signified a restoration of *libertas*.⁶¹⁶ It is only possible to interpret *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populiue Romani arbitrium transtuli* in *Res Gestae* 34 as possibly implying some type of restoration of *libertas*, because of the intentional ambiguity of the phrase itself and because of Augustus' intra-textual mention earlier in *Res Gestae* 1 of him supposedly restoring *libertas* to the *res publica*. Note, however, that by mentioning restoring some type of *libertas* to the *res publica* in *Res Gestae* 1, by employing the ambiguous expression *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populiue Romani arbitrium transtuli* in *Res Gestae* 34, by never explicitly personally claiming to have restored *libertas* to the *res publica* in January 27 B.C. and by never or rarely focusing on *libertas* in his public communications after January 27 B.C., Augustus was able to create ambiguous public self-representations about these matters. These latter forms of ambiguity would have appealed to both Romans who emphasised the importance of *libertas* in Roman politics and society and to those Romans and non-Romans who preferred for Augustus to set up some type of monarchy.

Wickert concluded that there was an official public image originating from Augustus about the characteristics of the principate and *libertas* and another public image of these phenomena, which was created in the imagination of the Roman people, and the boundaries between these two images cannot be too closely drawn.⁶¹⁷ It could be argued, however, that both Augustus and the imagination of the Roman people probably created not just two but instead numerous different and sometimes overlapping public images of Augustus' principate and the principate's relations to *libertas*.

⁶¹⁵ Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx 2006: 626.

⁶¹⁶ Welwei 2004: 31, Mannsperger 1973: 381- 404 and Ramage 1987: 70.

⁶¹⁷ Wickert 1969: 94.

Wirszubski claimed that there is no connection between this statement about *libertas* by Augustus at the beginning of *Res Gestae* 1 and what Augustus did in 27 B.C.,⁶¹⁸ but Wirszubski's reading of this text failed to take into account that in some other ancient media, Augustus was portrayed as an ongoing champion of *libertas*, thereby making it highly likely that at least some Romans would interpret Augustus' behaviour in January 27 B.C. as some type of restoration of *libertas*. Also, because the phrase *vindicatio in libertatem* was used ambiguously in the late old Roman Republic like the word *libertas*, Wirszubski asserted that when interpreting the expression *rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi* in *Res Gestae* 1, Romans probably would not have tended to attach great significance to it, let alone interpret it literally.⁶¹⁹ While it is true that there would have been numerous more literal and more figurative meanings given to this expression in *Res Gestae* 1 by some Romans in the years after it was made public, it is unlikely that Augustus would have made this introductory statement, using so many significant political expressions, about his own involvement in a major civil war, without intending his readers to regard it as an important statement.

The following section will examine Tacitus' responses to the views of three other Romans in Tacitus' *Annals* and *Histories* about *principes*. This section is relevant to this present thesis because the comments of these three Romans can be incorrectly used to argue that Tacitus totally approved of "moderate good" *principes*, supposedly like Augustus.

4.8 Tacitus' attitudes to “good” *principes*

It is true that some of the comments, which Tacitus attributed to Curtius Montanus, Marcellus Epirius and Emperor Galba, contradicted Tacitus' comments elsewhere and created more approving positive representations of "moderate good" emperors, supposedly like

⁶¹⁸ Wirszubski 1950: 101.

⁶¹⁹ Wirszubski 1950: 103-104.

Augustus. Relevant to this, Oakley argued that Tacitus' comments in *Agricola* 3.1 expressed a similar view of the principate articulated by Marcellus Epius, who prayed for good emperors but endured any sort, and who distinguished between the worst emperors who desired to rule by absolute despotic power (*dominatio*) and the supposedly best emperors who imposed some limits on the *libertas* of their subjects.⁶²⁰ Similarly, Curtius Montanus distinguished between a supposedly good emperor and bad emperors.⁶²¹ Pertinent, to such comments, Percival asserted that Tacitus did not oppose the principate as a political institution, but instead supported the reigns of supposedly "good" *principes*, and was only antagonistic towards those whom he would classify as bad or evil *principes*.⁶²²

Tacitus, however, had little respect for the opinions of Marcellus, believing that he had a revolting character.⁶²³ Also, despite Tacitus opposing the utmost extremes of liberty manifesting in the late Roman *vetus res publica*,⁶²⁴ Tacitus' comments in *Agricola* 3.1 do not equate with Epius Marcellus' perspective. This is obvious from the fact that in his speech, Marcellus was referring to Vespasian as a good emperor who supposedly found the right balance between *dominatio* and *libertas*, but in *Agricola* 3.1, Tacitus asserted that no emperor prior to Nerva, this including Vespasian, combined *libertas* with principate.

Reitzenstein⁶²⁵ asserted that Galba's speech, with its distinction between complete political slavery and complete *libertas* (*totam servitute...totam libertatem*),⁶²⁶ was basically an expression of Tacitus' political statement of faith at the time. In one sense, Galba's specific comment summarises part of Tacitus' own personal view in that Tacitus both opposed

⁶²⁰ Tacitus, *Histories* 4.8. For Oakley's position, see Woodman 2009: 187 and 192. Hadas also argued that Tacitus' political view was expressed by Epius Marcellus in *Histories* 4.8 (Hadas 1942: xix-xx).

⁶²¹ Tacitus, *Histories* 4.42.

⁶²² Percival 1980: 121-122.

⁶²³ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.95, 4.7 and *Annals* 16.26 and 33.

⁶²⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.3.

⁶²⁵ Willrich 1927: 54 n. 1. See Mellor for a similar evaluation of Tacitus' attitudes to Emperor Galba's words about a "good emperor" (Mellor 1993: 102-103).

⁶²⁶ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.16. Galba's expression "complete *libertas*" is undefined in this context and can be given meanings ranging from the liberty which was present in Rome during the best years of the era of the old *res publica* to the political and social anarchy and civil wars of the late years of the *vetus res publica*.

political slavery and licence,⁶²⁷ but not in the sense of Tacitus approving of the principate of Augustus or of any other emperor as a totally suitable alternative supposedly halfway between these two extremes of complete political slavery and complete *libertas*. When in *Agricola* 3.1 Tacitus said that Emperor Nerva was the first to combine the principate and *libertas*, he undermined Galba's suggestion that his reign was a manifestation of some type of *libertas*. Galba's reign came before Nerva's.

Conte hypothesised that Tacitus regarded the moderate principate of the adoptive emperors, this presumably being Galba, Nerva and Trajan, as the only practical solution to Rome's problems.⁶²⁸ This reading of Tacitus' texts, however, fails to grasp Tacitus did not support the political philosophy which Galba encapsulated in Galba's speech in *Histories* 1.15-16 and Tacitus regarded Galba's principate negatively as being like a master relating to his political slaves.⁶²⁹ Also, despite the fact that Tacitus praised Nerva's principate and seemed to have preferred it to the principate of other Roman emperors, this does not cancel out the fact that permeating Tacitus' texts *Germania*, *Histories* and *Annals* is a recurring implicit insistence that the principate instituted by Augustus and amended by his successors was a deeply flawed political system, except possibly when significantly modified by Nerva.

Note also that Tacitus had the Roman senator Thrasea Paetus in a speech associate a *princeps* being excellent (*egregius*) with the Senate not being restrained by any type of compulsion from the *princeps*.⁶³⁰ In other words, Thrasea rejected the types of principates provided by every Roman emperor up until the time he spoke these words. Tacitus described Thrasea Paetus as a personified "virtue herself (*virtutem ipsam*)," and referring to written praises of Thrasea Paetus, Tacitus labelled these writings as one of "the memorials of our noblest characters."⁶³¹ Even though Tacitus may not have agreed with everything Thrasea

⁶²⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.3.

⁶²⁸ Conte 1994a: 536.

⁶²⁹ Tacitus referred to Galba as one of Rome's political masters (*dominantis*) (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1).

⁶³⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.48.3-4.

⁶³¹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 2.1.

did,⁶³² it is far more likely that Tacitus' own political view is reflected in Thrasea's statement here than in the political statements of Emperor Galba, Curtius Montanus and Marcellus Epius, particularly considering Tacitus said that Galba exhibited no virtues,⁶³³ Tacitus portrayed Marcellus as having a despicable character and Tacitus made other comments which were similar to the above statement he ascribed to Thrasea. Also, Tacitus did not say anywhere else in his texts that only the worst emperors engaged in *dominatio*. Therefore, regardless of whether some other Romans regarded Augustus as a "good" emperor, Tacitus disapproved of Augustus' permanent *dominatio* and *regnum* and his failure to restore what Tacitus deemed *libertas* to the Roman people and Senate.

Tacitus referred to bad *principes*, thereby implying that good *principes* were possible.⁶³⁴ Also, he was pleased about the removal of especially tyrannical *principes*⁶³⁵ and preferred what he regarded as more virtuous *principes*.⁶³⁶ Despite this, however, Tacitus did not claim that the monarchical principate, which Augustus instituted, was a good system.

The next section will consider whether Tacitus' praises of the Emperors Vespasian, Nerva and Trajan and his usages of brief respectful phrases about the Emperor Augustus and his father Julius Caesar were indicative of any underlying limited approval of the principate, which was originally established by Augustus.

4.9 Tacitus' disclaimers

Because Tacitus praised Emperors Vespasian,⁶³⁷ Nerva⁶³⁸ and Trajan in a number of different ways, it can be argued that Tacitus actually possessed some type of deep-seated

⁶³² Refer to Walker (Walker 1952, 229) and Syme (Syme 1958: 561 n.8) for conflicting opinions about Tacitus' attitudes to Thrasea. See also to Roberts (Roberts 1988: 129) and Jens (Jens 1956: 333-338) for opposing interpretations of Tacitus' comments on Thrasea in *Annals* 14.21.1, a difficult text to interpret.

⁶³³ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.49.

⁶³⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 42.4 and 43.4.

⁶³⁵ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.3.

⁶³⁶ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.50 and *Agricola* 3.1.

⁶³⁷ For Tacitus' praise of Vespasian, refer to *Histories* 1.50, 2.80, 2.82, *Annals* 3.55 (refer to Kragelund's analysis of this passage: Kragelund 2000: 514), 16.5 and *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 17.3. Tacitus also described him as

partial approval of the principate which was originally established by Augustus. Note, however, that Tacitus was an expert in rhetoric, specialized in the nuances of words and had a sophisticated understanding of how words and interpretations of words could be employed in an ambiguous manner for political purposes.⁶³⁹ It is highly likely that in *Agricola* 3.1, 3.3, 44.5 and *Histories* 1.1, when he was praising the Emperors Nerva and Trajan, Tacitus' main actual purpose was to use partly ambiguous comments in order protect himself, if at any later stage he was accused of making disloyal comments towards the political system of the principate, as originally began by Augustus. Quintilian remarked that in his era, orators, who desired both to make effective criticisms of despots and to avoid personal danger, sometimes employed a commonly-taught rhetorical strategy involving using ambiguity (*ambiguitas*), so that the relevant expressions could also be interpreted in more acceptable ways by these same despots.⁶⁴⁰

It is also possible to argue that Tacitus' employment of the expressions "Julius of happy memory,"⁶⁴¹ "the deified Julius,"⁶⁴² "Augustus of happy memory"⁶⁴³ and "the deified Augustus"⁶⁴⁴ demonstrated that Tacitus strongly approved of the political systems instituted by Julius Caesar and Augustus. When twice referring to Caesar's wars against the Gauls and Germans and not to Caesar establishing a permanent dictatorship in Rome, Tacitus employed

"Vespasian of happy memory" (Tacitus, *Agricola* 9 and *Germania* 8.3) and "the venerable Vespasian" (Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 8.3), but note Tacitus also criticised Vespasian for greed, engaging in unjust corrupt practices and suppressing the *libertas* of the Senate (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.5, 2.84 and 4.44).

⁶³⁸ Tacitus also referred to the deified Nerva" (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1).

⁶³⁹ See for example Tacitus, *Histories* 3.3, 3.52 and 3.78. Cicero and Quintilian referred to the usage of ambiguity (*ambiguum*) as a rhetorical device (Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.61.235 and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 7.9.1-24. See also Cicero, *De Inventione* 2.40.116). Moles highlighted Tacitus' profound usage of ambiguity (Moles 1998: 151) and Lintott aptly noted Tacitus' "deliberate cultivation of ambiguity" (Boardman, Griffin and Murray 1988: 282). See also O' Gorman 2000: 1, Syme 1970: 139 and Morgan 2006: 10 for more comments on Tacitus' use of ambiguity.

⁶⁴⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.65-69. See also Todorov 1995: 125. The fact that Pliny the Younger, Tacitus' friend, seemed to have declined from writing a history text because of fear of giving offence to Roman *principes* (Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 5.8.13-14) and because Maternus was put to death by the Emperor Domitian for criticising tyrants (Cassius Dio 67.12.5), suggested the type of social pressure under which Tacitus wrote.

⁶⁴¹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 13 and 15 and *Germania* 28 and 37.

⁶⁴² Germanicus used this phrase in *Annals* 1.42.

⁶⁴³ Tacitus, *Agricola* 13 and *Annals* 1.19.

⁶⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 13 and *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 13.1, 17.2 and 17.5 and *Annals* 12.23.

the expression "Julius of happy memory."⁶⁴⁵ But Tacitus undermined his usage of this phrase by also highly praising Brutus and Cassius, Caesar's murderers, in the context of referring to the funeral of Junia, the sister of Marcus Brutus and the wife of Caius Cassius.⁶⁴⁶ Tacitus also negatively depicted the period of rule by Julius Caesar as part of the era of no good ethical practices and no just laws (*non mos, non ius*).⁶⁴⁷ Note also that the usage of the phrase "of happy memory" about Augustus cannot be taken as signifying some type of devotion by Tacitus to Augustus or to the institution of the principate initially created by Augustus. This is because Tacitus also employed the expression "Claudius of happy memory",⁶⁴⁸ a description which does not equate with Tacitus' mainly negative and critical appraisal of Claudius' character and reign as found in Tacitus' *Annals* Books 11-12.

Tacitus probably scattered these strategically placed phrases throughout his texts, so that he could use them if he was ever accused by a Roman emperor or by one of the latter's supporters of having treasonous attitudes towards the specific emperor or toward the principate in general.

4.10 Concluding comments

As demonstrated in this chapter, Tacitus believed that three essential features of a politically healthy Roman *res publica* were the absence of any form of overt or disguised *dominatio* and *regnum*, the presence of *libertas* for the Senate a broad freedom of speech and the presence of a broader *libertas* for the Roman people than just the freedom of the Senate and freedom of speech. Tacitus also believed that *libertas* was manifested when a *princeps*

⁶⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Germania* 28 and 37.

⁶⁴⁶ Tacitus emphasised: "But Brutus and Cassius were shining preeminently (shining with outstanding brightness) by the fact that their portraits were not on view (*Cassius atque Brutus eo ipso quod effigies eorum non visebantur*)" (*Annals* 3.76). Contrary to Tacitus, Velleius condemned Marcus Brutus for assassinating Julius Caesar (*Velleius Paterculus* 2.72.1-2).

⁶⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28.

⁶⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola* 13.

did not act as the supreme overseeing judge over the verdicts of common courts in Rome.⁶⁴⁹ On the basis of these foundations, this chapter demonstrated that Tacitus negatively depicted Augustus' principate as a form of disguised *dominatio* and *regnum*, which denied the Roman Senate and Roman people any substantial *libertas*. Tacitus provided a significantly more sceptical portrayal than the representations provided by Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio about whether Augustus provided *libertas* for the Roman Senate and people. Because of a lack of explicit commentary by Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio about the question of whether Augustus instituted a form of political *dominatio* and *regnum*, this chapter, however, was unable to provide extensive comparisons between Tacitus' portrayals of this matter with those of these other writers.

⁶⁴⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.75.1.

Portrayals of the relationships between Roman *res publica* and Augustus' principate

.This chapter will initially evaluate different Roman understandings of the concept of the *res publica* and then shall provide a discussion of the general representation in some sources of Augustus as the restorer and saviour of Rome's *res publica*. Then partly on the basis of the arguments and evidence presented in these two sections, a comparative analysis of the different interpretations of the relationships between the Roman *res publica* and Augustus' principate, which are found in the extant texts of Augustus, Velleius, Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, will be provided. This comparative analysis will be done in the framework of examining four competing major theories about the relationships between Roman *res publica* and the Augustan principate: the view that the (old) *res publica* continued during Augustus' principate, the perspective that Augustus really restored the (old) *res publica*, the theory that Augustus pretended to restore fully the old *res publica* and various versions of the façade theory.

Out of these four theories, the first and second usually provide the most positive perspectives on Augustus' principate and mostly are primarily founded on particular readings of Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34, Velleius and Suetonius. Various versions of the theory that Augustus pretended to restore fully the (old) Roman *res publica* are usually based mainly upon readings of Cassius Dio, misinterpretations of Tacitus and particular interpretations of Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34 and Suetonius. Those versions of this theory, which are primarily based on Cassius Dio's interpretations of the relevant events, tend to be generally positive towards Augustus' principate. Different forms of the façade theory mostly are primarily based

on Tacitus' *Annals* and are usually the most negative towards Augustus' principate. Therefore, because Tacitus chose the least commendatory of these four theories to portray Augustus' relationships with the *res publica*, this chapter provides final conclusive evidence of the thesis that Tacitus' representations of Augustus' political career were mostly far more negative, critical and sceptical than those provided by Velleius, the *Res Gestae*, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

5.1 *Res publica*

Any discussion of Tacitus' evaluative representations of the relationships between the *res publica* and Augustus' principate, compared with and contrasted to the portrayals of the same relationships by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, must begin with defining the Roman *res publica*.⁶⁵⁰ This, however, is not a simple task, because Tacitus' conception of the term *res publica* was markedly different from the related notions of *res publica* found, for example, in Augustus' *Res Gestae* and Velleius, who both gave the impression that they believed that there was only one *res publica*, which underwent various changes throughout Roman history.⁶⁵¹ Rome had no written political constitution and its political and administrative system was continually evolving,⁶⁵² but one significant modern scholarly debate is whether throughout its history, Rome had just one *res publica*, which frequently changed and evolved, or more than one *res publica*. The case will be made in this

⁶⁵⁰ For analysis of the various meanings of the phrase *res publica*, refer to Beranger 1953: 219, Salmon 1956: 457; Meier 1966: 1ff; Drexler 1957: 247-281; Stark in Oppermann 1967: 42-100; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 118; Suerbaum 1977: 1ff and 71ff; Ehrenberg 1974: 108-113; Judge 1974: 280-285; Braunert 1974: 343-358; Braunert 1975: 9-54 and 561-562; Brunt 1982b: 236-244; Mackie 1996: 328-329 and 334; Brunt 1988: 299 n.42; Welch and Hillard 2005: 1-48; Schofield 1995: 63-83; Jones and Sidwell 1997: 84; Moles 1998: 112, n.26 and Chambers (Cowan) 2006. Griffin and Atkins maintained that Cicero employed the phrase *res publica* to mean "a type of political activity that constituted the political community at its best" (Griffin and Atkins 1991: Introduction, xliv). Demonstrating a lack of understanding of Cicero's and Tacitus' perspectives on the term *res publica*, Favro argued that to the Romans, *res publica* meant "not so much a specific form of government, as a descriptor for the purpose of government, namely, to provide a legitimate administrative structure, laws, and rights" (Favro 1996: 104-105).

⁶⁵¹ Cowan argued that Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio interpreted the Augustan principate as involving "only radical change which destroyed the Republic and put monarchy in its place," but Velleius did not question the continued operation of the *res publica* despite the supremacy of the Caesars (Cowan 2011, Introduction, x-xi).

⁶⁵² Brennan 2004: 31.

section that Tacitus believed there were at least two *res publicae*: the *vetus res publica* and a separate *res publica* (or two or more *res publicae*) outside of the era of the *vetus res publica*. In her thought-provoking work *Roman Republics*, Harriet Flower argued strongly that it is more accurate to depict Roman history as a series of republics than just one republic which was replaced by the principate.⁶⁵³ One of the strengths of her analysis is that she argued that the periods associated with Sulla's dictatorship and the *dominatio* of Cinna, the First Triumvirate, the dictatorship of Julius Caesar and the Second Triumvirate could not be classified as parts of her hypothesised Roman Republics.⁶⁵⁴

It is unclear whether Suetonius also believed that there was a different type of *res publica*, which existed prior to Augustus' principate, from the *res publica* associated with Augustus' principate, or whether Suetonius' comments on these matters were a product of him being confused by Augustus' ambiguous rhetoric about these matters. For example, without specifically using Latin words meaning "old", Suetonius wrote of Augustus twice considering restoring the *res publica* (*De reddenda re publica bis cogitavit*), but deciding not to do this.⁶⁵⁵ Suetonius, however, also employed the phrase *res publica* when referring to Augustus mentioning the foundations which he had laid for the State during his principate.⁶⁵⁶ Also, when referring to years prior to Augustus' principate, Suetonius noted that for 10 years he administered the triumvirate for the *res publica* to be set in order.⁶⁵⁷

Jones and Sidwell claimed that *res publica* meant "not so much 'republic' (as we tend to translate it) as the 'activities of the Roman people',"⁶⁵⁸ and Meier argued that *res publica*

⁶⁵³ Flower 2010: 1-180.

⁶⁵⁴ Flower 2010: 28-34. On page 33, she argued that there were six Roman republics, but it is almost certain that other scholars could argue for alternative numbers of Roman republics once they begin the task of subdividing. Osgood (2006) argued that the Second Triumvirate period from 44 B.C. to the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. must be regarded as a separate period on its own.

⁶⁵⁵ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1.

⁶⁵⁶ *suo fundamenta rei publicae quae iecero* (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1-2).

⁶⁵⁷ *Triumviratum rei publicae constituendae per decem annos administravit* (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1). In his *Res Gestae* 7, Augustus also referred to himself being one of the triumvirs for 10 years for the re-establishment of the constitution. See also Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 12.2. For discussion of the Second Triumvirate, see Jones 1970: 23-43; Palmer 1978: 315-328; Millar and Segal 1984: 45; Millar 1973: 50-67; Cartledge 1975: 32; Brunt and Moore 1967: 49; Woodman 1983: 141-145; Wallmann 1989; Bleicken 1990; Lange 2009: 1-220.

⁶⁵⁸ Jones and Sidwell 1997: 84.

meant "state" and not "republic",⁶⁵⁹ but these limited singular definitions are to some extent problematic. Hillard, however, rightly demonstrated that the phrase *res publica* changed meaning in different political situations.⁶⁶⁰ Prior to Augustus' principate, most Romans specifically or vaguely equated the partly abstract and partly practical Latin notions equivalent to the English words "state" and the "republic" with each other, and the expression *res publica* could also have different meanings to different Romans in different contexts. Depending on the context, the expression *res publica* could mean the affairs of state, matters or concerns affecting the Roman people, the welfare of the State, the State itself, a free state (in opposition to despotism) and the body politic.⁶⁶¹ Julius Caesar even said that the *res publica* is nothing (*nihil esse*)⁶⁶² and Ovid asserted that Augustus "Caesar is the *res publica*."⁶⁶³ Also, Schofield rightly noted that in Cicero and other Latin authors, the expression *res publica* had a "notoriously elastic range of uses."⁶⁶⁴ As a result, this phrase was another suitable means by which Augustus could portray his ambiguous and sometimes contradictory political self-representations. The ambiguity of the expression *res publica* gave

⁶⁵⁹ Meier 1966: 1.

⁶⁶⁰ Welch and Hillard 2005: 1-23.

⁶⁶¹ The phrase *res publica* can also simply refer to the nation, community or political community (Griffin and Atkins, 1982: Introduction, xliv).

⁶⁶² Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 77.

⁶⁶³ *res est publica Caesar* (Ovid, *Tristia* 4.4.13-16). For relevant commentary on *Tristia* 4, see Oliensis 2004: 285-321.

⁶⁶⁴ See Schofield's Chapter 2 "Cicero's Definition of *Res Publica*" (Schofield 1995: 66). Schofield, however, partly misinterpreted Cicero's *De Re Publica* when he argued that Cicero did not ever employ the phrase *res publica* to mean "the Republic, i.e. as contrasted with the Principate or the autocratic system of government of the Principate," or to mean "republican" in terms of being against monarchy as a system of government (Schofield 1995: 66). First, note that Cicero wrote his *De Re Publica* over 20 years before Augustus established his principate. Therefore, Cicero could not reasonably compare the *vetus res publica* established by Lucius Brutus with Augustus' principate. Second, despite the fact that through the persona of Scipio, Cicero argued that he preferred monarchy as a system of government to an aristocracy or a democracy, Cicero insisted that a combination of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy was the best system (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.45.69 and 2.23.42-43). Third, Cicero referred to Plato's successors discussing different forms (*forma*) of the *res publica* (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.11.22), but Cicero noted that a *res publica*, which was a monarchy, was deprived of *libertas*, and *libertas* never involved serving a just master (or just supreme ruler) (*iustus dominus*) but instead involved serving no supreme ruler at all (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.23.43). Similarly, Livy also stated that while the Romans were ruled by their early kings, they had not tasted of the sweetness of *libertas* (Livy 1.17.3-4)). Also, after referring to *libertas* coming to the Roman *res publica* through Lucius Brutus (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.25.46), Cicero condemned Spurius Cassius, Marcus Manlius and Spurius Maelius for trying to obtain despotic power (*dominatio*) and kinship (*regnum*) after the *res publica* achieved its liberation (*liberata*) (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.26.48-2.27.49 and 2.35.60). Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that Cicero would have supported Augustus' principate if he came to realise that it was a form of *dominatio* and *regnum*. In his last writing *De Officiis*, Cicero argued that it was ethically right for Romans to assassinate any Roman who tried to become their king (*rex*) or supreme ruler or despot (*dominus*) (Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.21.82-83. See also 3.4.19).

it an inherent tendency to facilitate the different political interpretations of Augustus' political activities by different Romans.⁶⁶⁵

Tacitus' notion of *res publica* had part of its foundations in the writings of Cicero.⁶⁶⁶ For example, Cicero equated the *res populi* with the *res publica*,⁶⁶⁷ and likewise in *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus employed the phrase *veteris populi Romani* to be a synonym for his expression *vetus res publica* in *Annals* 11.23.2. Refer to Appendix 1 for analysis of the Ciceronian foundations of some of Tacitus' attitudes to *res publica*. Shotter correctly argued that the term *res publica* by itself was broad in meaning and did not imply any specific mode of government,⁶⁶⁸ but note that Tacitus often used other words in the surrounding literary context to demonstrate which type of *res publica* and corresponding form of government he was meaning. For example, in its particular literary context, Tacitus used the term *rei publicae populi Romani* to refer to the public concerns of the Roman people collectively from the time of its foundation right up until and including the era of the Roman emperors.⁶⁶⁹ Also, Tacitus used the expression *res publica* to refer to the affairs or concerns of the state as a whole during the reign of Augustus⁶⁷⁰ and Tacitus ascribed to some Romans speaking on the day of Augustus' funeral the view that the dominion of Augustus' heirs had been provided in *res publica* by Augustus.⁶⁷¹ Tacitus also employed the expression *res publica* to refer to the

⁶⁶⁵ Moles 1998: 112, n.26. Woodman also noted the ambiguity of the phrase *res publica* (Woodman 2004, xii)

⁶⁶⁶ Refer to the Appendix for analysis of some significant aspects of Cicero's discussion of the concept of the Roman *res publica*.

⁶⁶⁷ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 3.31.43 and 3.33.45. To Cicero, *res publica* meant the same as *res populi* and signified mainly "the matters or the property or concerns of the people" and could be reasonably translated as the commonwealth or state (Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.39, 41 and 48). Similarly in approximately 124 B.C., C. Sempronius Gracchus used the phrase *res publica* to equal the expression "the people of Rome (*populus Romanus*)" (*Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta*, edited by H. Malcovati, Turin, 1930, 183). See also Brunt 1988: 2. In his Preface 10-12 when talking directly to his readers, Livy closely connected the concept of their ethical attitudes and behaviours with the concept of your (*tua*) *res publica*. This statement has inter-textual connections to Cicero's close linking of the concept of the Roman *res publica* with the Roman *mos maiorum*. For *mos maiorum*, see also Rech 1936. Bringmann argued that the *res publica* could also be figuratively described as the Senate and people of Rome (*Senatus populusque Romanus*) (Bringmann 1977: 222-223).

⁶⁶⁸ Shotter 2003: 131.

⁶⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Histories* 3.72.

⁶⁷⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9.3 and 1.10.7.

⁶⁷¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.8.

Roman state during Otho's reign, but this was the new *res publica* associated with the principate.⁶⁷²

In the rest of this section, evidence will be provided that Tacitus also distinguished between the form of the *res publica* which functioned in the era of the principates of Augustus and other emperors, and the different type of *res publica* began by Lucius Brutus and ended by Julius Caesar, the triumvirs and/or Octavian/Augustus.⁶⁷³ Tacitus employed expressions such as *vetus res publica* and *veteris populi Romani* to refer to this particular type of government commenced by Lucius Brutus. For Tacitus to mention a *vetus res publica* numerous times, logically meant that he believed there was a new (*nova*) *res publica* also. This *nova res publica* commenced in association with the Augustan principate and possibly even had its roots in Julius Caesar's permanent dictatorship and in the operations of the Second Triumvirate.

In *Annals* 11.23.2, Tacitus referred to the *vetus res publica*, meaning the old Roman Republic prior to the beginning of the Augustan principate. Also in *Annals* 16.22, he employed a derivative of the phrase *vetus res publica* to refer to the old Republic. In the latter context, Tacitus' mention that Q. Aelius Tubero and M. Favonius were names unloved even in the old Republic (*veteri quoque rei publicae ingrata nomina*) confirmed that in this context, Tacitus did not employ the expression *res publica* to mean always simply "the state" or "the public concerns of the people." Tacitus also distinguished between *nova* and *veterum*, with *nova* referring to Augustus' principate and *veterum* referring to the era of the old Roman Republic.⁶⁷⁴ In his *Histories* 1.1, Tacitus drew a significant distinction between the era of the

⁶⁷² Tacitus, *Histories* 1.50 (First usage) and 1.90.

⁶⁷³ Furneaux and Goodyear believed that Tacitus regarded the expression *res publica* as sometimes referring to the old Roman Republic (Furneaux 1896: 184, Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 118). Brunt cited Tacitus' *Histories* 1.16, 1.50, *Annals* 1.3 and 1.4 as examples of Tacitus using the term *res publica* to mean "the Republic" (Brunt 1988: 299 n.42). Flower rightly noted that Tacitus employed the term *res publica* to mean "the pre-imperial state (*Hist.* 1.50, *Ann.* 1.3 and 7)" (Flower 2010: 11 n.21).

⁶⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2. Judge observed that in *Res Gestae* 34.1, Augustus employed the phrase *res publica* to mean the public institutions of Rome without any choice between different forms of the unwritten Roman constitution and claimed that Augustus never elsewhere distinguished between different forms of the Roman constitution. Judge also questioned whether Velleius' expressions "ancient form of the *res publica* (*antiqua rei*

old Republic, or literally the concerns of the Roman people (*res populi Romani*), and what occurred after the Battle of Actium when all power at Rome was concentrated in the hands of one man, Augustus.⁶⁷⁵ In his *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus described the old Roman Republic in the genitive as being *veteris populi Romani*. He made this statement in the context of comparing the previous Roman political system with the principate instituted by Augustus.⁶⁷⁶ Also, in *Annals* 1.3 and *Histories* 1.50 (2nd usage), Tacitus employed the basic expression *res publica* to mean "a system of government defined by contrast to the enduring quasi-monarchical system of the principate."⁶⁷⁷ When referring to the Roman people long before the era of Roman emperors, Livy employed the expression *res populo Romano* to refer to the concerns of Roman people and the phrase *re publica populi Romani* to refer to the public political concerns of the people of Rome.⁶⁷⁸ Similarly during the era of Roman emperors, Tacitus employed the expression *veteres populi Romani res* to refer to the events recorded in the writings of Roman historians such as Livy.⁶⁷⁹

On the foundation of *Annals* 1.1-4 and 3.28 and *Histories* 2.38, it can be strongly argued that Tacitus believed that the periods in which Marius, Cinna, Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar and the triumvirate of Octavian/Augustus, Mark Antony and Lepidus ruled as despots, were not really a part of what he would describe as the Roman *res publica*.⁶⁸⁰ The fact that Tacitus referred to the armies of Cassius and Brutus as being those of the *res publica* and as a result implied that the armies of Octavian/Augustus and Mark Antony were fighting against the old Roman *res publica*, possibly meant that Tacitus believed that in the period after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. up until the defeat of the armies of Cassius and

publicae forma)" (2.89) and "new *res publica*" (2.125) referred to different forms of the Roman constitution. Regardless of whether Judge was correct or not, Tacitus had a different approach to the Roman *res publica*.

⁶⁷⁵ For discussion about Tacitus' *Histories*' Preface, refer to Drexler 1965: 148-156.

⁶⁷⁶ Concurring basically with Tacitus' perspective, Syme referred to the transition from the republic to monarchy (Syme 1939: 5).

⁶⁷⁷ Mackie 1996: 328. For my analysis of *Annals* 1.3, see the later section "The view that the (old) *res publica* continued".

⁶⁷⁸ Livy 5.32.5 and 8.9.8.

⁶⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.32. Furneaux argued that Tacitus' expression *veteres populi Romani res* appeared to refer to the period down to the time of the Battle of Actium (Furneaux, Volume 1, 1896: 526 n.14).

⁶⁸⁰ For discussion of some of the difficulties in interpreting the first three sentences of Tacitus' *Annals* 1.1, see Bardt 1894: 451-452 and Koestermann 1963: 55-57.

Brutus in 42 B.C., that the *vetus* Roman *res publica* operated briefly. O’Gorman claimed that Tacitus believed that the death of the Roman Republic occurred after the Battle of Actium, despite the fact that traces of dying liberty (*vestigia morientis libertatis*) continued into the reign of Tiberius.⁶⁸¹ It is probably more accurate, however, to say that Tacitus believed that the final death blows were applied to the *vetus res publica* after the Battle of Actium, but it had ceased to function earlier.

Hillard rightly asserted that the *res publica* was always a work in progress and was the result of accumulated political processes over time in response to various crises and challenges.⁶⁸² Despite all of these significant and frequently ongoing changes in the institutions of the Roman *res publica* prior to the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, Tacitus believed that there were definite distinguishing characteristics of the particular form of the *res publica* begun by Lucius Brutus and ended by Julius Caesar and the Second Triumvirate. These main distinguishing features were the absence of any form of *dominatio* and *regnum* and the presence of a significant degree of *libertas* for the Roman Senate and for all Roman citizens including the majority of plebeians. Because there were numerous changes which occurred to the unwritten constitution of the *vetus res publica* over the centuries of its existence from the time of the expulsion of the Roman kings, Tacitus’ expression *vetus res publica* has a certain inherent limited amount of flexibility. Note, however, Tacitus made many comments which demonstrated that he believed that any form of the Roman *res publica*, which included *dominatio* and *regnum* and put too greater restrictions on *libertas*,

⁶⁸¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.74.5 and O’Gorman 1995: 104. On the concept of the vestiges of *libertas*, see also Goodyear 1972, Volume 2: 164. Goodyear also rightly noted that in the closing chapters of *Annals* Book 1, Tacitus was very concerned about "freedom, real or pretended" (164). As evidence, see *Annals* 1.75.1, 1.77.3 and 1.81.2.

⁶⁸² Welch and Hillard 2005: 1. Citing Cicero's *De Res Publica* 2.1.2-3 as evidence, Hillard correctly noted that the government and political processes of the Roman Republic were not the product of a constitution invented by a single lawmaker but were a product of continual evolution and change (Welch and Hillard 2005: 2). Hillard provided four political institutions which underwent very significant changes throughout Roman history prior to the reigns of the emperors. These were the tribunate of the plebeians, temporary dictatorship, the *Senatus consultum ultimum* and the secret ballot in assemblies of the Roman people (Welch and Hillard 2005: 21-22). We could add to these, numerous changes in the relationships between the Senate and the assemblies of the Roman people over the centuries and the evolving role of proconsuls.

was only a sham or pretended form of the *vetus res publica*.⁶⁸³ Tacitus insisted that some of the amendments, which Augustus made to the *vetus res publica*, had resulted in its actual destruction and its replacement by its antithesis, a type of *res publica* which was a new cleverly disguised form of monarchy or despotism.

Because the political constitution and structure of the Roman *res publica* demonstrated an immense flexibility over the centuries, adapting to changing realities,⁶⁸⁴ Eder concluded that enquiring into the actual nature of Augustus' principate can no longer involve examining a supposed transition from one form of government to another.⁶⁸⁵ Contrary to Eder, however, Tacitus' contrasted the new order with the old order,⁶⁸⁶ and said that after the Battle of Actium 31 B.C., there were few Romans left who had seen the (old) *res publica*.⁶⁸⁷

Tacitus attributed to some unnamed Romans during Emperor Otho's reign the belief that Roman *imperium* had remained when Julius Caesar defeated Pompey the Great at the Battle of Pharsalia and had remained when Augustus Caesar was victorious against Brutus at the Battle of Philippi, but the Roman "*res publica* was to have been about to remain under (the authority of) Pompey or Brutus."⁶⁸⁸ The obvious implication from this statement was that a particular type of *res publica* did not continue to exist under the rule of Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar. In this sentence, Tacitus was employing the phrase *res publica* in the specialised sense of the *vetus res publica*. Stanton interpreted the usage of the phrase *res publica* in this sentence to refer to "genuine openness of politics"-- the Roman upper classes having access to the affairs of state.⁶⁸⁹ This, however, is another expression of a caricatured

⁶⁸³ Moles correctly noted that in some of Tacitus' extant writings, the term *res publica* is sometimes contrasted with monarchy or equivalent expressions in a manner which compared a monarchical state or desire with a pluralist one (Moles 1998: 112, n.26.). Wirszubski postulated that the direct opposite of the Roman *res publica* was *regnum*, meaning an arbitrary despotism in which the state was the private property (*res privata*) of the ruler, and the people are this ruler's subjects without rights (Wirszubski 1968: 121). On the basis of this definition, Wirszubski claimed that the Augustan principate was not a *regnum* (Wirszubski 1968: 148). This was contrary to Tacitus.

⁶⁸⁴ Eder 1990: 83.

⁶⁸⁵ Eder 1990: 83.

⁶⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁶⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3.

⁶⁸⁸ *mansuram fuisse sub Pompeio Brutoque rem publicam* (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.50). For a similar historical perspective, see Florus 2.133.1-2.

⁶⁸⁹ Hillard et al 1998: 292.

understanding of Tacitus' motives. Tacitus had a far broader vision for Rome than just the narrow interests of Roman senators, despite him being a senator himself. Tacitus was no Sulla and no L. Marcius Philippus who were concerned about the interests of the nobles but had minimal concern about the welfare of the Roman plebeians.

In order to understand Tacitus' attitudes to Augustus' principate more fully, it is necessary to examine his assessments of the forms of government instituted by the Roman magistrates Sulla, Cinna, Marius and Pompey the Great under particular forms of the *res publica*. Tacitus criticized Sulla and Cinna for instituting forms of *dominatio*⁶⁹⁰ and said that Marius and Sulla both defeated *libertas* with military arms and turned *libertas* into *dominatio*.⁶⁹¹ Then linking the latter events to the actions of Pompey the Great, Tacitus maintained that Pompey was no better than Marius and Sulla, hiding his intentions, presumably for *dominatio*, more cleverly. In his next sentence, Tacitus argued that in Rome after the time of Pompey the Great, there was never any intention except (obtaining) the principate.⁶⁹² When in this case employing the word *principatus*, Tacitus was referring to the type of principate instituted by Augustus rather than the unofficial political roles of *princeps Senatus* and *princeps civitatis* under the old *res publica*.

Eder claimed that Sulla's dictatorship was acceptable according to the Roman Republican principles of employing temporary dictators in times of emergency.⁶⁹³ Despite Tacitus pointing out approvingly that under the *vetus res publica*, dictatorships were taken in terms of a particular (temporary) period of time (*Dictaturae ad tempus sumebantur*), in the same context, contrary to Eder, Tacitus condemned Sulla's type of government.⁶⁹⁴ Tacitus' negative appraisals of the governments of the Roman magistrates Sulla, Cinna, Marius and

⁶⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁶⁹¹ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.38. From a very different perspective to Tacitus, Mommsen asserted that Sulla attempted to save "the old constitution" of earlier Rome (Mommsen 1901, Volume 4, Book 4, Chapter 10: The Sullan Constitution).

⁶⁹² *numquam postea nisi de principatu quaesitum* (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.38). Similarly, in *Atticus* 20.5 Cornelius Nepos said that both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony desired to be *princeps* of the city of Rome and the whole world.

⁶⁹³ Eder 1990: 93-94.

⁶⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1. For discussion on Sulla's supposed monarchic government, see Carcopino 1950.

Pompey the Great provide strong evidence of the fact that Tacitus did not approve of all forms of the Roman *res publica* and that any comment by him of a *res publica* operating during Augustus' principate or during the principate of any other emperor, did not mean that Tacitus approved of the reign of the particular emperor as being an acceptable manifestation of the *vetus res publica*.

Some scholarly discussion of whether Tacitus approved of what in English has been labelled "the Roman Republic" is not nuanced enough and ignores the fact that Tacitus believed there were different forms of the *res publica* and that he did not approve of all types of the *res publica* before, during and after the Augustan principate. Because Tacitus never once applied the term *vetus res publica* or a similar expression to the governments of the Roman magistrates Sulla, Cinna, Marius and Pompey the Great, it can be strongly argued that he regarded their governments as types of *res publica*, but not as forms of the *vetus res publica* originally commenced by Lucius Brutus and amended by the Assemblies of the Roman people and by the Senate in following centuries.

Tacitus attributed to the opponents of Augustus the phrase *tempora rei publica* when referring to the conditions of the affairs or welfare of this state preceding Augustus' principate.⁶⁹⁵ According to this usage, Tacitus represented the period of the Second Triumvirate as being a part of the era in which a *res publica* operated, but it was not the *vetus res publica*. Related to this, it can be argued that Tacitus believed there was a perpetual state of *dominatio* from 60 to 44 B.C., and from 43 B.C. to 27 B.C. when the Second Triumvirate and then Augustus alone were in power, with possibly a brief interlude of *libertas* after the assassination of Julius Caesar until the defeat of the armies of Brutus and Cassius in 42 B.C.⁶⁹⁶ Note that despite Tacitus possibly implying that Brutus and Cassius provided a certain amount of *libertas* briefly, he did not suggest that this occurred throughout the whole Roman Empire at that time.

⁶⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10.

⁶⁹⁶ Leeman 1973: 193. Tacitus made relevant comments in Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1, 3.28 and *Histories* 2.38.

Tacitus ascribed to the critics of Augustus the claim that he turned the arms which had been given to him against (*contra*) the *res publica*.⁶⁹⁷ Stanton claimed that in this phrase in *Annals* 1.10, *res publica* meant just "the state",⁶⁹⁸ but in context, the expression *armae quae in Antonium acceperit contra rem publicam versa* referred to Augustus turning armies, which the Senate had delegated to him to defeat Mark Antony, against the Senate-backed armies of Brutus and Cassius. These comments by Tacitus' *prudentes* were contrary to Augustus' claim in *Res Gestae* 2 that the opposing armies led by Brutus and Cassius waged war upon the *res publica* (*bellum inferentis rei publicae*) and to Augustus' two other assertions that he used his armies solely on behalf of the good of the *res publica*.⁶⁹⁹ When we combine the above statement by the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10 with Tacitus' personal comment that the killing of Brutus and Cassius disarmed the (*res*) *publica*,⁷⁰⁰ the latter obviously implying that Augustus had attacked the *res publica* with his armies, it is obvious that in certain specialised contexts, Tacitus employed the phrase the *res publica* to refer to the old *res publica*, which he believed Romans such as Augustus destroyed. When in his *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus described his surrender of the *res publica* in 28-27 B.C. to the Roman Senate and people, Augustus cleverly avoided the question of who possessed *res publica* from that time onwards. In his *Annals*, however, Tacitus maintained that the Emperor Augustus permanently possessed the new Roman *res publica* as his own, but this was not the *vetus res publica*.

Because Tiberius insisted that Augustus was his role model, it is expedient to examine some of Tacitus' comments on Tiberius' principate and its relationships to the notion of the *res publica* as reflections of particular realities of the Augustan principate. For example, Tacitus portrayed Tiberius regarding A.D. 23, the ninth year of his principate, as the ninth year of well-ordered or law-abiding (*compositae*) *res publica*,⁷⁰¹ but Tacitus depicted Tiberius'

⁶⁹⁷ *armae quae in Antonium acceperit contra rem publicam versa* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10). Similarly, Florus referred to the *res publica* having been oppressed (crushed or destroyed or suppressed) by the military weapons (*oppressa armis re publica*) of the Second Triumvirate (Florus, 2.16.6.3).

⁶⁹⁸ Hillard et al 1998: 292.

⁶⁹⁹ *Res Gestae* 1-2.

⁷⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁷⁰¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.1.

principate as permitting only the phantoms of liberty (*similcra libertatis*)⁷⁰² and not really being a *res publica* like the old or *vetus res publica*. Tacitus also recorded that immediately after the death of Augustus, a report announced that Tiberius Nero "is making himself master of (all) matters (*rerum potiri*)."⁷⁰³ Then significantly a little later after he made this comment about Tiberius, Tacitus claimed that in the early period of his reign, Tiberius pretended that he desired that the consuls should take the initiative in the Senate as though the old Roman Republic (*vetus re publica*) were still operating, that Tiberius was unsure about whether to exercise control (*ambiguous imperandi*), and that when he convened the Senate, he did this simply under the title of the *tribunicia potestas*.⁷⁰⁴ Note in this instance, Tacitus contrasted being under the *vetus res publica* with being controlled by a *princeps* exercising *tribunicia potestas*. Obviously, Tacitus distinguished between the powerful political influences of *principes* under the *vetus res publica* and the control of the *res publica* by *principes* after the fashion of Augustus and Tiberius. Also almost immediately after making these comments, Tacitus depicted Tiberius exercising the accompaniments of a king's court.⁷⁰⁵

Stanton asserted that Tacitus' words in *Annals* 1.7.3 that Tiberius instituted all actions through the consuls *tamquam vetere re publica*, could not mean "as though the Republic still existed," but instead referred to the old system of patronage in which the rival *principes* would aim to have the consuls employ their *imperium* to fulfil the desires of the *principes*.⁷⁰⁶ In *Annals* 1.6-7, however, Tacitus was instead comparing what he depicted as the reality of Tiberius exercising the *imperium* of permanent one-man rule versus him pretending to follow more *vetus res publica*-like practice. His usage of the word "old (*vetere*)" in relation to *res publica* and his juxtaposition of the word *imperandi* against the phrase *vetus res publica*, shows that Tacitus regarded the possibility of the old Roman *res publica* operating through consuls as being the opposite of Tiberius operating his *imperium* fully.

⁷⁰² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.77.

⁷⁰³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.5.

⁷⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7. For discussion of this passage, see Seager 2002: 627-629

⁷⁰⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7.

⁷⁰⁶ Hillard et al 1998: 290.

Similarly contrary to Stanton's assertion that *re publica...populi Romani* in *Annals* 1.72 meant just "the state",⁷⁰⁷ Tacitus employed this expression to refer to the old Roman Republic. This is obvious from Tacitus' usage of the word *veteres* earlier in the same sentence. In context, Tacitus employed *veteres* to refer to the old laws under the *vetus res publica* compared with the amended laws under the Emperor Tiberius. Also, when he was referring to Tiberius misusing phrases of an older world (*priscis verbis*) to justify his crimes, Tacitus said that as though that thing (i.e. the contemporary political system) was (really) a *res publica*, the senators are convened (*illud res publica esset, coguntur patres*) by Tiberius.⁷⁰⁸ By this, Tacitus meant that the *vetus res publica* no longer existed under the principate, originally began by Augustus. Relevant to all these matters, in *Annals* 1.7 Tacitus referred to Tiberius "distorting (or twisting) words (*verba... detorquens*)" in relation to the *res publica*.

Similarly, Tacitus said that during a relatively earlier part of Nero's reign, "there was remaining nonetheless some shadow of the *res publica*."⁷⁰⁹ By employing the word *imago*, which meant a phantom imitation, illusory image or semblance, Tacitus was asserting that even when Nero's principate was not at its most tyrannical, it was only an imitation or semblance of the actual *vetus* Roman *res publica*. Tacitus' employment of the phrase *res publica* in this example is evidence that in some contexts, Tacitus used the expression *res publica* with a very specific meaning related to the old Roman Republic. The phrase *imago rei publicae* is crucial for understanding Tacitus' depiction of the principate in general, this including Augustus' initial principate.

Also, Tacitus attributed to Emperor Galba the comment that if the mighty structure of the Empire (*immensum imperii corpus*) could do without a single ruler (*rector*), it would have been appropriate that a *res publica* commenced during his principate, but instead he intended

⁷⁰⁷ Hillard et al 1998: 292.

⁷⁰⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.19.3.

⁷⁰⁹ *Manebat nihilo minus quaedam imago rei publicae* (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.28.1). On one occasion, Nero delegated to the Senate the trial of a dispute between two Roman colonies (Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 14.17), but note that the Senate was not able by its own initiative to take responsibility for such cases.

to provide the Roman people with a supposedly good successor as emperor who would hopefully provide the Roman people with neither complete slavery nor complete liberty.⁷¹⁰ The implied communication from Galba's discourse is that a *res publica* similar to the old Roman *res publica* did not exist during his principate and that having a single ruler (*rector*) was contrary to the foundational principles of the same *vetus res publica*.

Tacitus' attitudes to the relationships between the Roman *res publica* and Augustus' principate have been explored in many previous scholarly investigations. For example, Bringmann concluded: "Tacitus did not fall prey to the illusion of many modern historians who grant to the late Republic a right and opportunity to survive",⁷¹¹ while some other scholars have argued that Tacitus realistically accepted the principate as an inescapable political necessity.⁷¹² Seager, however, was closer to the truth when he argued that despite the fact that in his practical dealings with *principes*, Tacitus demonstrated that he was a realist, all of Tacitus' historical writings express "a deep, though purely intellectual, distaste for the principate and a romantic admiration for the Republic."⁷¹³ It is possible to make a case for the argument that Tacitus regarded particular forms of the *vetus res publica* as being superior also in practical terms to the principate originally instituted by Augustus. Kennedy rightly warned of the difficulties involved in judging whether an ancient Roman text was pro-Augustus or anti-Augustus,⁷¹⁴ but extensive analysis of the relevant texts demonstrate that Tacitus mostly provided more disapproving and sceptical portrayals of the relationships between the Roman

⁷¹⁰ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.16.

⁷¹¹ Bringmann 2002a: 409. For a similar perspective, see Roberts 1936: 11. Sorensen asserted that despite Tacitus' opposition to monarchy, Tacitus believed that the old republic was a thing of the past (Sorensen 1984: 68). For other views about Tacitus' attitudes to the old Roman Republic, see Furneaux 1883: 350; Grant 1956: 18-19; Shocat 1981: 203; Parks 1969: 20; Syme 1939: 517; Ehrenberg 1974: 108. Refer also to the chapter "Die Politischen Anschauungen des Tacitus: Sein Bild der römischen Republik" in Flach 1973b: 181-195 for an examination of Tacitus' view of the old Roman Republic.

⁷¹² Meyer 1910: 446 and Keitel 1984: 306. L'Hoir asserted that the *Annals* reveals that Tacitus believed that the ideal society was "government by a just princeps with consent of the Senate and people of Rome" (L'Hoir 1994: 12).

⁷¹³ Seager 1972: 256. Willrich and Salmon have rightly highlighted that Tacitus presented mostly critical representations of Augustus' principate (Willrich 1927: 54-78; Salmon 1968: 335). See also Gallia 2003 who examined the characteristics of Republicanism in the political discussions among the elite during the Flavian and Trajanic eras.

⁷¹⁴ Powell 1992: 26-58.

res publica and Augustus' principate than those provided by Velleius, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Augustus himself in his *Res Gestae*.⁷¹⁵

The next section will explore representations of Augustus as the restorer and saviour of Rome's *res publica*.

5.2 The representations of Augustus as the restorer and saviour of Rome's *res publica*

The analysis presented in this section can be applied to either the perspective that the constitution of the *vetus res publica* continued to function totally or almost completely unhindered during at least the early part of Augustus' principate, or to the alternate theory that Augustus really restored the *vetus res publica*. These two latter theories will be discussed in the two next sections.

Severy argued that Octavian/Augustus and poets and historians from the Augustan age onwards helped to create and reinforced the image of Augustus as the one who had restored and saved the damaged *res publica*, and that this depiction was in response to the image that inappropriate behaviour among the Roman nobles caused the previous civil wars and social turmoil.⁷¹⁶ Augustus and his supporters often represented his activities, related to Roman politics, the unwritten constitution, laws, culture, social practices, the *mos maiorum* and ethical matters, buildings, public works and religion, in terms of powerful but sometimes ambiguous restoration images.⁷¹⁷ These depictions of Augustus had both constitutional and non-constitutional aspects.

⁷¹⁵ Gabba 1984: 61-88.

⁷¹⁶ Severy 2003: 43.

⁷¹⁷ For commentary on Augustus' self-representations as restorer and initiator of a new era, see Bringmann 2002a: 409, Severy 2003: 37 and 56, and Hahn 1985: 28.

In numerous parts of his *Res Gestae* and in his Augustan Forum,⁷¹⁸ Augustus portrayed himself as a staunch defender of the old Roman *res publica*, who was forced by circumstances to make some "necessary" changes to its unwritten constitution in order to restore, protect and maintain this same *res publica*. Relevant to this, Gaertner noted that Augustus did not just portray himself as the saviour of the Roman state and a guarantor of peace, but he also depicted himself as imitating the ideology and practice of leading Republicans like Cicero and Pompey in their struggle supposedly to save and restore the old *res publica*.⁷¹⁹

Galinsky is one of the main modern scholars who have helped to popularize the portrayal of Augustus as a great restorer of Rome and saviour of his nation.⁷²⁰ There are a number of the extant sources which confirm numerous aspects of this representation by Galinsky. For example, Augustus painted an image of himself as the restorer of Rome through the provision of peace from wars, the supposed transference of the *res publica* to the control of the Roman Senate and people, and the provision of new laws which supposedly restored many of the traditions of the Roman ancestors (*exempla maiorumrevocari*) which were supposedly falling into disuse.⁷²¹ In addition, Augustus depicted himself as the saviour of Rome by his boast about being awarded a civic crown by the Senate,⁷²² and similarly Suetonius maintained that Augustus asserted it was his privilege to establish *rem publica* in a safe position (*salvus*).⁷²³

⁷¹⁸ Luce 1990: 125-138.

⁷¹⁹ Gaertner 2008: 52.

⁷²⁰ Galinsky 1996: 42-79 and Cartledge 1975: 33. See also Eder 1990: 108 and Weber 1925: 30. From a more critical position, Alföldi emphasized the centrality of Augustus' role of saviour for understanding Augustus' supremacy after the establishment of the republican façade of his plenipotentiary power in 27 B.C. (Alföldi 1971: 68).

⁷²¹ *Res Gestae* 8, 12-13 and 34. For a detailed discussion of *mos maiorum* as characteristic of the Augustan principate, see Volkmann 1942a: 246-264.

⁷²² *Res Gestae* 34. Weinstock provided a valuable examination of the background to the awarding of a civic crown (*corona civica*) to various special Roman citizens such as Augustus, and of the associated worship of the goddess *Salus* (Weinstock 1971: 163-174). See also Cooley 2009: 264-265.

⁷²³ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.2. The noun *salus* meant saviour, safety, security, well-being, refuge and means of deliverance. Ovid claimed that Augustus was the *Salus* of Rome and the *Pater Patriae* who would symbolically administer remedies or treat diseases among the Roman population: "*o Pater, o Patriae cura Salusque tuae*" (Ovid, *Tristia* 2.574). Suetonius pointed out that Augustus revived the ancient rite of the augury of the goddess *Salus* (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 31.4). Similarly, Cassius Dio wrote that in 27 B.C, the Senate

Augustus insisted that as a triumvir, he was setting or re-establishing the constitution in order⁷²⁴ and similarly Suetonius wrote that Augustus was a member of the triumvirate for the sake of re-establishing the *res publica*.⁷²⁵ By using the word *constituendae*, Augustus conveyed the image of himself as someone who would set Rome on firm foundations. Augustus developed this personal image as a restorer of order through his other self-representations as a restorer of the ancient Roman ethical customs (*exempla maiorum*) including those about the family and raising children, restorer of ancient Roman religion and buildings, and a restorer of *libertas*, peace, security and prosperity.⁷²⁶ Velleius Paterculus employed numerous words beginning with the prefix *re*: *repraesentaverit*, *revocata*, *restituta*, *redactum*, *revocata* and *redit*, to convey to his readers his emphasis on all the different wonderful things which Augustus had supposedly restored to the Roman people.⁷²⁷ For example, Velleius claimed that through Augustus, validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts and dignity to the Senate,⁷²⁸ but contrary to this, Tacitus said that Augustus united in his person the functions of the Senate and the legislature.⁷²⁹

Tacitus challenged the validity of these restoration images created by Augustus and others of like mind. For example, Tacitus depicted Augustus' behaviour as a triumvir as involving unjust executions through the proscriptions⁷³⁰ and he portrayed the 20 years beginning from the sole consulship of Pompey in 48 B.C. to 28 B.C., including the era of the

voted Augustus a crown of oak symbolising that he was always the savior (*sozonti*) of the citizens of Rome (Cassius Dio, 53.16.4). In his *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus reported that the Senate gave him this civic crown as a reward for his service to the Roman people. Weinstock provided a valuable examination of the background to the awarding of a civic crown (*corona civica*) to various special Roman citizens such as Augustus, and of the associated worship of the goddess *Salus* (Weinstock 1971: 163-174). For discussion of Augustus' public image as the divine saviour of Rome, see W. Deonna, "La legende d'Octave-Auguste, dieu, saveur et maitre du monde," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 83, 1920, 32-58 and 163-195, and 84, 1921, 77-107. Tacitus referred to a temple to *Salus* in Rome (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.74).

⁷²⁴ *rei publicae constituend{ae}* (*Res Gestae* 1. See also 7).

⁷²⁵ *rei publicae constituendae* (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1).

⁷²⁶ *Res Gestae* 1-2, 8, 12-13, 19-21 and 25-27. Adopting a similar position, Horace praised Augustus for taking the responsibility of beautifying or equipping by ethical customs and reforming (freeing from faults) by means of laws (*moribus ornes, legibus emendes*) the affairs of the Italian state (Horace, *Epistulae* 2.1.2-3. For commentary on this epistle, see Brink 1982: 11-20, 31-265 and 464-495 and Oliensis 1998: 191-196).

⁷²⁷ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.2-4. See also Woodman 1983: 250-251.

⁷²⁸ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3.

⁷²⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁷³⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2

Second Triumvirate., as a period in which there was no (good) ethical practices or laws or justice in Rome. Tacitus, the master of brevity,⁷³¹ described the era as *non mos, non ius*.⁷³² This was a damning indictment against not only Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, but also especially against Augustus and Mark Antony, who operated as the two main triumvirs from 43 until either 33 or 32 B.C. Tacitus' expression *non mos, non ius* was an assault on Augustus' claim in *Res Gestae* 1 that the Roman people appointed him as a consul and a triumvir for the sake of establishing the *res publica* on a firm foundation. Further eroding the supposed validity of Augustus' self-representation, Tacitus described the ethical state of Rome during the whole Augustan era as having deteriorated greatly.⁷³³ Tacitus' expression *nihil usquam prisci et integri moris* partly related to what he believed was Rome's political condition, but was not just limited to that. Augustus depicted himself as *propraetor* being instructed by the Senate in 43 B.C. to see that the *res publica* suffered no harm or damage,⁷³⁴ but Tacitus attempted to undermine this representation through some of the accusations of Augustus' *prudentes* opponents in *Annals* 1.10.

Similarly when referring to the era related to the reigns of the Emperors Augustus to Nero, Tacitus described it as an age of unhappy, sad or distressing activities in the capital (*maestae urbis res*).⁷³⁵ Also when Tacitus then described the political system of the principate as one (man) exercising political authority (*unus imperitet*)⁷³⁶ and then said that the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors, as represented in his *Annals*, involved savage or cruel commands (*saeva iussa*), perpetual accusations by informers and resulting ruined innocents,

⁷³¹ See Irvine 1952: 6 for comments on Tacitus' brevity and diction. See also Bews 1987: 205.

⁷³² Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28. For commentary on Tacitus' phrase *non mos, non ius*, refer to Woodman and Martin, 1996: 257. Failing to understand Tacitus distinguished between lawmaking and what he regarded as right forms of justice, Furneaux was astonished that Tacitus regarded the period of rule by Julius Caesar as being *non ius* (Furneaux 1896: 425, n.6).

⁷³³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.1 and 3.55. For commentary on *Annals* 3.55, see Woodman and Martin 1996: 400-413.

⁷³⁴ *Res publica n(e quid detrimenti caparet)* (*Res Gestae* 1).

⁷³⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.32.

⁷³⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.33. For a discussion of a textual problem related to the expression *neque alia re Romana quam si unus imperitet* in *Annals* 4.33.2, see Moles 1998: 115-118.

this was hardly a positive advertisement for permanent one-man rule by Augustus and his successors.⁷³⁷

The following section will critically examine commentary by Tacitus, the *Res Gestae* and Suetonius in the light of the theory that Augustus ensured the constitution of the Roman *res publica* continued to operate completely or almost totally unhampered during his principate. It will be demonstrated that in terms of this theory, Tacitus depicted Augustus' principate more sceptically and negatively than these other two Roman writers.

5.3 The view that the (old) *res publica* continued

Some scholars have asserted that Augustus ensured the constitution of the *res publica* continued to operate totally or almost completely unhindered during at least the early part of his principate. For example, Welwei argued that Augustus began his *Res Gestae* by referring to himself in 43 B.C. restoring *libertas* to the *res publica* to emphasise that he had assured the continuation of the *res publica* and that in this *res publica*, *libertas* could be fulfilled.⁷³⁸ Such assertions, however, are contrary to Tacitus' perspective. Tacitus did not support any version of the theory that the form of *res publica* operating during any part of the reign of Augustus after the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. was accompanied by *libertas* like under the *vetus res publica*.⁷³⁹

When comparing the old Republican era to the then present era, Tacitus insisted that “Roman (political) affairs by means of the inverted order of the state or constitution was not other than one (person) being in command or exercising control.”⁷⁴⁰ By using the phrase *converso statu*, Tacitus was emphasising that the unwritten Roman political constitution or state had been inverted or turned upside down by the Roman emperors, like Augustus,

⁷³⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.33.

⁷³⁸ Welwei 2004: 30-31.

⁷³⁹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1

⁷⁴⁰ *converso statu neque alia re Romana, quam si unus imperitet* (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.33).

compared with the old Roman *res publica* (when the latter was not suppressed by despots like Sulla and Cinna). By his combined usage of the words *converse statu* and *unus imperitet*, Tacitus undermined what he believed was Augustus' façade or pretence that through the newly instituted principate, Augustus was somehow sharing power with the Senate and people of Rome. Similarly, in the literary context of referring to differences in both Roman politics and ethics when comparing the eras before and during Augustus' reign, Tacitus significantly argued: "therefore the political constitution (or the legal position of the State or of the rights of the citizens) having been changed to the contrary (or having been overturned or subverted or ruined)." ⁷⁴¹

Judge argued that the primary sources which Cassius Dio used, for example Suetonius, supposedly asserted that all of the Roman public political institutions from the previous era remained in force during Augustus' reign. ⁷⁴² Also arguing that Augustus did not abolish the *res publica* but kept it under his control, Judge also postulated that Suetonius' mention in *Divus Augustus* 28.2 of Augustus' intention to provide a new order (*novus status*) was incorrect. ⁷⁴³ Judge asserted that Augustus' claim in Suetonius' *Divus Augustus* 28.2 that Augustus established the *res publica* "in its proper setting (*in sua sede*)" under his control, so he could be remembered for being the author of the best possible order (*optimi status auctor*), was more accurate. ⁷⁴⁴ Note that in *Divus Augustus* 28.1, Suetonius also used the expression *res publica* to mean the old Roman Republic, when he referred to Augustus twice considering restoring the Republic (*reddenda re publica*), but not doing so. ⁷⁴⁵ For Suetonius to have stated that Augustus twice previously considered restoring the Roman *res publica* but did not do so,

⁷⁴¹ *igitur verso civitatis statu* (Tacitus *Annals* 1.4).

⁷⁴² Judge 2009: 223.

⁷⁴³ Similarly, Judge argued that Suetonius was wrong when he referred to Augustus instituting "the new order" and that "innovation was certainly not his (Augustus') aim" (Judge 2010: 4).

⁷⁴⁴ Judge 2009: 223.

⁷⁴⁵ Wallace-Hadrill maintained that in an almost panegyric tone, Suetonius twisted what Wallace-Hadrill labelled the "charade of the return of power asserted in the *Res Gestae*" (34) by Augustus into some type of supposed meritorious unfulfilled intention rather than a false pretence (Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 111). Suetonius argued that despite Augustus not actually restoring the *res publica* after supposedly considering twice doing this, Augustus' good intentions were expressed when Augustus insisted that his sole motive was to be called the author of the best possible government (Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 28.1-2).

meant that Suetonius believed that the old Roman Republic had been abandoned some time prior to these two occasions. One man in the state, Suetonius was asserting that the *vetus res publica* did not continue to operate during Augustus' principate.

Stanton unconvincingly postulated that when reflecting back, Tacitus did not believe that Augustus brought about any major constitutional change in Roman politics.⁷⁴⁶ As part of his attempt to prove this hypothesis, Stanton interpreted Tacitus' expression *iuniores post Actiacam victoriam, etiam sense plerique inter bella civium nati: quotus quisque reliquus, qui rem publicam vidisset* (*Annals* 1.3) to mean merely that Tacitus believed that prior to the civil wars, there was more than one *princeps* in the Roman Senate, but after Actium there was only one outstanding *princeps* in the Senate, namely Augustus.⁷⁴⁷ Also, Stanton asserted that in the immediate literary context, Tacitus' mention of *aequalitate omnes exuta principis aspectare*⁷⁴⁸ showed that in Tacitus' above expression, Tacitus was focusing on the lack of equality for the various *principes* after the Battle of Actium. Stanton's interpretation is based on the unproven assumption that as a senator, Tacitus had attitudes like the more extreme senators in the late Republic who focused on the *libertas* and equality of Roman senators and nobles, but had little, if any, concern about the broader legal rights and *libertas* of all Roman citizens, including plebeians. Contrary to this implicit assumption about Tacitus, the latter wrote very critically of any aristocratic minority exercising a *dominatio* over its citizens and Tacitus referred positively to the supreme administrative authority of the people (*populi imperium*) being linked to *libertas*.⁷⁴⁹ Also, Tacitus emphasised the importance of not just the *libertas* of the Senate but also the voice of the Roman people.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁶ Stanton 1998: 281, 287 and 297.

⁷⁴⁷ Hillard et al 1998: 289. Compare to Koestermann 1963: 74. Miller argued that in this passage, *rem publicam* meant "the Republic" (Miller 1959: 109). Referring to Tacitus' *Annals* 1.3.7, Morstein-Marx and Rosenstein more accurately noted that Tacitus was here providing "a strong demarcation between Republic and Principate" defined by actual "experience and behaviour, not the surface facts of political life" (Morstein-Marx and Rosenstein in Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx 2006: 626).

⁷⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

⁷⁴⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 6.42.

⁷⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1.

Similar to Stanton, Galinsky chastised Tacitus for his supposedly thoroughly jaundiced perspective on Augustus which "proceeds from the narrowest of biases,"⁷⁵¹ in other words presumably some limited aristocratic perspective.⁷⁵² Contrary to this accusation, however, Tacitus condemned Sulla, one of the heroes of the Roman aristocracy in the first century B.C., labelling him that most cruel of nobles (*nobilium saevissimus*).⁷⁵³ Also, Tacitus did not consistently take the side of patricians in earlier Roman eras, nobles in later times and/or the Senate in their disputes with the plebeians and with tribunes of the plebeians. For example, Tacitus wrote approvingly of the population of Rome, just after the expulsion of the last king of Rome and of the commencement of the old *res publica*, needing to frame a large number of laws to check factions (*factiones*) of the Roman senators and to protect their political *libertas*.⁷⁵⁴ Also, Tacitus wrote critically of consuls usurping too much power, and of some senators making laws supposedly aimed at opposing crime, but actually intended to achieve various corrupt results during quarrels between the Roman patricians and plebeians.⁷⁵⁵

Tacitus' concept of political equality (*aequalitas*) was broader than just equality between various *principes*. He asserted that in some previous supposed Roman era before greed for power fully grew and broke limitations when the Roman *res publica* became great, equality among all Romans was easy to maintain.⁷⁵⁶ Tacitus did not challenge the division of Roman society into various social groups, such as nobles, equestrians and plebeians with unequal social statuses, but he believed in a particular basic type of equality between all Roman citizens. Tacitus also argued that in some original utopian state, the first humans

⁷⁵¹ Galinsky 1996: 78-79. Galinsky's apparent belief that Augustus' *Res Gestae* was much more historically reliable than Tacitus' *Annals* was evident when he accused Tacitus of employing reductionist terminology about Augustus and insisted that the foil for such Tacitean phrases was "Augustus' nuanced statement in *Res Gestae* 8.5" (Galinsky 1996: 78).

⁷⁵² Galinsky 1996: 79.

⁷⁵³ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.38.

⁷⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.27. For commentary on the relevant part of *Annals* 3.27, see Woodman and Martin 1996: 248-249.

⁷⁵⁵ Tacitus *Histories* 2.38 and *Annals* 3.27. Tacitus, however, also opposed *turbatores plebis* and the *licentia* of tribunes (*Annals* 3.27).

⁷⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.38.

(*vetustissimi mortalium*) existed in a state of equality, but when ambition and violence grew instead of modesty and self effacement, equality began to be outworn (*exui aequalitas*) and numerous despotisms (*dominationes*) began and remained perennial in some nations.⁷⁵⁷ In this latter comment, Tacitus does not solely concentrate on equality among aristocrats but instead referred to equality among all humans. Tacitus here also insisted that equality cannot occur under any type of despotism. Therefore, when Tacitus argued *aequalitate omnes exuta principis aspectare*, he was claiming that a broader political equality for Roman citizens was not possible under the characteristics of the type of *princeps* whom Augustus was. This is partly why in *Annals* 1.3 Tacitus asserted that few Romans had seen the old *res publica* when they were under the *dominatio* of Augustus, the latter being mentioned earlier in *Annals* 1.3.

As part of his thesis that the old Republic continued in Augustus' principate, Stanton also insisted that Tacitus' statement *nulla iam publica arma* in *Annals* 1.2 did not mean that there was not a Republican army left on the battlefield after Brutus and Cassius had been killed, but instead meant there were no public forces as opposed to Augustus' private forces remaining.⁷⁵⁸ Note, however, that Tacitus labelled Brutus and Cassius' army at the Battle of Philippi as *publica arma* because it had the majority support of the Senate and therefore in the eyes of the Senate were the armies of the *vetus res publica* opposing the rebel forces of Octavian and Mark Antony.⁷⁵⁹

The following section will examine, compare and contrast commentary by especially Tacitus, Suetonius and Velleius in relation to the view that Augustus really restored the (old) *res publica*. Once again, it will be evident that of these authors, Tacitus mostly provided the most negative and sceptical view of Augustus' political career.

⁷⁵⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.26. For commentary on the relevant part of *Annals* 3.26, see Koestermann 1963: 465 and Woodman and Martin 1996: 240-243.

⁷⁵⁸ Refer to Hillard et al 1998: 290 and Furneaux 1896: 180 n.11.

⁷⁵⁹ Compare to the usage of *res publica* in Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 8.1.

5.4 The perspective that Augustus really restored the (old) *res publica*

Suetonius wrote that Augustus twice thought of really restoring the Republic (*reddenda re publica*), but in both cases decided against it.⁷⁶⁰ Appian and Cassius Dio also recorded the various promises of Octavian and Antony to restore the Roman Republic actually.⁷⁶¹ Also, Appian claimed that Octavian handed over much business of the Roman state to the annual magistrates to administer in the traditional manner.⁷⁶² Primarily on the basis of sources such as these and of particular interpretations of Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34 and of Velleius 2.89.3-4, throughout the late 1800s, 1900s and 2000s there were many different varieties of the perspective that Augustus fully or partially really restored either the *res publica* or more specifically the old Roman *res publica*.

As noted previously in Chapter 1, scholars such as Mommsen, Pelham, Meyer, Hirschfeld, Kornemann, Siber, Canali and Eder hypothesised that Augustus actually restored the Roman Republic,⁷⁶³ while Judge, Loewenstein, Crawford and Yavetz rightly argued against this perspective.⁷⁶⁴ Some scholars employ ill-defined unclear terminology when commenting on such proposed restorations. For example, Eck argued that Augustus "restored (or renewed) the *res publica*" and "seemed to announce a return to the Republic," and that

⁷⁶⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1.

⁷⁶¹ Appian 5.132 and Cassius Dio, 1.7.1, 49.41.6 and 52.1.1.

⁷⁶² Appian 5.132.

⁷⁶³ Canali interpreted the concluding sentence in Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34 to mean that maybe without any deliberately bad intentions, Augustus recorded the restoration of the Republic (*registra la restaurazione repubblicana*) (Canali 1973: 170). Marsh (1927: 219-220 n.1) also noted the earlier dispute between E. Meyer (in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1903 and later in his *Kleine Schriften*) and Gardthausen (1896: 1334-1349) about whether Augustus was sincere about intending to restore the Roman Republic. Meyer argued in the affirmative, whereas Gardthausen labelled Augustus' declarations of Republican sentiments as involving total pretence.

⁷⁶⁴ Judge argued convincingly that the two inscriptions, the *Fasti Praenestini* for 13 January (*CIL*, I 2, p.231) and the *Laudatio Turiae* cannot be taken as indisputable evidence that Augustus restored a form of the old Roman Republic (Judge 1974: 288-301). Yavetz claimed that Augustus did not restore the old republican regime, but he also did not institute a dictatorship like those of Sulla and Caesar or an absolute Hellenistic monarchy (Yavetz 1984: 17). Loewenstein argued that the Augustan principate did not involve an actual restoration of the old Roman Republic in 27 B.C. (Loewenstein 1969: 537-542 and 563-564). As the title of his book indicates, Loewenstein believed that Augustus created a constitutional monarchy (*Die konstitutionelle Monokratie des Augustus*), rather than a military dictatorship or an unconstitutional autocracy (Loewenstein 1969: 560-561 and 563-564). Loewenstein stated, "Augustus' state leadership was a monarchy, but beyond all doubt it was constitutional (*Augustus' Staatsführung war eine Monokratie, aber sie war jenseits aller Zweifel konstitutionell*)" (Loewenstein 1969: 541). Therefore, when Loewenstein used the German word *Monokratie*, which can mean either monarchy which was beneficial to the common good or a tyranny, it is almost certain that he is referring to the former. See also Crawford 1992: 188.

Augustus' measures in 28 and 27 B.C. "were not mere exercises in public rhetoric."⁷⁶⁵ The expression "restored (or renewed) the *res publica*" is inherently vague because of the ambiguous nature of the concepts of restoration, renewal and *res publica*. Also, when Eck referred to "a return to the Republic," he did not specify precisely whether he meant a full restoration of the *vetus res publica* or some type of more vague partial renewal or restoration of the more general political phenomenon known as the *res publica*.

One of the reasons there has been extensive scholarly debate for centuries about whether Augustus restored the old Roman *res publica* is that the primary sources were written by different historians and other types of writers, who each had different agendas, and some of their comments at least on the surface appear contradictory and to a certain degree ambiguous. The relevant parts of the texts by Augustus (*Res Gestae*), Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio are each representations of the different, though sometimes partly ambiguous and contradictory, traditions in ancient Rome about whether Augustus fully or partly actually restored the old Roman *res publica* or the more general Roman *res publica* or pretended to restore the old Roman *res publica* or did something else.

In *Divus Augustus* 28, Suetonius made some significant and seemingly partly contradictory comments on the Roman *res publica*. As stated above, Suetonius first referred to the possibility of Augustus restoring the Roman *res publica*, but it is obvious that Suetonius' relevant restoration phrases *reddenda re publica* and *ne redderetur* related to different things from when he said in the surrounding context that the triumvirate of Octavian/Augustus, Mark Antony and Lepidus was instituted supposedly for setting the state or public affairs in order (*rei publicae constituendae*)⁷⁶⁶ and when he maintained that Augustus promised to set up the state or public affairs (*sistere rem publicam*) in a firm and secure position during his principate.⁷⁶⁷ Suetonius also used the phrase *res publica* with

⁷⁶⁵ Eck in Ewald and Norena 2010: 91.

⁷⁶⁶ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1.

⁷⁶⁷ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.2. McDermott argued that when in *Divus Augustus* 28.2 Suetonius recorded that Augustus referred to his desire that the foundations of the *res publica*, which he constructed, may remain, he

numerous meanings, for example, to refer the Roman state in a more general sense,⁷⁶⁸ to the state or public affairs during Augustus' principate⁷⁶⁹ and even to the government of the city of Naples.⁷⁷⁰ Suetonius' usages of the phrase *res publica* with different meanings in different contexts were similar to his employment of the word *libertas* with a far more restricted meaning in *Divus Augustus* 98.2 when compared to its much broader meaning in his *Tiberius* 50.1.

Suetonius' employment of the phrase *reddenda re publica* in *Divus Augustus* 28.1 is indicative of the fact that he believed there were different types of *res publica* in Roman politics. In other words, he distinguished the *res publica* which functioned during the era of the Second Triumvirate and the *res publica* which operated during the Augustan principate from the form of *res publica* which Suetonius claimed that Augustus twice did not actually restore. Lambrecht postulated that when Suetonius used the expression *de reddenda re publica* in relation to Augustus, Suetonius was referring merely to the possibility of Augustus totally withdrawing from public political life in Rome,⁷⁷¹ but note Suetonius regarded one aspect of this restoring the Roman Republic as involving Augustus ridding Rome of permanent supreme one-man rule.⁷⁷²

It is true that Suetonius never used the expression *vetus res publica* employed by Tacitus to refer to the old Roman Republic, but in one context, Suetonius instead used the word *libertas* to refer to the old Roman Republic as distinguished from the political system which Augustus inaugurated. According to Suetonius, Tiberius showed a letter sent by Drusus to Tiberius in which Drusus discussed with Tiberius the issue of compelling Augustus to restore liberty (*restituendam libertatem*) to the Roman political system.⁷⁷³ This comment confirms Suetonius' strong belief that Augustus never restored significant old Republican

was using the phrase *res publica* in an ambiguous way, with one of the meanings suggesting that Augustus' changes were a restoration of the old Roman Republic (McDermott 1980-1981: 26).

⁷⁶⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 101.3.

⁷⁶⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 37, 38.2, 58 and 61.1.

⁷⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 92.2.

⁷⁷¹ Lambrecht 1984: 134.

⁷⁷² Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1.

⁷⁷³ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 50.1.

libertas to the Roman state. It is obvious that a form of *res publica*, without a full measure of *libertas*, must be distinguished from a *res publica* with such *libertas*. Drusus died before Augustus' death⁷⁷⁴ and thus had no opportunity to fulfil his stated intention. Tacitus also reminded his Roman readers of this common oral tradition that Drusus had intended to restore liberty (*libertatem redditurus*) to Rome.⁷⁷⁵ Therefore, obviously Tacitus was highlighting that Drusus meant that the Emperor Augustus had removed *libertas* from Roman political life, despite Augustus' insistent claims to the contrary in *Res Gestae* 1.

When referring to Augustus' reign, Galinsky argued that expressions like *reddenda re publica* strongly resist attempts by modern scholars to define them in exact legal and constitutional terms and demand a broader perspective.⁷⁷⁶ Galinsky was partly right because of the ambiguous nature of the phrase *res publica* and because in the centuries prior to Augustus, the unwritten constitution of the *res publica* was frequently amended. Considering, however, that the phrase *res publica* possessed significant constitutional features, it is also erroneous to argue that any Latin phrase, which referred to some type of restoring of *res publica*, was totally devoid of constitutional and legal characteristics.⁷⁷⁷

Judge implied that Suetonius believed that there was little, if any, change in the public institutions of Rome (*res publica*) when we compare their operation during Augustus' reign to their functioning in the pre-Augustan era,⁷⁷⁸ but this does not totally agree with all of Suetonius' analysis of the related issues. As stated above, Suetonius maintained that twice Augustus thought of restoring the Roman republic, but on both occasions chose against it, and that Suetonius argued the first of these events happened immediately after Augustus had defeated Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., when Augustus remembered that Antony

⁷⁷⁴ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 7.3. In his *Claudius* 1.4, Suetonius said that Drusus made no secret of his intending to restore the old Roman Republic whenever he had the power to do so (*nec dissimulasse unquam pristinum se rei p(ublica)statum, quandoque posset, restitutum*).

⁷⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.33.

⁷⁷⁶ Galinsky 1996: 58.

⁷⁷⁷ For relevant evaluation, see Schmitzer 2011: 190.

⁷⁷⁸ Judge 2009: 223

had often charged that it was Augustus' fault that the *res publica* was not restored.⁷⁷⁹ Note also that Suetonius argued that one of the main reasons Augustus did not restore the (old) *res publica* was that he believed that it would be hazardous to entrust the Roman state into the control (*arbitrium*) of more than one person.⁷⁸⁰ Suetonius here contradicted Augustus' ambiguous claim in *Res Gestae* 34 to have transferred the *res publica* to the control (*arbitrium*) of the Roman Senate and Roman people.

Velleius claimed that under the Emperor Augustus, the old and ancient form of the *res publica* was restored.⁷⁸¹ Judge, however, strongly argued that we cannot be certain that Velleius here was referring to the restoration of a political constitution.⁷⁸² Evidence for Judge's argument was Livy employed a similar expression *erecti patres restitutam credebant rem publicam* to refer to a political situation in Rome in 460 B.C. which in no way meant a total restoration of the Roman *vetus res publica*.⁷⁸³ Judge also disputed the suggestion that Velleius' phrase *rei publicae forma revocata* meant that Augustus had actually restored the old Roman Republic.⁷⁸⁴ It is, however, extremely difficult to explain away the fact that Velleius said that Augustus restored the old and ancient form of the *res publica*. It is logical that when someone referred to the old and ancient form of the *res publica* previously operating, there correspondingly had to be one or more different forms of the *res publica* which had functioned after the era of the ancient form. One area of unresolved dispute is to what degree the expression *prisca et antiqua rei publicae* is a synonym for Tacitus' phrase *vetus res publica*.

⁷⁷⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1. Twice in *Divus Augustus*, Suetonius used the related Latin word *reddidit* to mean either "he restored" or "it restored" (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 48.1 and 94.7). Compare to Appian 5.132.

⁷⁸⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.2.

⁷⁸¹ *Prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata* (Velleius Paterculus, 2.89.3-4). In the context of referring to Velleius' phrase *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata*, Hillard argued that Velleius "was politically aligned with those who wished to emphasise continuities" (Cowan 2011, 219). Bleicken, however, argued that actually against the background of the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, the intense hardship and immense danger of the era of the Second Triumvirate, and of the possibility of Antony giving away half of the empire, or at least having a very different political conception for Roman hegemony in the East, the supposed political settlement of 27 B.C. must have appeared to some Romans as the re-establishment of the old Republic (Bleicken 1990: 111).

⁷⁸² Judge 2009: 212.

⁷⁸³ Livy, 3.20.1.

⁷⁸⁴ Judge 2009: 223.

To achieve any type of understanding of Velleius' ambiguous meanings in his expression *prisca...revocata*, we must examine the surrounding literary context. Note that immediately prior to and after this comment, Velleius listed what he regarded as many of the wonderful benefits which Augustus supposedly restored to Rome. These included the ending of the civil wars after 20 years, the suppression of foreign wars, the provision of peace, the ending of the frenzy of military activity everywhere, and the restoration of validity to the Roman laws, authority to the courts, sovereignty or dignity to the Senate, the *imperium* of magistrates supposedly to what it had previously been (except with the addition of two new praetors), agriculture to the fields, respect for Roman religion, freedom from anxiety and assurance of personal property rights.⁷⁸⁵ It is obvious from such comments that Velleius did not believe that Augustus' supposed restoration was solely limited to legal and constitutional matters, but Velleius did refer to elements of the latter also. For example, Velleius referred to Augustus restoring sovereignty or majesty to the Senate and reducing the *imperium* of all Roman magistrates to their former (implied old Republican) limits.⁷⁸⁶ Bringmann more convincingly interpreted Velleius' words *restituta...senatui maiestas, imperium magistratuum ad pristinum redactum modum* (2.89.3), which precedes Velleius' expression *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata*, to mean that Augustus reinstated the ascendancy of the Senate and restored the official powers of the Roman magistrates to their traditional previous limitations.⁷⁸⁷

Challenging Syme's assertion that in Book 2.89.4 Velleius asserted that Augustus had deceitfully claimed to have actually restored the Roman Republic in 27 B.C., Woodman supported Millar, Salmon and Judge for strongly arguing the case that Augustus did not claim

⁷⁸⁵ Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3-4. Seemingly partly founded on Velleius' interpretation of events, Earl claimed that Augustus restored the Roman Republic in January 27 B.C. not as a blatant fraud or hollow pretence and not as a restoration a specific type of government, but instead as an end to the lawlessness and anarchy of the Triumviral era and as a replacement of the rule of military force by the re-establishment of legitimate government, law and order, stability, peace and the specific liberties and rights of Roman citizens, commencing in 27 B.C. and being almost complete by 19 B.C. (Earl 1968: 66 and 71).

⁷⁸⁶ *restituta...senatui maiestas, imperium magistratuum ad pristinum redactum modum* (Velleius Paterculus, 2.89.3).

⁷⁸⁷ Klaus Bringmann 1977: 222.

to have restored the (old?) Republic in 27 B.C.⁷⁸⁸ Woodman, however, did not take into account the fact that the ambiguity of both Velleius' expression *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata* and Augustus' comment *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli* in *Res Gestae* 34 would have almost certainly resulted in the conveyance of number of different contradictory meanings to their Roman readers and hearers. Therefore despite the fact that in the extant sources, Augustus never explicitly claimed to have restored the (*vetus*) *res publica*, his comment in *Res Gestae* 34 and Velleius' above expression were suitable vehicles for the communication of this implicit message, plus a number of other contrary messages. Woodman also claimed that the expression *prisca...revocata* simply means "the dissolution of the triumvirate and the consequent return to the earlier form of administration," but this interpretation is itself partly ambiguous.⁷⁸⁹ This is because the words "the earlier form of administration" can mean numerous things, including a restoration of the *vetus res publica*. Such shortcomings are a logical result of the ambiguity and contradictions in the extant sources about Augustus' principate.

Despite the fact that one of the implied meanings of Velleius Paterculus' phrase *prisca...revocata* is some type of only partially clear restoration of the *res publica*, Velleius' statement is problematic to some extent considering that under the old traditional form of *res publica*, there was no general acceptance of someone operating permanently with all the combined political functions which Tacitus and Cassius Dio represented Augustus possessing. Velleius' portrayal of this assumed restoration is in marked contrast to Tacitus' depiction of the same. It seems that Tacitus regarded all such discussion as a useless or insidious distraction from the real issues and a manifestation of the type of sycophantic historical writings which Tacitus criticized in *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 1.1.

Tacitus revealed that he did not believe that Augustus had really restored the old Republic (*vetus res publica*), when in *Annals* 1.2 he contrasted the old order (*vetus*) with the

⁷⁸⁸ Syme 1939: 324, Millar 1973: 61-67, Salmon 1956: 457-458, Judge 1974: 279-311 and Woodman 1983: 254.

⁷⁸⁹ Woodman 1983: 254.

new order (*novus*). Tacitus' employment of the word old (*vetus*) is closely associated with his usage of the word *publica* earlier in the same passage, when Tacitus said that the killing of Brutus and Cassius by the armies of Augustus and Mark Antony had disarmed the *publica*. Tacitus portrayed Augustus as so drastically changing the Roman political system that only some aspects of its old nominal forms remained (*eadem magistratuum vocabula*).⁷⁹⁰ Tacitus wrote that during Augustus' reign, one aspect of the altered world was "all, having been set free from (having severed connection with) equality, looked to the commands of the princeps."⁷⁹¹ By this, Tacitus meant that in practical reality, all Romans, having been set free by Augustus from a political system in which there was a relative equality between respectively the two Roman consuls, between the various Roman praetors, between the two Roman censors and between the various tribunes of the Roman plebeians (but not necessarily between each of these different magistracies), instead looked solely to the orders of the *princeps* Augustus. Significantly, Tacitus here highlighted that under the new political system, Augustus had the authority and power permanently to command every Roman what to do. It is obvious from such comments that Tacitus believed that there were very significant differences between the operations of the *vetus res publica* and the Augustan principate.

Eder asserted that "apart from the separation of the *tribunicia potestas* from the office itself, each element of the *princeps*' authority and the design of the principate were rooted in Republican parallels or analogies. There was no need to invent anything new here."⁷⁹² If we examine each of Augustus' political functions individually, we can locate some previous analogies and parallels from the *vetus res publica*, but note Tacitus condemned Augustus for combining in his own person all the Republican political functions of the Senate, the

⁷⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4.

⁷⁹¹ *omnes, exuta aequalitate, iussa principis aspectare* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4).

⁷⁹² Eder 1990: 117.

magistracy and the legislature,⁷⁹³ and for instituting a *dominatio*, the latter being the antithesis of the *vetus res publica*.⁷⁹⁴

Throughout his texts, Tacitus referred twice to the genuine possibility of the future restoring of liberty (*libertatem redditurus*) and (*reddita libertate*) to the Roman people,⁷⁹⁵ thereby revealing he did not believe that Augustus had restored the *vetus res publica*. Tacitus also avoided expressions like *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populiue Romani arbitrium transtuli* used by Augustus and *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata* by Velleius,⁷⁹⁶ because he did not wish to give any credibility to false interpretations of Augustus' ambiguous and sometimes contradictory statements about his principate (*principatus*) and the *res publica*, two ambiguous terms themselves. While it is true that the word *libertas* also had numerous meanings in ancient Rome, Tacitus devoted much effort throughout his texts to provide partially context-driven descriptions of what he regarded as true and spurious forms of *libertas*.⁷⁹⁷

Eder asserted that Augustus restored the Roman Republic in real terms and not just as a mere farce, façade and veil for monarchy,⁷⁹⁸ and that Augustus restored the full authority of the Senate in 27 B.C.⁷⁹⁹ Note however, that as emphasised previously, Tacitus argued that no Roman Emperor, except Emperor Nerva, was able to unite the political institution of the principate with *libertas*.⁸⁰⁰ Similarly when Tacitus portrayed the image of a few Roman voices, when Augustus was old and sick, beginning to discuss the possibility of the return of

⁷⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁷⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3 and 2.59.

⁷⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.33 and 2.82.

⁷⁹⁶ *Res Gestae* 34, Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3-4 and Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1.

⁷⁹⁷ See previous relevant sections on *libertas* in Chapter 4.

⁷⁹⁸ Eder 1990: 102-104 and 108.

⁷⁹⁹ Eder 1990: 88. Similarly, Eder hypothesised that the Roman Republic was almost fully operating during Augustus' reign (Eder 1990: 109-110 and 116). Cook represented Augustus as standing closer to the Republican ideal of a leader than his successors as emperor (Cook 1986: 243). Eder argued that the Republican statues in the *Forum Augustum*, the long column of Republican portraits at his funeral procession and his boasts in his *Res Gestae* of having rescued the *libertas* of the *res publica* and of having re-established the *res publica*, were evidence of Augustus not being a monarch (Eder 1990: 86). See Pliny the Elder, 22.6.13 and Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 9.11.10 for evidence of Republican statues in the *Forum Augustum*. Coming from a more Tacitean perspective, Syme, however, argued that during Augustus' principate, Republican phraseology was employed, and in his mature years, Augustus stole the heroes and vocabulary of his previous Republican enemies (Syme 1939: 316-317).

⁸⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.1.

the blessings of *libertas* after Augustus' death,⁸⁰¹ Tacitus was portraying Augustus as having not restored *libertas*, one of the fundamental components of the old Roman Republic. Tacitus linked the concept of *libertas* to the institutions began by Lucius Brutus and to the glories of the old Roman community or state (*vetus populus Romanus*).⁸⁰² Also when Tacitus maintained that Marius and Sulla defeated *libertas* with arms and turned it into despotism (*dominatio*),⁸⁰³ Tacitus employed the word *libertas* here as a major component of the *vetus res publica*. In addition when Tacitus referred to some of the disasters of *vetus populus Romanus* being the despotisms of Cinna and Sulla, and being the political activities of Pompey, Crassus, Julius Caesar, Lepidus, Mark Antony and Augustus Caesar,⁸⁰⁴ Tacitus strongly implied that each of these men suppressed *libertas* among Romans.

Eder claimed that Augustus did not destroy the Roman Republic but instead "fashioned out of a Republic of oligarchs a Republic for all Romans..."⁸⁰⁵ Tacitus, however, depicted Augustus and the other triumvirs as having disarmed the *vetus res publica*,⁸⁰⁶ which had been trying to operate again after Julius Caesar's permanent dictatorship, and of Augustus being one of the main destroyers of the old Roman Republic. As stated previously, Tacitus maintained that after Augustus' victory at the Battle of Actium, there were few Romans left who had seen the (old) Republic⁸⁰⁷ and it was therefore an altered world.⁸⁰⁸ The phrase *res publica* in Tacitus' expression *quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset* cannot be interpreted as meaning just the state or public affairs, but instead related to Tacitus' later expression *vetus res publica*.⁸⁰⁹ Types of *res publica* or public affairs continued to exist in Rome during the dictatorship of Julius Caesar and the triumvirate of Augustus, Mark Antony

⁸⁰¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4. Refer to Shotter 1991: 3275 and Carter 1970: 238 and 243.

⁸⁰² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁸⁰³ Tacitus, *Histories* 2.38.

⁸⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁸⁰⁵ Eder 1990: 87 and 116. Contrary to this, see Syme 1939: 317.

⁸⁰⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁸⁰⁷ *quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset* (Millar 1973: 63).

⁸⁰⁸ *Igitur verso civitatis statu* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3-4).

⁸⁰⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7 and 16.22.

and Lepidus prior to Augustus' reign, but these were not what Tacitus labelled as *vetus res publica* or *vetus populus Romanus*.

Hillard argued that Augustus certainly did not claim to have restored the Roman Republic in a political or constitutional sense.⁸¹⁰ This hypothesis, however, is only true in the sense that there is no evidence in the extant sources that Augustus unambiguously and definitely asserted that he had restored the old Roman Republic. Note, however, that once we have established that Augustus specialised in ambiguous and sometimes contradictory political messages, it can be strongly argued that some of his political statements were deliberately worded so that they could be interpreted by some Romans to mean that he had actually totally or almost totally restored the old Roman Republic in a constitutional sense.

The next part of this chapter will evaluate, compare and contrast commentary by especially Tacitus, Augustus' *Res Gestae* 1 and 34 and Cassius Dio in relation to the theory that Augustus pretended to fully restore the old *res publica*. Once again it will be shown that of these authors, Tacitus mostly articulated the most negative and sceptical view of the relationships between the Roman *res publica* and Augustus' principate.

5.5 The theory of the pretended full restoration the old *res publica*

The theory that Augustus benevolently provided a supposedly pretended restoration of the old Roman Republic, is largely derived from Cassius Dio's mainly approving evaluation. Cassius Dio argued that Augustus claimed to have restored the old Roman Republic with its liberty, this being demonstrated in Augustus' supposed speech on 13 January 27 B.C., when Augustus supposedly offered liberty (*eleutheria*), their republic (*demokratia*)⁸¹¹ and absolute

⁸¹⁰ Millar 1973: 50-67 = 2002: 241-270; Judge 1974: 279-311; Cowan 2011: 238 n.3.

⁸¹¹ Cassius Dio 53.4.3 and 53.5.4. In Greek, the word *demokratia* referred to democracy or popular government. Therefore in this context, Cassius Dio was employing *demokratia* as a rough equivalent of the old Roman Republic, despite the fact that the latter was not democratic in the same ways as the Athenian democracy or modern democracies.

control over the Roman army to the Senate and Roman people.⁸¹² Cassius Dio also insisted that even though Augustus was in reality a monarch, to avoid the appearance of having forced the Roman people against their will to submit to his absolute power, Augustus pretended to be wanting to restore the entire government of the Roman state to the control of the Senate⁸¹³ and to be willing to surrender his absolute power over the Roman army, provinces and laws to the Roman Senate and people.⁸¹⁴ Cassius Dio added that immediately after making this offer, despite the initial different responses of various senators, the Roman Senate refused to accept this offer and instead forced him, seemingly against his original intentions, to assume supreme autocratic power.⁸¹⁵ Cassius Dio also claimed that Augustus began a monarchy (*monarchia*),⁸¹⁶ and had the power of a king (*basileus*) and of a dictator without having these titles.⁸¹⁷

There have been numerous scholarly variations of the theory that Augustus pretended to restore the *vetus res publica*.⁸¹⁸ For example, Syme presented the case that "Augustus claimed to have restored *libertas* and the Republic, a necessary and salutary fraud..."⁸¹⁹ Similarly, Hohl argued that in the statement *potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri, qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt* in *Res Gestae* 34.3, Augustus committed himself to a Republican principle, which many Romans wanted to hear, but there was a discrepancy between republican appearances and monarchic reality, resulting in Augustus creating the great fiction of the *res publica restituta*.⁸²⁰ Likewise, Keaveney asserted Augustus restored the Republic or at least created his own version of it, and referred to Augustus' political system's "deliberate superficial resemblance to the ways of old."⁸²¹ In a more nuanced approach, Wallace-Hadrill attempted to solve the question of whether Augustus

⁸¹² Cassius Dio 53.4.3 and 53.5.4.

⁸¹³ Cassius Dio 53. 6.4, 8.2-7, 8.4-5, 11.1-2, 11.4 and 12.1.

⁸¹⁴ Cassius Dio 53.2.6-7.

⁸¹⁵ Cassius Dio 53.11.1-12.1.

⁸¹⁶ Cassius Dio 52.1.1, 53.16.2-3 and 53.17.1-2.

⁸¹⁷ Cassius Dio 52.40.2, 52.41.1 and 53.17.1-6.

⁸¹⁸ Many of these were previously footnoted in Chapter 1.

⁸¹⁹ Syme 1939: 516.

⁸²⁰ Hohl 1947: 114-115.

⁸²¹ Keaveney 2007: 98- 99.

restored the Roman Republic in reality or pretence or whether some other alternative was correct, by asserting that Augustus instituted a system which was a paradox involving the creation of a new system by restoring the old one.⁸²² Wallace-Hadrill also noted many un-Republican aspects of Augustus' new political system⁸²³ and argued that "Augustus' 'restoration of the republic' was muffled with all its hypocrisy."⁸²⁴

Other scholars, for example Gruen, Zanker and Judge, in different ways have disputed the notion that Augustus claimed to have restored the Roman Republic.⁸²⁵ For instance, Judge has convincingly refuted the argument, that Cassius Dio's theory that Augustus pretended to restore the old Roman *res publica* fully, is supported by other literary and non-literary ancient sources.⁸²⁶ Judge also presented the case that the theory of the restored Republic ascribed concepts to Augustus which originated from Augustus' critics and not from Augustus himself.⁸²⁷ It is true that there is evidence that Mark Antony and Drusus criticized Augustus for not restoring the old Roman Republic,⁸²⁸ but as will be demonstrated in the following, relevant restoration images in Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34 and in Velleius 2.89.3-4 were ambiguous to some extent. Also Augustus and Velleius were definitely no critics of Augustus.⁸²⁹ Zanker wisely pointed out that even those in power are strongly influenced by their opponents' slogans.⁸³⁰ Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that because Brutus accused Octavian of instituting a *regnum* and a *dominatio*⁸³¹ and Mark Antony alleged that Augustus

⁸²² Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 11. Wallace-Hadrill, however, believed that Augustus only restored some partially amended aspects of the old Republican system, for example elections by the assemblies of the people (Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 21).

⁸²³ Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 16-24.

⁸²⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 140

⁸²⁵ Gruen 2005: 34-35. Zanker asserted that "the 'restoration of the Republic' was not simply a sham intended to fool the Roman public, as is often maintained" (Zanker 1988: 100). Carter maintained that Augustus and his supporters probably never claimed that he had 'restored the republic,' (Ian Scott-Kilvert 1987: 3).

⁸²⁶ Judge 1974: 279-311 (This chapter was reproduced in Judge 1987:172-204); Judge, "Augustus" in Judge 1987: 1-6; Judge 2009: 203-227; Judge 2010: 4.

⁸²⁷ Judge 1974: 306.

⁸²⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1, *Divus Claudius* 1.4 (Drusus' criticisms of Augustus' refusal to restore the old Roman Republic is implied in Drusus stating that he intended to restore it.) and Tacitus *Annals*, 1.33 and 2.82.

⁸²⁹ Velleius engaged in euphoric superlative praise of Augustus in Book 2.89.1-2.

⁸³⁰ Zanker 1988: 3.

⁸³¹ Cicero, *Ad M. Brutum* 25.6.

was the reason why the old Roman Republic was not restored,⁸³² Augustus would have responded directly or indirectly to these accusations by almost certainly frequently resorting to the safe haven of ambiguity, when discussing the *res publica* and *libertas* and possible restorations of these. Judge admitted that Augustus' assertions in *Res Gestae* 34 involved an "irretrievably obscure manoeuvre".⁸³³

Cartledge argued that when Augustus said that he had transferred the *res publica* from his *potestas* to the *arbitrium* of the Senate and people of Rome, this meant restoring the Roman Republic, but this so-called political settlement between Augustus and the Senate in January 27 B.C. was a comedy and a charade disguising an absolute monarchy.⁸³⁴ Note, however, that because Augustus' account in *Res Gestae* 34 of the political events of 28-27 B.C. was annoyingly vague, this partly being caused by the ambiguity of the phrases which he employed,⁸³⁵ it is virtually impossible to argue the case that in this passage, Augustus was certainly claiming to have restored the *vetus res publica* in either a real or pretended sense.⁸³⁶

When Augustus portrayed the image of him transferring the *res publica* from his own control to the *arbitrium* of the Senate and Roman people, and he added the statement that after this time he took precedence over all other Roman magistrates in *dignitas* or *auctoritas*, but not in power,⁸³⁷ Augustus almost certainly knew that these comments were equivocal. Evidence of the ambiguity of these two statements can be seen in the almost never-ending unresolved scholarly debates about the actual meaning of Augustus' words in these sentences. Augustus was an extremely clever politician. Therefore, he almost certainly knew that his words in *Res Gestae* 34 could be interpreted to mean that he had fully or almost completely restored the *vetus res publica*,⁸³⁸ blended somehow with Augustus' operations as the *princeps senatus* and *princeps civitatis* with overriding *dignitas* or *auctoritas*, without him supposedly

⁸³² Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1.

⁸³³ Judge 1987: 4.

⁸³⁴ Cartledge 1975:38- 39. For similar comments, see Grant 1949: 102.

⁸³⁵ Turpin 1994: 427.

⁸³⁶ Mackie 1996: 332.

⁸³⁷ *Res Gestae* 34.

⁸³⁸ Rich 1990:136.

operating as a monarch or temporary dictator.⁸³⁹ In such statements, Augustus created ambiguity by conveniently leaving out a certain amount of information and employing ambiguous words like *res publica* and *transluti* in such comments. Extant ancient Roman sources, such as *Res Gestae* 34, reflect different aspects of Augustus' ambiguous and sometimes contradictory self-representations, but some modern scholars, in their zealous attempts to identify the one "real" Augustus, erroneously ignore or downplay the significance of these contradictions and ambiguity.⁸⁴⁰

The serious shortcomings Augustus' *Res Gestae* as a source help to foster its numerous ambiguities and the contradictions in its interpretation. For example, it is just as instructive in what it leaves out as what it includes.⁸⁴¹ For example, when Augustus boasted that he supposedly handed the *res publica* back to the control of the Senate and the people and he boasted that he had no more power than his current colleagues, this did not present the full truth, as revealed in other sources.⁸⁴² Also Augustus engaged in a certain amount of deception. When referring to him being initially elected as consul,⁸⁴³ he failed to mention that this was opposed by the Senate and occurred in the context of him having taken the drastic step of marching his army into Rome and his soldiers coercing senators and others.⁸⁴⁴ Also conveniently failing specifically to mention Mark Antony's name, Augustus implicitly depicted Antony as a traitorous enemy of Rome when Augustus boasted about providing the Romans with *libertas* from the despotism of the faction led by Antony.⁸⁴⁵ Later, however, Augustus referred in respectful tones to the subsequent operation of the Second Triumvirate,

⁸³⁹ *Res Gestae* 5.

⁸⁴⁰ Here is example of contradictory or ambiguous evidence in the extant sources about Augustus: In *Fasti* 1.587-590, Ovid said that on 13 January 27 B.C., Augustus returned every province to the Roman people (Ovid, *Fasti* 1.587-590). Strabo, however, did not paint the image of Augustus transferring the whole *res publica* to the control of the Senate and people of Rome, but instead referred to Augustus, after receiving supreme political power, deciding to divide the provinces of the Roman Empire into provinces of Caesar and provinces of the people (Strabo 17.3.25 C840).

⁸⁴¹ Syme 1939: 523.

⁸⁴² Klaus Bringmann 1977: 222.

⁸⁴³ *Res Gestae* 1.4.

⁸⁴⁴ Appian 3.88, Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 26.1, Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10 and Cassius Dio 46.43. For a discussion of Augustus' alleged lies in his *Res Gestae*, see Ridley 2003: 159-227 and Augustus' alleged omissions, see Ramage 1987: 32-37.

⁸⁴⁵ *Res Gestae* 1.

failing to mention that Antony was a key member of this threesome, and thereby was suggesting Antony was a great Roman patriot.⁸⁴⁶

Because of the inherent ambiguities of *Res Gestae* 34.1, many other alternative interpretations of this text are also not compelling.⁸⁴⁷ For example, Judge maintained that in *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus singled out the "transfer of administrative control after the crisis of 28 B.C.," but was "not advancing a constitutional theory, although he is dealing with a matter which has constitutional significance." Also, Judge conjectured that Augustus' consistently material use of the term *res publica* throughout his *Res Gestae* signified that in his *Res Gestae* 34.1, Augustus was not referring to alternate forms of the Roman political constitution, but instead was concerned with the question of who was managing the public political institutions of Rome.⁸⁴⁸ It is true that in *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus does not present an elaborate comparative exposition of the constitutional political statuses of himself, the Senate and the people of Rome prior to and after the events he described, but note Augustus referred to his supposedly changed relationships to the Senate and people of Rome, these being constitutional matters to some extent. Also, the issue of who was managing the public political institutions of Rome was partly a constitutional concern.

Cooley interpreted *Res Gestae* 34.1 to mean that Augustus did not "restore the constitution of the Republic, but rather restored constitutional government,"⁸⁴⁹ but taken by itself in Latin and not necessarily in Greek, this passage could be reasonably interpreted in terms of either of these alternatives or in other ways as well. Despite providing much good commentary in her work *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Cooley's analysis of *Res Gestae* 34.1 suffers from serious shortcomings which are also found in many other works on the same

⁸⁴⁶ *Res Gestae* 7.

⁸⁴⁷ For example, Scullard proposed that in January 27 B.C, Augustus restored constitutional government rather than the Roman Republic (Scullard 1982: 212). Pollini made similar assertions (Pollini in Raaflaub and Toher 1990: 336). Turpin argued that when Augustus stated that he had transferred the *res publica* to the control of the Senate and people of Rome in *Res Gestae* 34, Augustus was referring merely to his transferral of a number of provinces to the Senate and his putting limits on the duration of his magistracy (Turpin 1994: 427-428 and 431).

⁸⁴⁸ Judge 2009: 213 and 222.

⁸⁴⁹ Cooley 2009: 258. Cooley agreed with Scheid 2007: 89.

passage.⁸⁵⁰ First, citing Millar (1973, 63-67) and Scheid (2007, 89) she wrongly interpreted the passage as having basically one clear meaning rather than ambiguous meanings. Second, she tried to create a supposedly consistent combination of the perspectives about Augustus' actions found in *Res Gestae* 34.1, Velleius 2.89.3, Cassius Dio 53.2.5, Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28.2, Ovid *Fasti* 1.589 and Strabo, *Geography* 17.3.25, despite the fact a strong case can be made for the argument that these passages interpret Augustus' actions in some contradictory ways. Rather than ignoring the serious inconsistencies among these sources, it is more reasonable to interpret *Res Gestae* 34.1 as having ambiguous meanings, this being consistent with Augustus' seeming record of ambiguous public self-representations elsewhere.

Despite the fact that the exact phrase *res publica restituta* or derivatives of this expression were not used in other extant sources by Augustus,⁸⁵¹ note that as stated earlier, in 28 B.C., Octavian/Augustus declared on a gold coin that that he had restored law and rights or justice to the Roman people (LEGES ET IURA P[opulo] R[omano] RESTITUIT).⁸⁵² The meaning of the Latin verb *restituo* was to restore or renew to an earlier condition. Strothmann asserted that in general, Augustus broadened the meaning of the related noun *restitutio* to signify more than simply restoring the pre-civil war Republican political order,⁸⁵³ but note that the noun *restitutio* and the related verb *restituo* were ambiguous enough to imply either a restoration of the latter or something broader. This is especially considering that the claim on this coin issue that Augustus restored rights to the Roman people is ambiguous in itself, because it does not specify which specific rights and to what extent. Note also that the exact phrase *res publica restituta* or derivatives of this were not used by Suetonius or Velleius about Augustus, but were instead employed earlier by Livy and Cicero, in contexts which did

⁸⁵⁰ Cooley 2009: 258-260.

⁸⁵¹ Christ interpreted *res publica restituta* to mean the re-establishment of ordered government,⁸⁵¹ but Mackie more astutely asserted that the phrase *res publica restituta* was vague and incomplete and therefore could have been interpreted in different ways in ancient Rome (Mackie 1996: 331). Mackie noted that *res publica restituta* could have had alternative meanings to various Romans such as "the survival of the state as a political entity, the repatriation of exiles, the re-establishment of social and religious order" or "Augustus' surrender of the *res publica* to the *arbitrium* of the Senate and populace in 28-7" (Mackie 1986: 331).

⁸⁵² Galinsky 2005, 23-24.

⁸⁵³ Strothmann 2000: 23. Strothmann described the meaning of the Latin word *restitutio* as the restoring of an earlier (better) condition (Strothmann 2000: 23).

not relate to changes in the type of constitutional government⁸⁵⁴ and later on an arch of Septimus Severus erected about A.D. 203.⁸⁵⁵ Partly on the basis of these points in the latter sentence, Judge argued that Augustus' statement *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populi que Romani arbitrium transtuli* in *Res Gestae* 34 could not have related to constitutional changes in Roman government,⁸⁵⁶ but once again, such assertions are based on the assumption that Augustus was not a master in political ambiguity and contradiction.

Augustus' employment of the perfect active indicative *vindicavi* in *Res Gestae* 1 and the *transtuli* in *Res Gestae* 34 are not synonyms for the perfect active indicative *restitui*, but note that Augustus' expressions *per quem rem publicam dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi* and *rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populi que Romani arbitrium transtuli* are ambiguous enough to be taken by some Romans to mean that he had restored the type of *libertas* which Rome enjoyed prior to the despotisms of Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar and the Second Triumvirate, that Rome had been totally freed by Augustus from the oppression of despotism (*dominatio*) and that in some unspecified way Augustus had returned the massive power of *res publica* to the Roman Senate and people, thereby implying he no longer had absolute power. Willrich, however, rightly highlighted: "If Tacitus ever did read the text of the *Res Gestae*, he would have laughed bitterly at the words: *rem publicam...vindicavi*. He stresses over and over again the fact that the emperor used his power in *rem publicam* for suppressing the republic."⁸⁵⁷ Tacitus maintained that Augustus ruled (or controlled) (*rexit*) the *res publica*.⁸⁵⁸

Tacitus never explicitly or implicitly portrayed Augustus either in actuality or as a pretence restoring the Roman *vetus res publica* to a form, which would be acceptable to Romans from the time of the expulsion of the Roman kings up until the time of Caesar's

⁸⁵⁴ Livy 3.20.1 and Cicero, *In Catilinam* 3.1, *De Senectute* 20, *Post Reditum in Senatu* 36, *Post Reditum ad Populum* 14, *De Domo Sua* 145 and 146, *Philippicae* 13.9.

⁸⁵⁵ *CIL*, VI, 1033. See Brilliant 1967.

⁸⁵⁶ Judge 1974: 285-288.

⁸⁵⁷ Willrich 1927: 61.

⁸⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Dialogus De Oratoribus* 17.3

defeat of Pompey, excluding Romans who supported the despotisms of the Decemvirs, Marius, Cinna, Sulla and the First Triumvirate.⁸⁵⁹ Relevant to this, Tacitus referred to Tiberius later in his reign “having been brought back to those hollow or pretended and frequent mockeries: restoring the Republic and his wish that the consuls or others might assume control.”⁸⁶⁰ Tacitus here meant that solely Tiberius or both Tiberius and Augustus had previously often employed the phrase *de reddenda re publica* when claiming that they wished that the consuls or others would take from them the control of the government of Rome in order to restore the *res publica*. Tacitus undermined also any possible interpretation by other Romans of *Res Gestae* 34, which suggested Augustus really restored the *vetus res publica*. For example, Tacitus argued that Augustus disarmed the *res publica*, united in his person the functions of the Senate, the magistracy and the legislature, and instituted a *dominatio*.⁸⁶¹ Any combination of these political functions in one person and any form of *dominatio* are both antitheses of any real transferring by Augustus of the *res publica* to the control of the Senate and people of Rome.

The following section will evaluate, compare and contrast commentary by especially Tacitus, Augustus' *Res Gestae* and Cassius Dio in relation to the theory that in his relations to the Roman *res publica*, the Augustan principate was really some type of political façade or pretence, which disguised Augustus' monarchy. Again, it will be demonstrated that Tacitus portrayed Augustus' principate more negatively and critically than the other above-mentioned two authors.

⁸⁵⁹ It is possible to argue that the First Triumvirate of Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus was also a form of despotism.

⁸⁶⁰ *ad vana et totiens inrisa revolutus, de reddenda re publica utque consules seu quis alius regimen susciperent* (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.9). Similarly, referring to Tiberius' expressed supposed concern about the importance of not damaging the *res publica*, Tacitus critically portrayed it as being characteristic of Tiberius to conceal his recent discoveries in crime by means of old discourses or phrases (*Proprium id Tiberio fuit scelera nuper reperta priscis verbis obtegere*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.19). In context, Tacitus' satirical expression “old discourses or phrases” was almost certainly his way of condemning Augustus' and Tiberius' previous pretended promises to restore the *res publica* (Tacitus, *Annals* 5.3). Referring to Tiberius' reign, Tacitus also said that an outward or sham appearance (presumably of the Roman Republic) is continuing unchanged (*durat simulacrum*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 6.11) whenever a prefect was commissioned to discharge the consular functions. Similarly, Tacitus negatively referred to the shadow of the Republic under another emperor (*imago rei publicae*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.28).

⁸⁶¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2-3.

5.6 The façade theory

A significant number of German scholars have argued either that Augustus' principate was actually some type of political façade, which disguised his monarchy in "Republican-like" forms,⁸⁶² and/or have asserted that Tacitus maintained that the Augustan principate was some type of façade.⁸⁶³ For example, Gelzer asserted that the principate of Augustus was a military monarchy disguised in outwardly Republican forms and was therefore a façade.⁸⁶⁴ There are also many examples of English-language scholars who have advocated various versions of the façade theory⁸⁶⁵ and/or have argued that Tacitus claimed that Augustus began a political system which was a sham or pretence to a significant extent.⁸⁶⁶ Scholars, however, such as Earl, Crook, Eder and Judge have rejected the theory that Augustus instituted a political façade.⁸⁶⁷ As we will see in the following, not all modern scholars who believe that Augustus' principate was a political façade, assert that Augustus pretended to restore the old Roman Republic fully. The interpretations of many modern scholars proposing different

⁸⁶² Most of these were footnoted in Chapter 1. Alföldi referred to the quasi-Republican façade of Augustus (*quasi-republikanische Fassade des Augustus*) (Alföldi 1971: 100) and to Augustus camouflaging his principate in Republican garb (Alföldi 1971:67). Hohl evaluated the principate of Augustus as being "a contrast between theory and practice or experience, between Republican appearance and monarchical actual being (*Gegensatz zwischen theorie und praxis, zwischen republikanischem schein und monarchischem sein*)" Hohl 1947: 107). Willrich claimed: "It remained for modern writers to be deceived by the 'republican façade' which Augustus stuck up on the building of his monarchy" (Willrich 1927: 61). Klingner mentioned: "Augustus, camouflaged behind republican forms" (Klingner 1969: 500). Hanel referred to Augustus "disguising monarchy (*maskierte monarchie*)" and to pure monarchy hidden under Republican features (Hanel 1971: 191 and 197). Christ asserted that Augustus' new political system was heavily burdened "by its contradictions between façade and reality" (Christ 1984: 52).

⁸⁶³ Vittinghoff 1959: 54; Willrich 1927: 61; Trankle 1969: 108; Christ 1978: 470; Welwei, 1996: 479). Bringmann argued that Tacitus declared in *Annals* 1.3.7 that the Republican forms of the regime founded by Augustus were a façade (Bringmann 2002a: 409).

⁸⁶⁴ Gelzer 1923: 147-195.

⁸⁶⁵ Most of these were footnoted in Chapter 1. Brunt described the political system which Augustus set up as including "the quasi-Republican façade with which Augustus chose to veil the completeness of his control." (Brunt 1984: 430. See also 423 and 425). Stockton argued that there was a great gap between the appearance and the reality of the formal powers of Augustus (Stockton 1988: 157). The Italian scholar Garzetti emphasised that the official-parade ground powers, which were based on Roman tradition, were manifestations of "the republican façade" which differed from "the profound reality of autocracy" involved in the principate (Garzetti 1974: 15).

⁸⁶⁶ For example, Seager also asserted that Tacitus was sure that from the inception of the principate, any outward appearance of republicanism in it was a sham (Seager 1972: 261. See also 256-258). Similarly, O'Gorman maintained Tacitus believed that Augustus' claim about his actions in relation to the Roman *res publica* was a façade and was "a euphemism masking the hidden truth" that he had actually reinstituted the monarchy (O'Gorman 2000: 3). See also Syme 1939: 2; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 102; Martin 1981: 227; Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 13-14; Kraus and Woodman 1997: 111.

⁸⁶⁷ Earl 1968: 56; *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 10, 1996: 113; Eder 1990: 108).

versions of the façade theory are more nuanced. For example in a sophisticated analysis, Wallace-Hadrill argued that the government of Augustus manifested elements of both façade and serious republicanism,⁸⁶⁸ and posited that Rome under the rule of Augustus and other emperors had a "twin centre, part republican and part autocratic."⁸⁶⁹ This perspective could be argued by some to be close to some extent to Tacitus' view of the Augustan principate.

The three main Roman writers who represented Augustus engaging in a political façade were Appian, Cassius Dio and Tacitus. Despite Suetonius depicting Tiberius engaging in forms of political façade at the beginning of his reign,⁸⁷⁰ he never portrayed Augustus as doing the same during Augustus' principate. Appian, however, asserted that Augustus "preserved the form (or show or pretence) and false name of the republic (*to men schema tes politeias kai to onoma ephulaxe*)," despite the fact that he was a monarch (*monarchos*) and king (*basileus*), and that all Roman emperors after that time were kings.⁸⁷¹

Scholars who advocate a form of the façade theory, accept the underlying assumption found in both Tacitus' and Cassius Dio's texts that there was a sharp distinction between the era of the *vetus res publica* (or the Greek equivalents in Dio's text) and the period of rule by Roman emperors. We need, however, to clearly distinguish between the generally benign benevolent façade, which Cassius Dio portrayed Augustus instituting, and Augustus' supposedly relatively more corrupt façade which Tacitus maintained Augustus created with the help of Augustus' supporters. Tacitus regarded this façade as mostly ethically and politically bad in its conception and results, whereas in stark contrast, Cassius Dio praised the façade as being necessary for its results. Also, Tacitus did not approve of *regnum* or *dominatio*, while Cassius Dio was extremely critical of all forms of democracy and argued that monarchy was the most practical form of government to live under.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1985b: 250 and 1982: 45 and 48).

⁸⁶⁹ Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 32.

⁸⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 26-27, 29-31 and 33.

⁸⁷¹ Appian, *Preface* 6 and 14.

⁸⁷² Cassius Dio 44.2.1-4.

Cassius Dio mostly provided positive representations of Augustus' political façade. For example, Cassius Dio approvingly depicted Augustus having absolute control (*kurieuo*) of all matters for the whole of his reign, because of his command of the Roman army and public funds,⁸⁷³ despite engaging in much political pretence. Cassius Dio provided an example of the latter when he portrayed Augustus employing the same political names used in the old Roman Republic, to give the false impression that he possessed only powers which had been specifically granted to him by the Roman people and Senate⁸⁷⁴ and in order to enjoy all of the prerogatives of kings except the title.⁸⁷⁵ Cassius Dio also approvingly depicted Augustus as always being superior to the previous Roman dictators in power and honour, but as having refused the office of the dictatorship, after the Roman people tried to force him to accept it, because he believed it would arouse hatred and jealousy towards him.⁸⁷⁶

Tacitus depicted Augustus as conveying the image to his fellow Romans that his new political system was as much like the *vetus res publica* as was possible in a supposed emergency situation.⁸⁷⁷ Related to this, Tacitus claimed that under a cleverly disguised "Republicanised" veneer, Augustus permitted some of the political institutions of the *vetus res publica* to function during Augustus' principate, while he amended other Republican political institutions so much that they became mere outward shells of their previous forms.⁸⁷⁸ Tacitus' pointed comments "the officials carried the old names (*eadem magistratuum vocabula*)" (of the *vetus res publica*)⁸⁷⁹ and "few indeed were left who had seen the *res*

⁸⁷³ Cassius Dio 53.16.1-2.

⁸⁷⁴ Cassius Dio, 53.17.11-18.1.

⁸⁷⁵ Cassius Dio, 53.18.2. Compare to 52.41.1-2

⁸⁷⁶ Cassius Dio 54.1.4-2.1. See also 53.17.1-6

⁸⁷⁷ Because of a lack of clarity of Augustus' representations to the Roman people about these matters, it is very difficult to obtain precise answers to the two questions of to what extent Augustus actually restored traditional structure and powers back to Roman political institutions, and to what extent he claimed he had done this (Mackie 1986: 332).

⁸⁷⁸ Brunt presented the case that after January 27 B.C., Augustus was diligent to observe as many of the outward forms of the old Republican system as was compatible with his intention to retain supreme control of the Roman state, and that Augustus pretended that he had modified rather than overturned the old Roman Republic (Brunt 1988: 7-8).

⁸⁷⁹ In the context of referring to Tacitus' expression *Domi res tranquillae, eadem magistratuum vocabula....qui rem publicam vidisset* in *Annals* 1.3.7, Christ commented: "Even here there is a recollection of the contradiction between the republican façade and the constitutional reality and we are made aware of the fact that the new system was merely accepted and the memory of the republic allowed to fade" (Christ 1978: 467). Furneaux

publica", astutely characterize key aspects of his representation of Augustus' principate.⁸⁸⁰ In the context of referring to Tacitus' expression *Domi res tranquillae, eadem magistratuum vocabula....qui rem publicam vidisset* in *Annals* 1.3.7, Christ rightly interpreted Tacitus as emphasising: "Even here there is a recollection of the contradiction between the republican façade and the constitutional reality and we are made aware of the fact that the new system was merely accepted and the memory of the republic allowed to fade."⁸⁸¹

Tacitus portrayed Augustus as assuming various partly real and partly pretended Republican personae at various times.⁸⁸² These personae usually were a mixture of Augustus functioning according to some real political roles of the *vetus res publica*, for example the consulship,⁸⁸³ *tribunicia ius* and *tribunicia potestas*,⁸⁸⁴ combined with a certain amount of going beyond the previous limits of these roles of the *vetus res publica* to be operating a monarchy and a form of *dominatio*. For example, Tacitus employed the expression *qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit* to accuse Augustus of pretending to be just a *princeps* like other *principes* under the *vetus res publica*, while at the same time, Augustus permanently possessing supreme political and military authority (*imperium*) in actual practice, which was contrary to the foundational principles of the same *vetus res publica*.⁸⁸⁵ Tacitus' statement that Augustus united in his person the functions of the

argued that in *Annals* 1.3, Tacitus employed the expression *rem publicam* to refer to the political constitution of the *Senatus populusque Romanus* which Romans after the Battle of Actium or even during the previous civil wars, had never personally observed (Furneau, Volume 1, 1896: 184 n.5) and Miller asserted that in the same passage, *rem publicam* referred to "the Republic" (Miller 1959: 109). Millar came close to what Tacitus asserted when Millar argued that Augustus established a monarchy by his careful management of constitutional forms, personal behaviour fulfilling Republican traditions and avoidance of the appearance of monarchy and its trappings (Millar 1981b: 33). For more commentary, see also Brunt 1984: 423 and Koestermann 1963: 73.

⁸⁸⁰ Tacitus *Annals* 1.3.

⁸⁸¹ Christ 1978: 467.

⁸⁸² Livy, one of Tacitus' mentors, referred to Appius Claudius, the leader of the oligarchic Decemvirs, as operating by a false persona while he was establishing his form of political despotism (Livy 3.36.1). The Latin word "persona" employed by Livy in this statement referred to mask worn by actors. In essence in his *Annals*, Tacitus accused Augustus of wearing a political mask like an actor.

⁸⁸³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁸⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2 and 3.56.

⁸⁸⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1. Commenting on Tacitus' accusation in *Annals* 1.1, Klingner perceptively argued: "Princeps is a genteel term behind which hides *imperium*, rule by decree. So that the reader might be in no doubt as to the meaning of the word, Tacitus chooses the phrase *sub imperium*....against which there is no appeal." (Klingner 1969: 500). Grenade argued that in *Annals* 1.1, Tacitus brought together the words *princeps* and *imperium* with a touch of satire, which was directed at the *Res Gestae*, which uplifted Augustus' supreme status but described it from the perspective of *auctoritas*, as though there was no underlying *imperium* (Grenade 1961: 188).

Senate, magistracy and the legislature⁸⁸⁶ was an allegation that Augustus was an absolute monarch. Also by creating the image of Augustus having "other secrets of despotism (*alia dominatio arcana*),"⁸⁸⁷ Tacitus highlighted his belief that Augustus engaged in numerous secretive forms of political deceit to disguise his despotic rule.

In *Annals* 1.2.1, Tacitus probably employed the expression *consulem se ferens* to depict that Augustus engaged in a façade by disguising some aspects of the realities of his political power.⁸⁸⁸ The present participle *ferens* has a number of possible meanings: exhibiting, displaying, alleging, claiming, calling or naming. Some of these meanings were suitable to suggest that Augustus was only outwardly displaying these qualities or was calling himself these things contrary to the reality. These meanings fit the immediate literary context considering that just after this, Tacitus depicted Augustus as uniting "in his person the functions (*munia*) of the Senate, the magistracy and the legislature."⁸⁸⁹ This latter expression focused Tacitus' portrayal on what he considered were realities of Augustus' absolute powers rather than on what Tacitus regarded as the often ambiguous functions which Augustus ascribed to himself, which partly disguised his real political and military powers. Tacitus was obviously aware that during the *vetus res publica*, no magistrate was permitted to exercise a combination of tribunician power consecutively for 37 years, *imperium* over approximately half the provinces in the Roman Empire, and greater *imperium* than all of the proconsuls ruling the remaining public provinces, like Augustus did.⁸⁹⁰ Eck astutely noted that Tacitus

10, 104 and 385). See also Koestermann 1963: 58. Furneaux wrongly interpreted *imperium* to mean just military command (Furneaux, Volume 1, 1896: 180).

⁸⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.2.

⁸⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.59.

⁸⁸⁸ In *Annals* 1.2.1, Tacitus wrote: "...he laid aside the title of triumvir and displayed himself as consul and as content with tribunician authority for looking after the commons (*posito triumviri nomine, consulem se ferens et ad tuendam plebem tribunicio iure contentum*)." For debates about the meaning of this passage, see Mommsen 1887-1888, 2: 870-873; Haverfield, 1912: 195-197; Syme 1946: 157; Miller 1959: 102-103; Koestermann 1963: 63; Klingner 1969: 502-503; Goodyear 1972, Volume 1: 102.

⁸⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.1. See Goodyear, Volume 1, 1972, 103.

⁸⁹⁰ The scholarship on these matters is plentiful. For example, Ober argued that Augustus had mainly ruled through the exercising of his *auctoritas* (Ober 1982: 326). Eder asserted that the core of Augustus principate was his *tribunicia potestas* (Eder 2005: 26), but Brunt and Moore argued that *tribunicia potestas* was not the real foundation of Augustus' control (Brunt and Moore 1967: 47). See also Boak 1918: 24; Syme 1958, Volume 1: 409; Kunkel 1961: 364; Hammond 1968: 79-84; Kolbe 1969: 89-95; Scullard 1982: 214.

regarded Augustus' titles, honours and distinctions as superficial and contrary to the actual real substance of Augustus' life.⁸⁹¹

Tacitus represented Augustus' supporters as attempting to rebut the accusation that his new political system was a form of despotism or monarchy (*regnum*) or a permanent manifestation of dictatorship (*dictatura*).⁸⁹² Likewise in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus depicted himself refusing any office or title which would suggest that he was a monarch or despot.⁸⁹³ Similarly, Suetonius portrayed Augustus being so concerned about not having the public image as Supreme Master that he would not allow anyone, including his children or grandchildren, to call him *dominus*, meaning master or supreme ruler, either jokingly or seriously.⁸⁹⁴ Tacitus, however, represented Augustus as instituting a despotic political system (*dominatio*)⁸⁹⁵ and a new form of monarchy,⁸⁹⁶ which came in a disguised mixture of real and counterfeit features of the old Roman *res publica*. Despite being a strong critic of Tacitus⁸⁹⁷ and not taking seriously Tacitus' evidence about Augustus engaging in much political pretence and façade, even Galinsky recognized that one of the main contradictions of the Augustan era was "the coexistence of republican and monarchic forms of government" which "were accentuated by the claims of a virtual monarch to have saved the Republic."⁸⁹⁸

Challenging façade theories about the Augustan principate, Crook asserted that Augustus merely expressed "his overwhelming predominance in encouragingly familiar concepts--sovereignty vested in the Senate and people, and no political structure incompatible with *mos maiorum*."⁸⁹⁹ Note, however, that the limited available sources suggest that except in the case of rare temporary dictatorships in times of emergency, since approximately the late

⁸⁹¹ Eck 1998: 3.

⁸⁹² Tacitus *Annals* 1.9.

⁸⁹³ See also Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 52 and Cassius Dio 53.17.2-5. Refer to Wallace-Hadrill and Beranger for commentary on these acts of refusal (*recusatio*) (Wallace-Hadrill 1982a: 36 and Beranger 1953: 137 ff).

⁸⁹⁴ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 53.1-2.

⁸⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3, 1.10 (assuming that those Romans who had this view were representative of Tacitus' own view) and 2.59.

⁸⁹⁶ When referring to Augustus' family, Tacitus described it as the royal or reigning household (*domo regnatrice*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4).

⁸⁹⁷ Galinsky 1996: 54 and 78-79.

⁸⁹⁸ Galinsky 1996: 370.

⁸⁹⁹ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 10, 1996: 79.

500s B.C. the *mos maiorum* of the Romans had rejected all political systems which had a permanent one-man supreme ruler as the final political authority in Rome. This is partly evident in Tacitus' negative appraisals of the attempts of Marius, Cinna, Sulla, Pompey and Julius Caesar to institute permanent forms of one-man absolute rule in Rome.⁹⁰⁰ Augustus insisted that he would not accept any power contrary to the traditions of his Roman ancestors,⁹⁰¹ but monarchy had been contrary to Roman traditions for centuries.

A number of scholars, who did not support façade theories of the Augustan principate, believed that his principate was republican to some degree, without necessarily being a real full restoration of the old Roman Republic.⁹⁰² For example, Levick asserted that it is erroneous to believe that Augustus instituted a façade of republican government with despotism concealed behind it. She postulated that a more accurate view was that during the Augustan era, the political machinery of the old Roman Republic operated more or less as it had before during the Republican era but "Augustus manipulated the levers."⁹⁰³ Tacitus, however, insisted that Augustus instituted an actual despotism or *dominatio*, and not just to some limited manipulating of the political levers.

As noted previously, Tacitus also satirically critiqued Augustus' resignation of his virtually absolute powers as a triumvir in 28/27 B.C., emphasizing that after Augustus felt that his power was secure, he surrendered his powers as a triumvir and presented the Romans with laws under a *princeps*, but as a result, the chains which were already on the Roman people were tightened even further.⁹⁰⁴ Tacitus portrayed this very negative image of Augustus' principate in stark contrast to many of the more positive depictions of his principate

⁹⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 2.38. See Ash 2007: 181-182.

⁹⁰¹ *Res Gestae* 6.

⁹⁰² For example, Kunkel insisted that it is wrong to interpret Augustus' principate as a monarchical office built into the Republican constitution. Kunkel instead asserted that the Republican constitution provided Augustus with particular tools to exercise power, with Augustus locating the foundation and justification of these tools in other non-constitutional realms of Roman life (Kunkel 1961: 360-361).

⁹⁰³ Levick 2010: 71.

⁹⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.28. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1982b: 27, Woodman and Martin 1996: 259 and Southern 2001: 110. See Bleicken 1990: 89 for his comparison of Octavian's position in the period of the triumvirate compared with his political status after the changes which supposedly occurred in January 27 B.C. and for the argument that Augustus' designated possession of being *sacrosanctus* resulted in him having a superior political function to his colleagues in the consulate even after 27 B.C.

found in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. To Tacitus, the reality was that Augustus always possessed absolute despotic political and military power both prior to and after the time of him surrendering his powers as a triumvir up until the time of his death, because as Tacitus emphasised, after Augustus' victory in 31 B.C. at the Battle of Actium, "everyone looked to the orders of the *princeps*."⁹⁰⁵

This paragraph contains some comments which are similar to some of those in Chapter 2, but it is necessary to reiterate these points because of their relevance to the topic of façade. Agreeing with comments by the *prudentes* in *Annals* 1.10, Tacitus accused Augustus in *Annals* 1.3 and 2.59 of instituting a form of political *dominatio* and in *Annals* 1.1-4 and 3.56 Tacitus alleged that Augustus engaged in numerous other acts of pretence or deception to disguise his real political intentions. Tacitus also made other comments elsewhere which have parallels in *Annals* 1.10. In *Annals* 1.10, the Roman opponents of Augustus' rule accused Augustus of engaging in pretence far more extensively than any façade limited to just constitutional matters. This truth can be seen in the following detailed evidence: The *prudentes* insisted that Augustus had used his filial duty (*pietatem parentem*) to Julius Caesar and the critical problems of the *res publica* as merely a cloak or excuse (*obtentus*) to veil his real intentions and that it was from his greedy lust for being the master (or acting as a despot) (*cupidine dominandi*) that he bribed Julius Caesar's veterans, corrupted or seduced to dishonest conduct the legions of a consul (*corruptas consulis legions*), illegally levied a private army, pretended or produced a fraudulent imitation of friendship towards the Pompeian side (*simulatam Pompeianarum gratiam partium*), usurped or seized possession of the symbol and authority of a praetor by a decree of the Senate (*decreto partrum fascis et ius praetoris invaserit*), possibly deceitfully instigated the murders of two Roman consuls, cunningly took the armies of these two consuls for his own purposes, extorted the consulate from an unwilling Senate (*extortum invito senatu consulatum*), insidiously turned against the *res publica* the armies which the Senate gave him to quell the activities of Mark Antony,

⁹⁰⁵ *omnes...iussa principis aspectare* (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.4).

engaged in proscriptions or murders of Roman citizens, betrayed Sextus Pompey by making a pretended peace treaty (*imagine pacis*) with him at Misenum in 39 B.C. and deceptively betrayed Lepidus by a shadow of a friendship (*specie amicitiae deceptos*). The *prudentes* also criticised Augustus for surreptitiously encouraging the religious veneration of his own self, the latter being described as actually causing a diminution of the honouring of the Roman gods. To varying degrees, all of these allegations and his employment of words such as *obtentus*, *corruptas*, *simulatam*, *invaserit*, *extortum*, *imagine pacis* and *specie amicitiae deceptos* all reinforce one of the foundational characteristics of Tacitus' evaluations of Augustus' political career: Augustus engaged in an all-encompassing deceitful façade in relation to both constitutional and non-constitutional matters which coloured many of Augustus' public and private dealings with other Romans.

As recorded in *Annals* 1.1 and *Histories* 1.1, one of Tacitus' prime intentions was to expose what he believed were the realities behind the reigns of Augustus and other emperors in the first century A.D. Tacitus aimed to expose what he regarded as the ambiguities, contradictions, gaps and hypocrisies in the public images of Augustus. Tacitus' portrayal of Augustus was mostly far more negative, critical and disapproving than the depictions provided in the *Res Gestae*, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided unique comparisons and contrasts in relation to the portrayals of especially five Roman writers about Augustus' political career. These writers were Tacitus, Augustus, Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. Out of these five authors, Augustus in his *Res Gestae* provided the most positive depictions of his political career, with Velleius' discourses on Augustus ranking not far behind. Despite sometimes criticising Augustus' attitudes and behaviour in Augustus' early political career, Suetonius mostly provided positive portrayals of Augustus' later political career. Also despite negatively representing some characteristics of Augustus' political behaviour in 44 B.C. and as one of the triumvirs, Cassius Dio depicted Augustus as a role model for other emperors. Of these five Roman writers, Tacitus' portrayals of Augustus' political career were mostly the most negative, critical and sceptical.

In his *Annals*, Tacitus asserted that there were a number of different interpretations of Augustus' political career among Romans. This thesis provided evidence that Tacitus' own perspectives on Augustus' political career were provided partly or wholly in *Annals* 1.10 through the personae of the *prudentes*, throughout some other parts of his *Annals* and through *Agricola* 3.1, but not through *Annals* 1.9. Tacitus portrayed Augustus as creating a new form of despotism and monarchy, which was founded on absolute political and military power, and which deprived the Roman people and Senate from experiencing any significant degree of *libertas*.

Tacitus' representations of Augustus' principate were contrary to numerous modern scholarly interpretations which relied more heavily on one or more of Augustus' *Res Gestae* or the texts of Velleius, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, and which argued that the Roman *vetus res publica* continued to operate during Augustus' principate or Augustus actually restored or pretended to restore the *vetus res publica* during Augustus' principate. Tacitus depicted Augustus' political career as founded significantly on façade, pretence, deception, ambiguity

and contradiction. Tacitus' portrayal of Augustus' principate as a very negative type of façade is in contrast to Cassius Dio's depiction of Augustus' political system as a benign benevolent façade.

Considering Tacitus' depiction of Augustus' political career was exceedingly more negative, disapproving and sceptical than these other four Roman writers, it is not surprising that in following centuries right up until the present time, Tacitus' texts, especially his *Annals*, have been favoured works among many of those European scholars, who opposed all forms of despotism, autocracy, absolute monarchy, permanent dictatorship and political façade.

Appendix 1: Tacitus' viewpoints about the *res publica* were partly founded on Cicero's perspectives

Earlier in Chapter 5, it has been argued that some of Tacitus' perspectives on the Roman *res publica*, which have particular relevance to this thesis, have some of their foundations in Cicero's discussions of the same matters. This Appendix will provide an analysis of some of Cicero's relevant comments about the Roman *res publica*.

In his *De Re Publica*, Cicero employed the personae of Scipio Aemilianus and Laelius, two other early Romans whom Cicero regarded highly, as mouthpieces for many of Cicero's own views.⁹⁰⁶ Writing at the time of the power struggles between Julius Caesar and Pompey in the late 50s B.C., Cicero ascribed to Scipio the argument, accompanied by Laelius' agreement, that whenever a tyrant (*tyrannus*) was ruling Rome, it was incorrect to say that the citizens had a bad form of the *res publica*, when the actual truth was that they really had no *res publica* at all (*discendum est plane nullam esse rem publicam*).⁹⁰⁷ Referring to when the Second Triumvirate ruled in Rome, Cicero said, "But when the republic...was no more (*Cum autem res publica... nulla esset omnino*)."⁹⁰⁸ Cicero also maintained that at the time of the writing of his *De Officiis* in about 43 B.C., "certainly we have lost the *res publica* completely (*rem vero publicam penitus amisimus*)."⁹⁰⁹ Cicero also argued that during the civil war between the armies of Pompey and Julius Caesar, the *res publica* was lost, and because of the wounds done and also because of the cures (*medicamenta*) prepared for it.⁹¹⁰ In 60 B.C., Cicero warned of the imminent danger of the *res publica* being dismissed (or abandoned) (*amissa*).⁹¹¹ In March 49 BC, Cicero asserted that the Roman people would never enjoy a *res publica* while both or one of Pompey and Julius Caesar were alive.⁹¹² In September 44 B.C.,

⁹⁰⁶ For valuable background to Cicero's *De Re Publica*, see Lintott 2008: 232-241; Zetzel 1995: 1-35.

⁹⁰⁷ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 31.43 and 32.44.

⁹⁰⁸ Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.1.3.

⁹⁰⁹ Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.8.29.

⁹¹⁰ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 9.5.

⁹¹¹ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 1.18.

⁹¹² Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 9.7.

Cicero wrote to Cassius, referring to his hope that liberty and the *res publica* would be restored (*libertatem et rem publicam recipere*).⁹¹³ In October 44 B.C. months after Brutus and Cassius had fled from Rome, Cicero referred to the hope of in future the *res publica* being restored (*recuperata*).⁹¹⁴ Cicero also argued that it was possible for the Romans to have a *res publica* which was so crushed by the power of the Roman army that neither the Senate nor the people of Rome had any power and there was no semblance or vestige of a constitution (*civitas*).⁹¹⁵ Cicero contrasted the previous many years when the Roman republic stood (*stante re publica*) with the brief time since its overthrow by the Second Triumvirate.⁹¹⁶ In this context, he employed the perfect passive participle *eversa*, meaning having been overthrown or ruined or fallen violently, to refer to what he believed was the recent violent fall of the *vetus res publica*.

In addition, Cicero argued that in 43 B.C. when he wrote his *De Officiis*, the Romans did not have any type of *res publica*.⁹¹⁷ Therefore, Cicero believed that the triumvirate of Mark Antony, Augustus Caesar and Lepidus had not restored any real form of the *vetus res publica*. When referring to the *res publica*, Cicero alleged that Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus did not reform the Roman Constitution but actually overthrew it: "And how I wish that...it had not fallen into the power of humans (who) desired not so much to modify (or reform) as to overthrow the Constitution (*Atque utinam...non tam commutandarum quam evertendarum rerum cupidos incidisset*)".⁹¹⁸ Cicero's statement opposes Augustus' later claim that the aim of the Second Triumvirate was the re-establishment of the Constitution⁹¹⁹ and Suetonius' similar assertion *Triumviratum rei publicae constituendae*.⁹²⁰ Lintott argued that in

⁹¹³ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 12.2.1.

⁹¹⁴ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 15.13.

⁹¹⁵ Cicero, *Epistulae Ad Familiares* 10.1.1.

⁹¹⁶ Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.1.4.

⁹¹⁷ Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.12.35.

⁹¹⁸ Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.1.3.

⁹¹⁹ *Res Gestae* 7.

⁹²⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 27.1.

De Re Publica, Cicero claimed that the ideal political constitution was the traditional Roman *res publica*.⁹²¹

Cicero attributed to Scipio and Laelius the view that if the government was just controlled by one political faction, the *res publica* did not actually exist.⁹²² They also argued that during the rule of the Decemvirs in Rome, when *libertas* lost all of its legal foundations and when there was no opportunity for appeal (*provocatio*) to Assemblies of the Roman People against any of the decisions of the Decemvirs, the *res populi* did not exist.⁹²³ Cicero wrote approvingly of the early Roman Kings except Tarquinius Superbus,⁹²⁴ referred to Romulus establishing two foundations of the *res publica*,⁹²⁵ and mentioned the Roman *res publica* existing in the reigns of Kings Numa and Servius Tullius.⁹²⁶ Cicero referred to Servius Tullius as a most excellent king,⁹²⁷ contrasted the good form of *res publica* existing in the reign of King Servius Tullius with the worst possible form of *res publica* existing in the reign of King Tarquinius Superbus, but regarded some of the political foundations laid by the early Roman kings as merely stages in the progression of the Roman *res publica* towards perfection.⁹²⁸ Sallust also demonstrated that the phrase *res publica* can even refer to the Roman monarchy.⁹²⁹ Cicero referred to the time that the Roman state was ruled by Julius Caesar as being "when the *res publica* was in the power of one (*cum esset in unius potestate res publica*)".⁹³⁰ Despite this and despite insisting that a *res publica* can be in the form of a monarchy, aristocracy or democracy, Cicero maintained that no State which was totally under the control of a tyrant (*tyrannus*) or a political faction (*factio*), under the supreme rule of the multitude (*multitudinis dominatus*) of citizens or under the rule of the Decemvirate could truly

⁹²¹ Lintott 2008: 437.

⁹²² Cicero, *De Re Publica* 32.44.

⁹²³ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 32.44.

⁹²⁴ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.7.12-2.31.53.

⁹²⁵ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.10.17.

⁹²⁶ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.16.30, 2.21.37 and 2.22.39.

⁹²⁷ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.25.45.

⁹²⁸ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 2.11.22, 2.18.33 and 2.21.37

⁹²⁹ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 6.6 and 7. See also Beranger 1953: 219 and Salmon 1956: 457.

⁹³⁰ Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.2.6.

be called a *res publica*.⁹³¹ Relevant to this discussion of the *res publica*, note in April 44 B.C., a month after Julius Caesar's assassination, Cicero questioned whether those who were operating as consuls and other magistrates in Rome at the time were really Roman magistrates.⁹³² Tacitus made a similar comment about what occurred in relation to the Roman magistrates after Augustus Caesar became *princeps*.⁹³³

Despite not explicitly admitting his partial reliance on some of Cicero's viewpoints about the concept of the Roman *res publica*, a comparison between Cicero's comments in this Appendix and Tacitus' analyses of the same or similar matters, as depicted in my previous chapters, reveal many similarities between the attitudes of these two Roman leaders. A suitable topic for future research would be a more in-depth comparative analysis between the views of Cicero and Tacitus to the Roman *res publica* and to other associated political issues.

⁹³¹ Cicero, *De Re Publica* 3.31.43, 3.32.44 and 3.33.45.

⁹³² Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 14.6.

⁹³³ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3.

Appendix 2: The Augustan poets Virgil and Horace

Both Bomer and Fishwick argued that the writings of poets frequently appear to provide transparent representations of popular attitudes and behaviours in a particular society.⁹³⁴ Wallace-Hadrill was right to some degree when he argued that the Augustan poets provided significant evidence for the mood of Augustus' reign,⁹³⁵ but Millar cautioned that Augustan literature referring to Augustus' principate is ambivalent and is "a fruitful, if treacherous, field the study."⁹³⁶ Related to this, note that it is also extremely difficult to determine to what degree Horace's praises of Augustus were genuine and whether Horace also included implicit criticisms of some aspects of Augustus' political behaviours.⁹³⁷ Also, there has been ongoing largely unresolved scholarly debate about the question of whether Virgil's poems are strongly supportive of Augustus or whether they provide some type of explicit and/or implicit critique of his principate.⁹³⁸ Volk maintained that traditionally scholars regarded Virgil as having a positive and optimistic attitude towards Augustus, but beginning in the 1960s, the Harvard School or "two voices" pessimistic style of criticism of the *Aeneid* produced a significant paradigm shift among many Virgilian scholars, resulting in a focus on examining nuances of Virgil's optimism and pessimism and frequently concluded that Virgil's texts manifested "a deep and deliberate ambiguity."⁹³⁹ Because of word limits, the present

⁹³⁴ Bomer 1951: 33 and Fishwick 1991: 36.

⁹³⁵ Wallace-Hadrill 1985a: 180. For discussion of the debate about the relationships between Augustus and Maecenas with Horace, Virgil and Ovid, see Syme's chapter "The Organisation of Opinion" in his *Roman Revolution* 460-461; Williams 1968: 102; Yavetz in Raaflaub and Toher: 39; Woodman and West 1984: 195; Wallace-Hadrill 1986: 67; Wallace-Hadrill 1989a: 160; Horsfall 1981: 5; Konstan 1995: 328-342; Fantham 1999: 79. Compare to Hubbard, 1974, 99.

⁹³⁶ Millar 2002: 314.

⁹³⁷ Hardison Jr and Golden 1995: Preface ix and 25.

⁹³⁸ For example, see Stahl, 1998, Preface xiii; Harrison's Chapter 1 "Some Views of the Aeneid in the Twentieth Century" in Harrison 1990: 1-20; Nethercut's chapter "American Scholarship on Vergil in the Twentieth Century" in Bernard 1986: 303-327. Adler referred to the intense long-standing controversy about whether Virgil's *Aeneid* was pro-Augustus or anti-Augustus (Adler 2003: Introduction ix).

⁹³⁹ Volk 2008: 4-5. Similarly, in his review of the reception of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the 20th Century, Harrison discussed some of the major German and English scholars who interpreted the *Aeneid* as a positive representation of Augustus' principate, for example, the German scholars Richard Heinze, Eduard Norden, V. Poschl, Karl Buchner, Friedrich Klingner and G. Binder, the American/British scholar T.S. Eliot and the British academic Philip Hardie (Harrison 1990: 1-4, 6, 8 and 18). Harrison also discussed the opposing symbolic approach of the so-called Harvard School of Virgilian Critics, who argued that because of ambiguity, the *Aeneid* provided "a pessimistic view alongside the surface glory of Aeneas and Rome, a public voice of triumph, and a private voice of regret" (Harrison 1990: 5). Harrison referred to the scholars Adam Parry, Wendell Clausen,

thesis will not contrast Tacitus' representations of Augustus' political career to the very complex and nuanced depictions of the same found in Virgil's, Horace's and other Augustan poets' texts.

Michael Putnam, Kenneth Quinn and R.O.A.M. Lyne as examples of the pessimistic approach (Harrison 1990: 5-6, 9 and 19). Some scholars argue that the Augustan poets were not so extreme in their flattery of Augustus that they would never question anything about his reign (Doblhofer 1981: 1922-1986; Little 1982: 254-370; Phillips 1983: 780-817; Ahl 1984: 40-110.).

Appendix 3: Seneca the Younger's *De Clementia* and the *Octavia*

It is an error to believe that Tacitus was the first extant Roman author explicitly to criticise aspects of Augustus' political career. Seneca's *De Clementia* also contained significant clear criticisms of Augustus' political career, but was written prior to the era in which Tacitus' texts were composed. The *Octavia* was probably written prior to the dates on which Tacitus authored his texts and it also provided serious explicit criticisms of Augustus' political behaviours.

After asserting in *De Clementia* 1.11.1-2 that Augustus was restrained (*moderatus*) and merciful (*clemens*) in later years, Seneca accused Augustus of being partly responsible for the supposed massacre of captives at Perusia at 41-40 B.C., for the deaths of many Romans at the battle against the forces of Sextus Pompey in 36 B.C. and at the Battle of Actium 31 B.C. and for the cruel proscriptions by the Second Triumvirate. Despite making these strong criticisms, Seneca stated that he believed that Augustus was a good *princeps*, deserved the name of father (*parens*) and was a god (*deus*).⁹⁴⁰ Seneca attempted to justify these stark differences in Augustus' behaviour, by saying that as a youth, Augustus was hot-headed, flared up with rage and engaged in many behaviours which he later looked back upon with regret.⁹⁴¹ In contrast, however, Tacitus did not attempt to justify Augustus' earlier behaviours. Instead in *Annals* 1.9, Tacitus employed the comments of assumed supporters of Augustus to provide similar justifications for Augustus' earlier questionable behaviours, while at the same time in *Annals* 1.1-3 and 10, Tacitus undermined these attempted justifications. Generally speaking, Tacitus represented the attitudes and behaviours of Seneca the Younger

⁹⁴⁰ Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.10.3.

⁹⁴¹ Seneca the Younger, *De Clementia* 1.11.1.

favourably,⁹⁴² but it is certain that Tacitus would have opposed Seneca's support of monarchy in *De Clementia* 1.11.4-1.12.1.

The Roman historical drama *Octavia* of unknown authorship possesses some similar characteristics to Tacitus' *Annals* 1.9-10, despite also having some significant differences. One of the similarities is that *Octavia* provided juxtaposed representations of two different opinions about Augustus. The first of these was a favourable representation of Augustus by a persona of Seneca the Younger. The second was a highly critical portrayal of Augustus by a persona of the Emperor Nero. Nero negatively depicted Augustus putting to death many Romans by the proscriptions, and for being at least one of the main causes of the slaughter of many Romans at the Battle of Philippi, at the battle against the forces of Sextus Pompey and during the civil war against the forces of Mark Antony.⁹⁴³ Considering that *Octavia* was a historical drama rather than a historical narrative, it is necessary to avoid attempting to make absolute statements about whether its two representations of Augustus were actual expressions of the real opinions of Seneca the Younger and the Emperor Nero about Augustus. *Octavia*, however, is useful as evidence of a persona of a Roman, prior to Tacitus' era, expressing a negative view about significant aspects of Augustus' political career.

⁹⁴² Tacitus, *Annals* 14.52, 15.63 and 15.65. Note, however, that on one occasion, Tacitus criticized Seneca strongly (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.11). In his text *De Clementia*, Seneca the Younger engaged in much sycophantic flattery towards the Emperor Nero, the ruler who would ultimately pressure Seneca into committing suicide. In his *Annals*, Tacitus criticized Romans who engaged in sycophancy towards emperors (*Annals* 1.1 and 1.7). Tacitus also sarcastically noted that sycophancy by Roman people resulted in the Emperor Nero being victor over the national servility (*ac publici servitii victor*) (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.13). Tacitus respected Seneca and probably drew off Seneca's criticisms of Augustus' attitudes and behaviours, but did not imitate Seneca's praises of Augustus. For discussion of Seneca the Younger in Tacitus' *Annals*, see Brinkmann 2002; Dyson 1970: 71-83; Henry and Walker 1963: 98-110.

⁹⁴³ *Octavia* 504-524.

Abbreviations

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1963-)

FGH *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*

Inscr. Dessau *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Dessau, Berlin, 1892-1916)

ILS *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Dessau, Berlin, 1892-1916)

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Additional secondary sources about various physical images of Augustus

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