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# The Return of the King?

Tacitus on the Principate of Augustus

In memoriam J. A. CROOK

**ABSTRACT:** Tacitus opens the *Annals* with a succinct sketch of the constitutional history of Rome from the kings to Augustus (1.1.1). The common interpretation holds that Tacitus adopts a cyclical view of this history which identifies the supremacy of Augustus with kingship, and chooses his vocabulary of power primarily with stylistic variation in mind. The terms employed, *princeps* and *imperium*, are also held to announce a major interpretative preoccupation of the *Annals*, the gap between the ‘appearance’ and the ‘reality’ of power under the principate. This essay will demonstrate that these interpretations of the structure and language of the preface are misleading. Tacitus offers a sequential view of Roman constitutional history that casts Augustus as a pivot between the tradition stretching back to the foundation of the city and a new phase which he identifies in its own terms, not as a reversion to kingship. The introduction of the motif of ‘appearance v. reality’ comes not with the language of *princeps* and *imperium*, but at 1.2.1. An appendix analyses the use of the term *principatus* in Velleius Paterculus and Tacitus. *Keywords:* Tacitus, Augustus, *princeps*, *Imperium*, *principatus*

## I

Tacitus commences the preface to the *Annals* with a survey of the constitutional history of Rome from the foundation of the city to the dispensation established by Augustus (1.1.1):

*urbem Romam a principio reges habuere; libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit. dictaturae ad tempus sumebantur; neque decemviralis potestas ultra biennium neque tribunorum militum consulare ius diu ualuit. non Cinnae, non Sullae longa dominatio; et Pompei Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem, Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere, qui cuncta discordiis ciuilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit.*

The city of Rome was held by kings from the beginning; liberty and the consulate were established by L. Brutus. Dictatorships were taken up as necessary;<sup>1</sup> neither was the decemviral power exercised for more than two years, nor the consular authority of the tribunes of the soldiers

1 On *ad tempus* see GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc.: ‘for (the needs of) the occasion’; *OLD tempus* 10c.

for long. The despotism of neither Cinna nor Sulla was enduring; and the might of Pompey and Crassus passed quickly into the hands of Caesar;<sup>2</sup> the arms of Lepidus and Antony to Augustus, who took all things, worn out by civil discord, under his command with the name *princeps*.

Tacitus is customarily regarded as presenting this history as a cycle.<sup>3</sup> For R. SYME,

the victory of Augustus Caesar signified that a cycle ended in the long annals of Rome. In the beginning the Kings, and then the Free State, which yielded to the age of dynasts; and the last of the dynasts brought in the monarchy again. The formulation was easy and inescapable. Tacitus adopts it in the exordium of the *Annales*, setting down in brief phrases the vicissitudes of power from the Kings to the Principate.<sup>4</sup>

SYME read into the preface a cyclical view of Roman constitutional history which equated the principate of Augustus with the kingship of the Regal period. This act of interpretation has become a statement of fact. M. M. SAGE, for example, asserts that 'the Principate is clearly presented [by Tacitus] as the issue of the dynastic struggles of the civil war and at the same time a completion of a constitutional circle which links the original monarchy of the kings to the new monarchy of Augustus.' For J. GEISTHARDT and I. GILDENHARD, there is simply 'no doubt that the circumstances that applied under the kings have returned with the Augustan usurpation. The circle of history is closed ...'<sup>5</sup>

In fact this 'easy and inescapable' formulation is derived from Dio, not from Tacitus. Dio interpreted the supremacy of Augustus as a reversion to monarchy (52.1.1):

ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τε τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ ταῖς τε δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ εἴκοσι καὶ ἑπτακοσίοις ἔτεσι, καὶ ἔπραξαν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἔπαθον: ἐκ δὲ τούτου μοναρχεῖσθαι αὐθις ἀκριβῶς ἤρξαντο, καίτοι τοῦ Καίσαρος βουλευσαμένου τὰ τε ὄπλα καταθέσθαι καὶ τὰ πράγματα τῇ τε γερουσίᾳ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ ἐπιτρέψαι.

The Romans accomplished and endured these things under kingship, democracy, and the rule of the dynasts for seven hundred and twenty-five years: then they went back precisely to monarchy, although Caesar deliberated on whether to lay down his arms and hand over affairs to the senate and the people.

For Dio, Rome passed through three constitutional stages – kingship, the Republic (to which he refers with the term *democratia*), and the rule of dynasts<sup>6</sup> – before returning in

2 On *cessere* in see TLL III 731.38–732.20; GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc.; OLD 15.

3 Cf. *Ann.* 3.55.5, where Tacitus floats the possibility that *mores* are subject to a cycle. See WOODMAN and MARTIN (1996) ad loc.; GOODYEAR (1970) = (1992) 143–48.

4 SYME (1958) 364, cf. 347 on *Tac. Ann.* 1.2 (the 'origins of monarchy at Rome'). SYME's use of the term 'Principate' belies the notion of a cycle, but on his reading 'names did not matter much', as he says in the *Roman Revolution* (1939: 516) following a restatement of *Ann.* 1.9.5 that 'the State was organized under a principate – no dictatorship or monarchy'.

5 SAGE (1991) 3405; GEISTHARDT and GILDENHARD (2019) 272. Cf. also LEO (1896) 191–2 = (1960) 300; WIMMEL (1961) 47; GOODYEAR (1970) 104 = (1992) 147; WITTE (1963) 12–13; LEEMAN (1973) 194; RAAFLAUB (2008) 261; RAAFLAUB and TOHER (1990b) xi; LEVENE (2010) 298.

6 Here *dynasteiai* most likely refers particularly to the Second Triumvirate: see RICH (forthcoming).

the fourth to a monarchy under Augustus, whom he generally represents as single-mindedly pursuing sole power from the beginning of his career.<sup>7</sup>

Tacitus' approach is quite different. He sketches the constitutional history of Rome as the story of the concentration of power during three distinct phases, the kings, the Republic, and the supremacy of Augustus. Tacitus recognises that total control came to be exercised by one man, but he does not deploy the language of Roman kingship to characterise the result: he describes Augustus' status with the contemporary designation of *princeps* and his total power with the evocative term *imperium*.<sup>8</sup> When he later comes to characterise the rule of Augustus, he reaches for the concept of *dominatio*, power beyond formal limits, akin, in his usage, to the power wielded by eastern and western rulers and tribes and, at Rome, by the likes of Cinna and Sulla. In that context (not, as usually assumed, in the preface), he introduces his abiding interest in exposing the gap between the expression and the reality of power. Formal offices and powers are one expression of a supremacy that transcended traditional constitutional structures. The structure and language of the preface to the *Annals* accord that supremacy a distinct identity: not a reversion to kingship, but a new dispensation emerging and departing from the two earlier stages of Rome's constitutional history. It was a new dawn of *pax et princeps*, as Tacitus will later call it in language redolent of the preface (*Ann.* 3.28.2).

## II

Tacitus' interest in the preface lies in the concentration of supreme power in the state during three constitutional phases, the regal period, the Republic, and the dispensation established by Augustus. In this scheme, Augustus marks the end of the Republican era that witnessed his rise to power and the beginning of a new phase: he is a pivot in the constitutional history of Rome.<sup>9</sup> As *auctor* of a new phase, Augustus recalls, in Tac-

7 In Dio's account, the history of the late Republic is dominated by individuals seeking supreme power, not least the young Augustus: see e.g. 46.34.4, 47.39.2, 50.1.1; RICH (1989) 92–4. Dio's assertion (47.18.1) that each of the Triumvirs was striving for sole power finds expression in the contemporary Cornelius Nepos (cf. MILLAR [1973] 65 = [2002] 267): *Att. 20.5 cum se uterque* (sc. *Caesar atque Antonius*) *principem non solum urbis Romae, sed orbis terrarum esse cuperet* ('since each desired for himself to be *princeps* not only of Rome but of the world'); note also Tac. *Hist.* 1.50.3, 2.38.1.

8 EDER ([1990] 81 n. 57; cf. [2005] 15) grasped that Tacitus does not present the constitutional history of Rome in neat cyclical terms: 'In Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.1) the circle from the *reges* to the *princeps* does not close ... insofar as the conceptual difference continues to exist'. Cf. also BORGO (1986) 77.

9 This linear trajectory is comparable to that Tacitus expresses through Otho at *Hist.* 1.84.4, where the distinction between *rex* and *princeps* is also clear (cf. *RE* XII 2111 [L. WICKERT]): *hunc auspiciato a parente et conditore urbis nostrae institutum et a regibus usque ad principes continuum et immortalem, sicut a maioribus accepimus, sic posteris tradamus*, 'just as we have received this [senate], established by our auspicious father and founder of our city and enduring immortally from the *reges* to the *princeps*, so let us hand it down to posterity'.

itus' scheme, the *auctor* of the Republic, L. Brutus, as much as he does the *reges* of early Rome.<sup>10</sup>

Tacitus variously marks the theme of constitutional history and his sequential approach to it:

(1) The first phase commences with the kings, who are given agency as the subject of the verb of their clause, *urbem Romam a principio reges habuere*. Tacitus sets up his constitutional focus in two ways. (i) He seems to echo Sallust's *De coniuratione Catilinae* 6.1 *urbem Romam, sicuti ego accepi, condidere atque habuere initio Troiani ... cumque iis Aborigines ...* ('the city of Rome, as I understand it, was founded and held in the beginning by Trojans ... and with them Aborigines ...'), but his replacement of *Trojiani* with *reges* emphasises a constitutional interest that Sallust broaches only later in his preface.<sup>11</sup> (ii) *a principio* is an open-ended starting point of the tendency towards the concentration of supreme power – the control of Rome (*urbem Romam a principio ... habuere*) – in the hands of one or several men from the foundation of the city, the very theme of the passage.<sup>12</sup>

(2) The second phase commences with the establishment of the Republic by L. Brutus, who, like the *reges* in theirs, is the subject of his clause: *libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit*. The term *libertas* was alone sufficient to express the Republican form of government,<sup>13</sup> while *consulatum* named the highest magistracy of the Republic, its power believed to be equivalent to that exercised by the kings.<sup>14</sup> *consulatum* signifies the focus in this new constitutional phase: less on elaborating the history of *libertas* than on the concentration and exercise of supreme power in the state.<sup>15</sup> Tacitus' interest in

10 For Augustus as *auctor* cf. an edict probably of 28–7 B. C. (WARDLE [2005] 200–01) reported and glossed at Suet. *Aug.* 28.2: *... Ita mihi saluam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar ...* 'fecitque ipse se compotem uoti, nisus omni modo ne quem noui status paeniteret, "... may I set the *res publica* safe and sound on its foundation and reap the benefit of that act, which is my aim, so that I may be called the author of the best form (sc. of the *ciuitas*, community) ...' And he himself brought about the fulfilment of the vow, having exerted himself in every way so that no one should regret the new form' (sc. of the *ciuitas*, community). Augustus' articulation *optimi status auctor* seeks credit for creating the best form of political community through the proper establishment of a *res publica* that had ceased to exist from 48 to 28 (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3.28.1; Dio 53.2.5). Suetonius makes the constitutional novelty of this achievement more explicit. See BADIAN (1986) 92–3; BRUNT (1982) 239; LE DOZE (2015) 83–4; WARDLE (2014) ad loc.; on *status* see also KOESTERMANN (1937) 226–9.

11 On the Sallustian echo see e.g. WÖLFFLIN (1868) 128–9; SCHOENFELD (1884) 49–50; HÄUSSLER (1963) 261; GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc. For Tacitus' language cf. also the *Tabula Lugdunensis I.8 quondam reges hanc tenuere urbem*, 'kings once held sway over this city' (with MALLOCH [2020]); Just. 1.1.1 (with LEVENE [2010] 294).

12 Cf. LEEMAN (1973) 192 (comparing the language of Sall. *Hist.* 1.10 [RAMSEY] *dissensiones domi fuere iam inde a principio*). On the ablative expression see KÜHNER and STEGMANN (1976) 2.1.494; TLL X.2 1309.65–1310.2. The first sentence of the *Annals* is thus hardly a 'mere statement', as GEISTHARDT and GILDENHARD (2019: 271) claim.

13 Cf. WIRSZUBSKI (1950) 5; GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc.

14 Cf. e.g. Polyb. 6.11.12 with WALBANK (1957–79); Cic. *Rep.* 2.56 with ZETZEL (1995); Liv. 2.1.7–8 with OGILVIE (1965); MOMMSEN (1887–8) 2.1.93.

15 Cf. BARDT (1894) 454–5; KOESTERMANN (1961) 331–32, 347, (1963) ad loc.; WITTE (1963) 6, 13–14; GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc.; LEEMAN (1973) 192; LACEY (1996) 1; LEVENE (2010) 298–9. Emphasis on *libertas*: cf. e.g. KLINGNER (1953) 5; JENS (1956) 346; HÄUSSLER (1965) 261; WIMMEL (1961) 38, 43.

supremacy maintains a continuity of theme across different constitutional phases, from the period of the kings to a time when supremacy during the Republic passed to, and was transformed by, Augustus.

Tacitus lists three moments in the Republic when, during the abeyance of the consulship, supreme power was temporarily concentrated in the hands of extraordinary (but legal) magistracies: *dictaturae ... decemviralis potestas ... tribunorum militum consulare ius*. This list is followed by a second one containing three terms articulating supremacy, *dominatio ... potentia ... arma*. The exercise of supreme official power through magistracies in the early Republic is inverted in the late Republic: supreme power, much of it unofficial, is identified with the individual or individuals wielding it. Simultaneously, the tendency in the first century B. C. towards the concentration of supreme power in the hands of a single man, initiated by the *dominatio* of Cinna and of Sulla, asserts itself in the face of dynastic alliances, the 'First' and Second Triumvirates, as power passes to Caesar and finally to Augustus (note the balance of *et ... cessere*).<sup>16</sup> Throughout Tacitus emphasises by the use of temporal expressions and anaphora that the possession of supreme power during the Republic was transitory. The effect is the creation of a chiasmic temporal frame for this phase of Rome's constitutional history: (a) *ad tempus ...* (b) *neque ... ultra biennium, neque ... diu ...* (b) *non ... non ...* [= anaphora] *longa ...* (a) *... cito ...*<sup>17</sup> Within that frame the procession of magistracies and magnates complements the sense of movement and impermanence. This emphasis on the temporary character of supreme power in the second constitutional phase sharpens the enduring character of the coming supremacy of Augustus.

(3) Tacitus places Augustus at the end of this series of first-century dynasts, *Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere*, but the end of this sequence is simultaneously the start of a new phase: Augustus emerges from one political tradition to establish a new one. Tacitus marks the change with a relative clause, *qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit*, and distinguishes Augustus from his Republican predecessors in two ways. (i) Augustus is transformed into the subject of *accepit* and thereby given an agency reminiscent of the *reges* and L. Brutus, the agents of the first two phases of constitutional history; the partial echo of a *principio* in *nomine principis* reinforces Augustus' place in this tradition and his initiation of a new phase. (ii) Augustus' supremacy endures: no restrictive temporal adverbs apply to his tenure of power. Augustus emerges from the period of the Republic to stand outside the chiasmic temporal

16 BARDT (1894) furnished a detailed reading of this second phase of constitutional history – both what Tacitus says and does not say. LEEMAN (1973: 193) offered a different emphasis than the above: 'both triumvirates, begun as a shared and thereby tempered *dominatio*, quickly (*cito*) developed into monarchies – not a mere continuation, but an intensification of the process, a new, intermediate (transitional!) stage in the development from republicanism, only temporarily interrupted, to firmly established monarchy.' WIMMEL (1961: 39) claimed that Tacitus distorts the history of the late Republic on the way to making Augustus the end-point of the Republican sequence. SCHILLINGER-HÄFELE (1966) rightly questioned this unconvincing claim of distortion, but his own suggestion that Tacitus ends the Republican sequence with Caesar is unpersuasive. On the *dominatio* of Cinna and of Sulla see below.

17 Adverbial *cito* probably also qualifies *Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere*. SCHILLINGER-HÄFELE (1966: 498, 500) preferred to read it only with *et Pompei Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem (cessere)*.

frame Tacitus arranges for it. Absent from this representation of Augustus' supremacy is mention of the battle of Actium, the turning point in the preface to the *Histories*.<sup>18</sup> In the preface to the *Annals* Tacitus instead focuses on the period of Augustus' supremacy<sup>19</sup> and the expression of that supremacy after Actium.

Tacitus further marks the new beginning by deploying the distinctive terminology of Augustus' dispensation, *princeps* and *imperium*. Just as the opening sentence of the preface, *urbem Romam a principio reges habuere*, seems to evoke the preface of Sallust's *De coniuratione Catilinae*, so the alignment of *nomen principis* and *imperium* may glance at a similar combination in the same work: *Cat.* 6.6–7 *imperium legitimum, nomen imperi regium habebant* ('They had legal *imperium*, the name of the *imperium* being regal'). The similarity of the language throws into relief the two aspects of Tacitus' presentation of Augustus' supremacy as distinct from earlier phases of Rome's constitutional history, that it was not *regnum* but *imperium* expressed through the traditional and unregal title *princeps*.

Tacitus reproduces in the expression *nomen principis* the title used to designate Augustus' supreme position in the state.<sup>20</sup> The origin of the word lay in the Republican tradition of describing leading citizens as *principes*, and Augustus ostentatiously observed this custom in his description of contemporary senators.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the singular form *princeps* came to be associated with Augustus from the late 20s, 'the' rather than 'a' *princeps*.<sup>22</sup> Tradition served a novel purpose: *princeps* designated the uniqueness of Augustus' new political status in tones that implied his intention to comport himself, not as a king, but in the conventional manner of a leading citizen of the *res publica*.<sup>23</sup> The title shaped the representation of the new political reality. Already in the lifetime of Augustus, the use of *princeps* in expressions designating the period of his supremacy evoked an

18 Tac. *Hist.* 1.1.1 *postquam bellatum apud Actium atque omnem potentiam ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere*, 'after the battle of Actium and the interests of peace determined that power be conferred on one man, those great minds ceased to exist'.

19 Cf. WIMMEL (1961) 40.

20 The use of *nomen* of a designation or title (*OLD* 4c) recurs in this context at *Ann.* 1.2.1 and 1.9.5 (on which see below) and is otherwise common in Tacitus: e.g. *Ann.* 1.58.5 *exercitum reduxit nomenque imperatoris auctore Tiberio accepit*, 'he led the army back and received the title *imperator* on the proposal of Tiberius', 1.72.1 *nomen patris patriae Tiberius a populo saepius ingestum repudiauit*, 'Tiberius refused the title *pater patriae* which had been frequently pressed on him by the people', 3.56.2 *id summi fastigii uocabulum Augustus reperit, ne regis aut dictatoris nomen adsumeret*, 'Augustus devised it as the name of the highest rank so that he might not assume the title of king or dictator'. See GERBER and GREEF (1903) 952–53; and note also the quotation from Ovid below in n. 22. The use of *nomen* here is not *OLD* 15a 'a name used to disguise the true nature of a person or thing', *pace* BORGIO (1986) 77 n. 11; Giesthardt-Gildenhard (2019) 271–2. See further section III below.

21 For *principes* cf. e.g. R. *Gest. diu. Aug.* 12.1; Suet. *Aug.* 31.5 with WARDLE (2014); *RE* XII 2004–2014, 2029–41 (L. WICKERT); *TLL* X.2 1280.42–1281.44.

22 For *princeps* as applied to Augustus cf. e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.50, *Epist.* 2.1.256; Ov. *Fast.* 2.142 *tu domini nomen, principis ille tenet*; R. *Gest. diu. Aug.* 13, 30.1, 32.3; *RE* XII 2057–9 (L. WICKERT); *OLD* *princeps*<sup>2</sup> 6; *TLL* X.2 1283.54–1284.3; BÉRANGER (1953) 31–40; BRUNT and MOORE (1973) and COOLEY (2009) on R. *Gest. diu. Aug.* 13; RICH (2012) 38–39, 59–60. The shift from 'a *princeps*' / *principes* to 'the *princeps*' is brought out well in the passage of Cornelius Nepos cited above n. 7 (see HORSEFALL [1989] ad loc.).

23 Cf. PELHAM (1879) 331–33 = (1911) 58–60; BRUNT (1977) 114; WALLACE-HADRILL (1982) 42–3, 47.

abstract notion of his 'regime', a sense soon evident in its derivative *principatus*.<sup>24</sup> Tacitus himself will use *princeps* when an abstract designation might have been expected: *Ann.* 1.9.5 *non regno tamen neque dictatura, sed principis nomine constitutam rem publicam*, 'the commonwealth had been ordered not according to a kingdom nor a dictatorship, but with the name of *princeps*' (a passage to which we shall return), 3.28.2 *sexto demum consulatu Caesar Augustus, potentiae securus, quae triumviratu iusserat aboleuit deditque iura, quis pace et principe uteremur*, 'finally, in his sixth consulship, Caesar Augustus, secure in power, abolished what he had ordered during the Triumvirate and gave laws which we were to use in peace and under a *princeps*'.<sup>25</sup>

The expression *sub imperium* is the last in a series of terms for 'power'. KOESTERMANN commenced the sequence with *dominatio* ('*dominatio – potentia – arma – imperium*'), while GOODYEAR traced the *variatio* further back ('*potestas ... ius ... dominatio ... potentia ... arma ... imperium*').<sup>26</sup> Disagreement about the commencement of the variation in terms points up Tacitus' main interest in the location of supreme power in the state. It is a thread that in fact runs through the whole passage: *reges ... consulatum ... dictaturae ... decemviralis potestas ... tribunorum militum consulare ius ... dominatio ... potentia ... arma ... imperium ...* Tacitus' transition from position to magisterial power to terms signifying power to power expressed metonymically and back again to a final term signifying power certainly avoids repetition of vocabulary. But Tacitus is not striving merely for literary effect; very different semantics are in play. Each term designates a different form of power in relation to the legal roles and structures of the state, and none was morally neutral.<sup>27</sup> *potestas* and *ius* signify official and limited power, while *dominatio* and *potentia* connote unofficial and excessive power outside the constitutional framework of the *res publica*.<sup>28</sup> The use of *potentia* of the so-called First Triumvirate emphasises the unofficial power of this 'coalition of influence', while *arma* points up the military basis of the official power of the Second Triumvirate of Antony, Lepidus, and the young Augustus.<sup>29</sup>

24 Cf. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.256 *formidatam Parthis te principe Romam*; R. *Gest. diu. Aug.* 13 *ter me principi[pe senat]us claudendum esse censui[ſ]* (also 32.3), 30 *a]nte me principem*. See LAST (1950) 121; TLL X.2 1283.69–1284.3.

25 The construal of 3.28.2 *quis pace et principe uteremur* is disputed (see WOODMAN and MARTIN [1996]), but the point remains the same. Tacitus' use of the concrete *princeps* is telling: he does not use *principatus* to refer to the political system of the principate, but only to the regime of a particular *princeps*: cf. e. g. *Hist.* 2.55.2. So, to give a reverse example of abstract for concrete (cf. MALLOCH [2013] on Tac. *Ann.* 11.23.3), Tacitus can use *principatus* for *princeps* (*Agr.* 43.2). On *principatus* see further the Appendix.

26 KOESTERMANN (1963: ad loc) commented: 'Synonyma aus Gründen der Variatio, bei jeweilig leichter Verschiebung der Akzente. In respondierenden Gliedern vermeidet Tacitus durchweg die Verwendung des gleiches Ausdrucks'. On the *variatio* see GOODYEAR (1973) ad loc.: 'the desire for stylistic variation ... was probably quite as influential here as any striving after supposed historical precision'.

27 Cf. GOTTER (2008) 203.

28 *potestas*: OLD 3; TLL X.2 303.45–306.44. *ius*: OLD 13; TLL VII.2 692.3–693.81. *dominatio*: OLD 2; TLL V.1 1878.28–1880.69; *potentia*: OLD 1; TLL X.2 292.34–293.54; DREXLER (1959) 67; WITTE (1963) 7–11; BUONGIOVANNI (2003) esp. 42–3 = (2005) 52–3; GOTTER (2008) 199–200. BACH (1834) stands out among early Tacitean commentators for seeking to explain the nuances of these terms.

29 Cf. FURNEAUX (1884) ad loc. (quotation in n. on *potentia*); BARDT (1894) 455.

Tacitus uses *imperium* differently from *potentia* and *arma*. The observation that Augustus *cuncta discordiis ciuilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit* asserts Augustus' supremacy in the period following the civil wars and especially from the early 20s B. C. Here Tacitus could have used the pejorative language of power applied to the first-century dynasts, language that he has used in the *Histories* and will shortly use again in the *Annals*, as we shall see. Alternatively, he could have applied *imperium* to the constitutional power wielded by those magnates preceding Augustus. Instead he reserves the term for Augustus, with good reason: it had strong contemporary resonances.

Already in the 20s B. C. the supremacy of Augustus was described in terms compatible with Tacitus' articulation. Vitruvius, a contemporary writing after 27 B. C., opens his *De architectura* with a bald assertion about (probably) the period 30–27 (Praef. 1): *cum diuina tua mens et numen, imperator Caesar, imperio potiretur orbis terrarum*, 'when your divine mind and will, imperator Caesar, obtained command of the world ...'.<sup>30</sup> That supremacy was also associated with the tenure of specific *imperium*. In the foundation decree of AD 11–13, specifying days of sacrifice at the altar to the *numen* of Augustus at Narbo, the worldwide *imperium* of Augustus is dated, with considerable licence, from the first grant of (propraetorian) *imperium* to him on 7 January 43: *Lex arae Aug. Narb. (CIL XII 4333 = ILS 112) 1.23–5 VII quoq(ue) idus Ianuar(ias) qua die primum imperium orbis terrarum auspicatus est*, 'also on the seventh day of the Ides of January, on which he first commenced his command of the world'.<sup>31</sup> Not dissimilarly, Tacitus' use of *imperium* evokes the *imperium* held by Augustus during his rise to power and in the early years of his supremacy: the *imperium propraetore* granted to him in 43, the *imperium consulare* that came with his tenure of the consulship of 19 August 43, the enhanced *imperium consulare* that he wielded as Triumvir from late in the same year,<sup>32</sup> and, above all, the *imperium consulare*, so important to his self-image as *princeps*, which he wielded as consul from 31 to 23 and which underpinned his enormous *prouincia* from 27.<sup>33</sup> Tacitus' use of *imperium*

30 Cf. MILLAR (1973) 65–6 = (2002) 267–68; BRUNT (1982) 241.

31 For the grant of *imperium* cf. *R. Gest. diu. Aug.* 1.2–3. For discussion of this unusual commemoration see HERBERT-BROWN (1994) 215–20. For commemorations on 7 January see SNYDER (1940) 231, who suggested that Pliny might have had this date in mind as Augustus' *dies imperii* at *Nat.* 11.190 (*primo potestatis suae die*).

32 Cf. Appian. *BCiu.* 4.2.6; BRUNT (1982) 236; VERVAET (2010) 82, 89–91; RICH (2012) 43; BLEICKEN (2015) 116–17.

33 When Augustus took control of 'all things' after Actium, he did so theoretically both as Triumvir and as consul for 31 (Dio 50.10.1; see VERVAET [2010] 81, 89; RICH [2012] 43–8). In practice the situation was more complex. Although the second term of the Triumvirate presumably expired at the end 33 (cf. Rich [2012] 46), Antony continued to refer to himself as Triumvir until he was stripped of the command in 32 (Dio 50.4.3), and from 31 Augustus, now in the unusual position of being a lone Triumvir, dropped the title in preference for acting through the consulship, which he held until 23 and whose title he continued to use between 23 and 5 B. C.: cf. *ILS* 79, 80, 81; the aureus of 28 B. C. (British Museum accession no. CM 1995, 4–1.1; RICH and WILLIAMS [1999]; RICH [2012] 89–105); *Tac. Ann.* 1.2.1; PELHAM (1888) 32–36 = (1911) 65–71; HAVERFIELD (1912) 197; VERVAET (2010) 130–1; RICH (2012) 47. The resumption of the consulship was a strategic move back to the ostentatious possession of a traditional magistracy and away from the controversial extraordinary command of the Triumvirate – the mirror image of the young Augustus' resignation of his first consulship of 43 in preference for the superior command of the Triumvirate (cf. BLEICKEN [2015] 117; for a different view of the value of the consulship to Augustus see LIEBESCHUETZ [1986]). The



brings into play the origins of Augustus' supremacy in the constitutional structures of the Republic as it expresses his transcendence and transformation of those structures to take command of 'all things' and usher in a new dispensation.<sup>34</sup> Unlike the formal *imperium* of the first-century magnates, the *imperium* of Augustus had no limits of scope or time: uniquely, he held *imperium* and the fasces without interruption from 7 January 43 to his death in AD 14. Small wonder, then, that the Narbo inscription in hindsight characterised as worldwide his first tenure of *imperium*. Tacitus chose an appropriate term to evoke Augustus' formal commands in the moment of expressing his unlimited power.

### III

If the opening of the *Annals* establishes the supremacy of Augustus in the context of the constitutional history of Rome, chapter two introduces a key component of Tacitus' understanding of the expression of that supremacy under the principate in the context of sketching the expansion of Augustus' power and the support he sought to draw from his family to perpetuate it (1.2.1–3.5).

It is central to Tacitus' presentation of the power of Augustus that it was not limited or static. Its totality is set up in the preface, where at 1.1.2 its expansion is an implied precondition of the growing flattery of historians that contributed to the decline of historiography during his dispensation.<sup>35</sup> Developments are addressed directly in the second chapter, where the tone darkens and the pace quickens. Tacitus goes back to the

part played by Augustus' Triumviral past at the time of the so-called first constitutional settlement of 28–7 is debated: cf. e.g. RICH (2012) 46–7, 51, 56–7; BÖRM and HAVENER (2012). On Augustus' powers see BRUNT and MOORE (1973) on *R. Gest. diu. Aug.* 1.4; FERRARY (2001).

34 The translation 'command' (cf. FURNEAUX [1884] ad loc.; WOODMAN [2004]; Wiseman [2019] 162) neatly expresses this versatility. The *imperium* at issue is the power Augustus wielded as *princeps* (*OLD* 1c 'the power exercised by the Roman emperors'; GERBER and GREEF [1903] 575; RICHARDSON [2008] 170), but the particular expression *cuncta ... sub imperium accepit* broadens it in a way akin to *OLD* 5 'dominion (exercised by a ruler or people), government, sway'; cf. *TLL* VII.1 572.68–573.45. With the use of *imperium* here may be compared that at *Hist.* 1.1.4 *principatum diui Neruae et imperium Traiani*, where *imperium* designates Trajan's 'regime' (*OLD* 3b) and, through the *variatio* with *principatus*, perhaps hints at its military character (cf. the notes of IRVINE [1952]; HEUBNER [1963]; CHILVER [1979]); the equivalence between *principatus* and *imperium* complements the use of *imperium* in our passage to mark the supremacy of the *princeps* in this new phase of constitutional history. For *sub imperium* see an analogous statement at *Plin. Nat.* 3.136, quoting the Tropaeum Alpium of 7/6 B. C. (cf. *CIL* V 7817), *imp. Caesari diui filio Aug. ... quod eius ductu auspiciisque gentes Alpinae omnes quae a mari supero ad inferum pertinebant sub imperium p(opuli) R(omani) sunt redactae ...*, 'To Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of the god, ... because by your leadership and under your auspices all the Alpine tribes from the upper sea to the lower have been brought under the command of the Roman people' (cf. RICHARDSON [2008] 165).

35 At 1.1.2 Tacitus enacts a contrast between the distinguished writers who, it is implied, were free to record the ups and downs of Rome's early history and the disappearance of respectable writers in the face of the growing climate of flattery under Augustus: *sed ueteris populi Romani prospera uel aduersa claris scriptoribus memorata sunt, temporibusque Augusti dicendis non defuere decora ingenia, donec gliscente adulatione detererentur*, 'but the fortunes and misfortunes of the ancient Roman people were recorded by famous writers, and there was certainly honourable minds to record the times of Augustus, until they were deterred by growing flattery'. The preface to the *Histories* (1.1.1; above n. 18) also observes a decline in historiography after Actium, but in a more variegated manner. See MARINCOLA (1999) 396–98.

Triumviral period to commence a narrative of *pauca de Augusto et extrema* (1.1.3), ‘a few items about Augustus, especially his last days’, and glances at the victory of Augustus in the civil wars: 1.2.1 *ne Iulianis quidam partibus nisi Caesar dux reliquus, posito triumviri nomine consul se ferens et ad tuendam plebem tribunicio iure contentum ...*, ‘not even for the Julian party was there a leader left except Caesar, who having laid down the name of Triumvir and parading himself as consul and as content with the tribunician power for protecting the plebs ...’<sup>36</sup> Here the faint echo of legal power in Tacitus’ use of *imperium* in the preface is spelled out: Tacitus draws attention to Augustus’ articulation of his supremacy after Actium through the consulship and, later, the tribunician power. He now pursues the narrative further, with ‘profound insight’ into the development of Augustus’ position.<sup>37</sup> The power wielded by Augustus expanded, as he *insurgere paulatim, munia senatus magistratum legum in se trahere*, ‘gradually rose up, and drew to himself the functions of the senate, magistrates, and laws’ (1.2.1) to find himself unopposed by any single person and embraced by the provinces, which were only too happy to see the end of the *imperium senatus populi* (1.2.2).<sup>38</sup> This expansion in Augustus’ power resulted in *dominatio* (1.3.1). For Tacitus, the term expressed the essential character of the rule of the *princeps*. Nowhere is this more obvious than when he has *dominatio* stand in for *princeps* in the description of Junius Silanus, the first victim of Nero, as *segnis et dominationibus aliis fastiditus, adeo ut C. Caesarem ...*, ‘indolent and despised by other despotisms, to the extent that C. Caesar ...’ (13.1.1).<sup>39</sup> *dominatio* evoked, not the formal rule of Roman kingship, to which Tacitus never applies it, but power above and beyond constitutional limits. Such, in Tacitus’ usage, was the power wielded by the first-century dynasts Cinna, Marius, and Sulla, and, in a recurring characterisation, by rulers and leaders east and west.<sup>40</sup> The term, and these associations, branded Augustus a despotic ruler, and it was appropriate to that form of rule that the despot guard his personal supremacy through personal means.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, Tacitus’ first application of *dominatio* to Augustus at 1.3.1, while summarising his rule as set out in the previous chapter, necessarily foregrounds the introduction of the machinations designed to establish the dynasty which would act as a support for his despotism, *subsidia dominationi* (1.3.1). Tacitus adds *dominatio* to

36 ‘Parading himself’: CROOK (1996) 113. For *ferre + se + accusative* in Tacitus see GERBER and GREEF (1903) 458; in general see TLL VI.1 561.35–50.

37 CROOK (1996) 113.

38 For *insurgere* see OLD 6; TLL VII.1 2064.49–51. For *trahere* in see OLD 20.

39 Tacitus applies *dominatio* (cf. above n. 28) to Augustus again at *Ann.* 2.59.3 and to the *princeps* or aspiring *princeps* at *Hist.* 1.36.3, 2.63.1, *Ann.* 4.57.3, 5.3.1, 6.48.2, 12.4.1, 15.69.1, and by association to the family (above all the women) and connections of the *princeps*: e.g. *Ann.* 4.1.1, 4.12.3, 6.45.3, 12.7.3, 12.8.2, 14.2.2. Tacitus’ characterisation was a challenge to the likes of the younger Pliny, who held that *dominatio et principatus* were different in nature (*Paneg.* 45.3). Pliny is distinguishing Trajan (ie. a *gratior princeps*) from Domitian, no *princeps*, but a *dominus*.

40 See *Ann.* 1.1.1 above for Cinna and Sulla and *Hist.* 2.38.1 for Marius and Sulla. Tacitus has Claudius characterise Parthian rule as *dominatio* at *Ann.* 12.11.2, and *dominatio* is applied to eastern rulers at *Hist.* 5.8.3, *Ann.* 6.43.2, 11.8.3, 12.10.1, and to western leaders and tribes at *Ann.* 2.46.3, 12.30.2. The term occurs in general pronouncements (*Hist.* 4.8.4, *Ann.* 3.26.2), one of which, a pregnant remark on the *dominatio* of oligarchies, is made in an eastern narrative: *Ann.* 6.42.2 with WOODMAN (2017).

41 Cf. LE DOZE (2015) 100; WISEMAN (2019) 158.

*imperium* to characterise the supremacy of Augustus. The two terms were not in tension. *imperium* expresses Augustus' total control of the state at the end of the civil wars with a faint echo of the constitutional structures that he has transcended; *dominatio* describes the character of Augustus' total rule in a manner that expresses pejoratively the expansion of his power to absorb the highest institutions and laws of the *res publica* and the personal dimension of a rule requiring the support of dynasty.

Tacitus' characterisation of a supremacy expressed through Republican offices and powers but transcending all constitutional limits sets up a defining feature of his analysis of the principate: his interest in the gap between the forms and realities of power. This motif is normally thought to appear first in the opening of the preface. At *Ann.* 1.1.1, in the words of F. R. D. GOODYEAR, *princeps* marks the 'pretence or public image' and *imperium* 'the reality' of Augustus' power.<sup>42</sup> But *nomen principis* does not conceal the 'reality' of Augustus' *imperium*: the phrase expresses the designation of Augustus' status, as we have seen. The gap between pretence and reality is introduced, in fact, in the second chapter. There Tacitus implies that Augustus used the consulship and the tribunician power – not the title *princeps* – as masks for a more comprehensive accumulation of power over time: *posito triumviri nomine consulem se ferens et ad tuendam plebem tribunicio iure contentum* (1.2.1). The 'pretence or public image' is conveyed by *se ferens* and *contentum*: the legally-sanctioned consular *imperium* and tribunician *ius* were a front for boundless, all-absorbing power.

The motif of 'appearance v. reality' has perhaps been imposed on the preface by a reaction against the symmetry between Tacitus' claim there that Augustus *cuncta ... nomine principis sub imperium accepit* and the observation he makes through some friendly *prudentes* at the funeral of Augustus: *non aliud discordantis patriae remedium fuisse quam <ut> ab uno regeretur. non regno tamen neque dictatura, sed principis nomine constitutam rem publicam*, '... there had been no other remedy for the discord of the fatherland than that it be controlled by one man. The commonwealth had been ordered not according to a kingdom, nor a dictatorship, but with the name of *princeps*' (1.9.4–5).<sup>43</sup> In these passages Tacitus describes, and friendly *prudentes* defend, the position of Augustus with the phrase *nomen principis* – but surely Tacitus cannot have identified with *their* views? Accordingly, KOESTERMANN alleged a contrast between the two statements because he read 1.1.1 as a cynical articulation of 1.9.5: 'Im positiven Teil des "Totengerichtes" heißt est 1,9,5 *non regno tamen neque dictatura, sed principis nomine constitutam rem publicam*. Demgegenüber sagt Tacitus hier [1.1.1], daß *nomen principis* nur das Aushängeschild war, hinter dem in Wahrheit die volle Machtergreifung (*sub imperium*) stand'.<sup>44</sup> GOODYEAR held that Tacitus' revelation of pretence at 1.1.1 prepares the reader to doubt the credi-

42 GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc. Cf. *RE* XII 2073 (L. WICKERT); SYME (1958) 408; MILLER (1959) ad loc.; WITTE (1963) 12; BRUNT (1982) 238; RICH (1989) 100, (2012) 37; GEISTHARDT and GILDENHARD (2019) 271–2.

43 FERRETTUS (1541: ad loc.) rightly inserted *ut*: see also GOODYEAR (1972) ad loc. For the statement cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.33.2 *sic conuerso statu neque alia rerum <salute> quam si unus imperitet*, 'so with the situation having changed and there being no hope of safety without the rule of one man'. <salute> is the emendation of BRINGMANN (1971), and there have been other proposals: see WOODMAN (2018) ad loc.

44 KOESTERMANN (1963) on 1.1.1.

bility of 1.9.5 as ‘something less than the precise truth’.<sup>45</sup> But since the preface does *not* introduce the motif of ‘appearance v. reality’, the two statements may be read as complementary rather than as contradictory. In the preface, structure and terminology mark Augustus off from the *reges* and the magnates of the first century. At 1.9.5 that distinction is spelled out and clarified: the government of *unus* (1.9.4) is that of the *princeps*, who is not a *rex* or a *dictator*. The claim of the preface that Augustus *cuncta ... sub imperium accepit* does not render suspect the claim of 1.9.5 that *principis nomine constitutam rem publicam*: in his own voice Tacitus emphasises Augustus’ control of the state rather than, as the friendly *prudentes* do, the form of the state. Tacitus and these *prudentes* recognise the distinctive character of the dispensation established by Augustus, and it is a distinctiveness that he will mark elsewhere (*Ann.* 3.56.2).<sup>46</sup>

This symmetry between Tacitus and the friendly *prudentes* exposes the error of assuming that he ‘endorsed’ only the views of Augustus ventriloquised at 1.10.1–7. Certainly, Tacitus shares ground common with the unfriendly *prudentes*, who for example attribute to Augustus an early desire of achieving the *dominatio* ascribed to him already at 1.3.1. On the other hand, he does not permit them the accusation that the young Augustus was responsible for the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa, the consuls of 43.<sup>47</sup> Nor does every criticism chime: for example, the motive that the unfriendly *prudentes* are made to offer for Augustus’ adoption of Tiberius seems unconvincing in view Tacitus’ treatment at 1.3.3.<sup>48</sup> Tacitus does not simply give the critics of Augustus a longer disquisition because he agreed with them.<sup>49</sup> Nor do their criticisms ‘largely or entirely cancel out’ the preceding chapter.<sup>50</sup> Tacitus has the unfriendly *prudentes* take a selective approach to

45 GOODYEAR (1972) on 1.9.3.

46 For this passage see above n. 20.

47 1.10.2 *mox ubi decreto patrum fasces et ius praetoris inuaserit, caesis Hirtio et Pansa, siue hostis illos, seu Pansam uenenum uulneri adfusum, sui milites Hirtium et machinator doli Caesar abstulerat, utriusque copias occupauisse*, ‘Then, when, by a decree of the senators, he usurped the fasces and the authority of a praetor, after Hirtius and Pansa had been killed – either they had been by the enemy, or poison applied to a wound had carried off Pansa, his soldiers and the criminal contrivance of Caesar had despatched Hirtius – he took possession of their armies’. The indicative *abstulerat* marks *siue ... abstulerat* as the explanation of Tacitus. The *abstulerit* of PLUYGERS (1860: 54) is based on his assumption that ‘haec omnia [ie. 1.10.1–2] aliorum non scriptoris oratione proponuntur’, but it is hardly consistent with the line taken by the unfriendly *prudentes* that they should leave the truth about this notorious rumour in doubt. KOESTERMAN (1963: ad loc.) held that Tacitus used the indicative to emphasise the responsibility of Augustus, when the very opposite is more likely: Tacitus declined to endorse a suspicion he did not want to pass over (cf. SHOTTER [1967] 173).

48 At 1.3.3 Tiberius is the last choice of Augustus: *Nero solus e priuignis erat, illuc cuncta uergere*, ‘Nero was alone among the step-sons; to him all things inclined’. At 1.10.7 the hostile *prudentes* offer a motive for Augustus’ decision to adopt Tiberius which does not easily square with the earlier presentation of his diligence and regard for the political consequences: *ne Tiberium quidem caritate aut rei publicae cura successorem adscitum, sed, quoniam adrogantiam saeuitiamque eius introspexerit, comparatione deterrima sibi gloriam quaesiuisset*, ‘not even Tiberius had been adopted as a successor out of regard for the *res publica*, but since he had observed the arrogance and harshness of the man closely, he had sought glory for himself through the worst possible comparison’. See KOESTERMANN (1961) 351–52; PELLING (2010) 374.

49 The idea goes back at least to LIPSIUS (1607) on 1.10.1 ‘uberius hanc partem exsequitur: an quia ipse in ea? Non ambigo’. Cf. VOGT (1936) 14–5; WALKER (1960) 212; WITTE (1963) 152–57. Another view holds that Tacitus was uncommitted or impartial: REID (1921) 196; MILLER (1959) p. 9; BORGIO (1986) 88–89, 93.

50 GOODYEAR (1972) on 1.9.3.

Augustus which almost completely ignores their opponents' favourable interpretation of his principate. They concentrate instead on Augustus' career before Actium, his attitude to cult, and his family and dynastic policy. Political developments after the death of Antony draw the single observation that the resulting peace was stained with the blood of conspiracy and military disaster (1.10.4). The friendly *prudentes* prefer to emphasise the stability, rather than the disasters, of the period, but they admit Augustus' use of force to ensure quiet (1.9.5), thereby proleptically defusing the coming mention of internal violence by the critics of Augustus. In their lengthier treatment of the post-Actium dispensation, the friendly *prudentes* celebrate the respect for law, the *modestia* of the allies, and the beautification of Rome. These points are far from 'largely or entirely' cancelled out in the hostile interpretation that follows. They are not 'answered' at all.

A different approach to the import of these funerary evaluations is required. Tacitus offers two opposing interpretations of Augustus because one voice could not adequately express the different contemporary responses to his life or the complexity of his achievement.<sup>51</sup> The two judgements are equally important: they are the insights of *prudentes* who are to be taken more seriously than a majority indulging in empty speculation (1.10.1 *plerisque uana mirantibus*).<sup>52</sup> Here – at least – Syme was right: the 'favourable tribute' of the friendly *prudentes* is neither 'perfidious' nor 'grudging', but 'monumental'<sup>53</sup> – as befits an appreciation resonating with the preface of the *Annals* itself.

### Appendix: *principatus*

Tacitus uses *principatus* in all his works, but for the *Germania*, and almost always in relation to Augustus and his successors.<sup>54</sup> He employs the term with two broad nuances, which, it must be emphasised, cannot always be clearly differentiated.

(1) The supreme position or supreme status of a *princeps* (sometimes with a sense of 'power' to the fore, the supremacy of a *princeps*): *Agr.* 3.1 *Nerua Caesar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem* (sense [2]? Cf. *OLD* 3); *Hist.* 1.13.1 *potentia principatus diuisa in Titum Vinium consulem, Cornelium Laconem praetorii praefectum* (sense [2]? So Heubner [1963] and Damon [2003] ad loc.); *Hist.* 1.15.1 *nunc me ... praeclara indoles tua et amor patriae impulit ut principatum, de quo maiores nostri armis certabant, bello adeptus quiescenti offeram, exemplo diui Augusti qui ... postremo Tiberium Neronem priuignum in proximo sibi fastigio conlocauit*; *Hist.* 1.58.1 *Vitellius ministeria principatus per libertos agi solita in equites Romanos disponit* (sense [2]?); *Hist.* 1.62.2 *torpebat Vitellius et fortunam principatus inertis luxu ac prodigiis epulis praesumebat*; *Hist.* 1.77.1 *sic distractis exercitibus ac prouinciis Vitellio quidam ad capessendam principatus fortunam bello opus*

51 Tacitus' concern with representing contemporary opinion: see LORD (1927); SHOTTER (1967).

52 Cf. KOESTERMANN (1961) 349–51; GOODYEAR (1972) on 1.9.1; EDER (2015) 15.

53 SYME (1958) 432, with reference to 1.9.5 and quoting the ending of the appreciation from *mari Oceano* on; cf. KOESTERMANN (1961) 348–49, (1963) on 1.9.3; JENKYNs (2013) 126: a 'magisterial assessment'.

54 At *Hist.* 1.50.3 and 2.38.1, Tacitus, using *principatus* with the sense of position/status, embraces the late Republic as well. On Tacitus' use of *principatus* see also GERBER and GREEF (1903) 1186.

*erat* (cf. Irvine [1952] ad loc.; OLD 2b); *Hist.* 1.83.1; *Hist.* 2.47.2; *Hist.* 2.79.1 *isque primus principatus dies in posterum celebratus* (sense [2]?) ; *Hist.* 2.80.1 *ceteri adcurrere, Caesarem et Augustum et omnia principatus uocabula cumulare*; *Hist.* 3. 39.2; *Hist.* 3.70.1; *Hist.* 3.86.1; *Hist.* 4.11.2; *Hist.* 4.85.2; *Ann.* 1.6.3 *neue Tiberius uim principatus resolveret cuncta ad senatum uocando*; *Ann.* 1.7.5 *litteras ad exercitus tamquam adepto principatu misit*; *Ann.* 3.60.1 (cf. WOODMAN and MARTIN [1996] ad loc.). This sense also occurs at e.g. Vell. 2.124.2 *solique huic contigit paene diutius recusare principatum*. Cf. OLD 2b.

(2) The act of ruling or governing by a *princeps*, the regime of a *princeps*: *Agr.* 7.2 *initia principatus ac statum urbis Mucianus regebat*; *Agr.* 43.2 *ceterum per omnem ualetudinem eius crebrius quam ex more principatus per nuntios uisentis et libertorum primi et medicorum intimi uenere, siue cura illud siue inquisitio erat* (metonymy: ‘the habit of a regime’ = ‘the habit of a *princeps*’; cf. WOODMAN and KRAUS [2014] ad loc.); *Dial.* 17.3 *sextam iam felicitis huius principatus stationem qua Vespasianus rem publicam fouet* (sense [1]?) ; *Hist.* 1.1.4 *principatum diui Neruae et imperium Traiani, ubiorem securioremque materiam, senectuti seposui*; *Hist.* 2.64.1 *in itinere ac taberna proiectum humi iugulauit, magna cum inuidia noui principatus, cuius hoc primum specimen noscebatur*; *Hist.* 3.7.2; *Hist.* 3.67.1; *Hist.* 4.8.2; *Hist.* 5.10.2 *simul manere apud exercitus Titum ad omnis principatus noui euentus casusue utile uidebatur*; *Ann.* 1.1.3 *consilium mihi . . . tradere . . . Tiberii principatum*; *Ann.* 1.6.1; *Ann.* 4.6.1 *Tiberio mutati in deterius principatus initium ille annus attulit*; *Ann.* 13.4.2. This use occurs also at e.g. Vell. 2.89.5–6 *bella sub imperatore gesta pacatusque uictoriis terrarum orbis et tota extra Italiam domique opera omne aeui sui spatium impensurum in id solum opus scriptorem fatigaret: nos memores professionis uniuersam imaginem principatus eius [= Augusti] oculis animisque subiecimus*. Cf. OLD 3.

In some of these uses there seems to be an implicit temporal aspect (e.g. Tac. *Hist.* 1.1.4; *Ann.* 1.1.3) which is more prominent in instances where *principatus* functions primarily as a chronological marker: *Dial.* 17.6 *Coruinus in medium usque Augusti principatum, Asinius paene ad extremum durauit*; *Hist.* 2.10.1 *recens Galbae principatu censuerant patres*; *Hist.* 2.55.2 *in senatu cuncta longis aliorum principatibus composita statim decernuntur*; *Hist.* 2.65.1; *Hist.* 3.75.1; *Hist.* 4.2.3 *Lucius Vitellius interficitur, par uitii fratris, in principatu eius uigilantior*; *Hist.* 4.6.1; *Ann.* 13.1.1 *prima nouo principatu mors*. This ‘chronological’ use occurs also at *Edict. imp. Claud.* (CIL V 5050 = ILS 206) 11–13 *is . . . primum apsentia pertinaci patrum mei, | deinde etiam Gai principatu, quod ab eo non exigebatur | referre, non stulte quidem, neglexerit*; Fest. p. 142 L *cum mansisset ab urbe condita <ad pri>ncipatum Augusti (ad pri cod. X)*. Cf. TLL X.2 1303.66–1304.2.

When Tacitus refers to what moderns understand to be the political system that Augustus founded he expresses himself not with abstract *principatus* but with concrete *princeps*, such as at *Ann.* 3.28.2 (quoted above). ‘The Principate’ is not a use to which Tacitus, or any other ancient author, seems to have put *principatus*. It is the terminology of modern scholarship associated particularly with Mommsen.<sup>55</sup>

55 See MOMMSEN (1887–8) 2.2 *passim*; EDER (2005) 16.

Recently, A. Cooley has discussed the use of *principatus* in the Augustan period and the first century A. D. Her claim that *principatus* in the sense of ‘what we would call the Principate’ did not emerge ‘under Augustus’ but ‘only’ under Claudius seems to confuse two categories of meaning – the modern notion of the political system called ‘the Principate’ and the Roman imperial use of *principatus* to mean, in one of its senses, the rule or regime of a *princeps*.<sup>56</sup> COOLEY bases her objection to tracing an interpretation of *principatus* as ‘constitutional settlement’ or ‘constitutional structure’ back to the Augustan period on the claim of E. S. GRUEN that use of the term to mean ‘form of government’ or ‘type of regime’ was foreign to Augustus and writers of his time, that Augustus ‘never occupied a post called the Principate’ or exercised ‘an office to which the title *princeps* was attached’;<sup>57</sup> GRUEN asserted that this meaning of *principatus* was common only later, among writers such as Tacitus. But Tacitus does not use *principatus* to mean a ‘type’ of regime (ie. a political system), nor does he use *principatus* to designate anything as formal as a ‘post’ or an ‘office’. Did GRUEN (and COOLEY) misconstrue J. BÉRANGER? BÉRANGER stated that *principatus* in the sense of a political system, ‘the Principate’, was a modern notion; he was concerned rather with the word in the sense of the ‘regime’ of a *princeps*, a sense he claims first emerges in the Claudian edict quoted above: *Edict. imp. Claud.* (CIL V 5050 = ILS 206) 12.<sup>58</sup>

On the back of this conflation of categories, COOLEY criticises SHIPLEY’S and WOODMAN’S translation of *principatus* as ‘principate’ at Vell. 2.89.6 (quoted above) for allegedly signifying a ‘constitutional settlement by Augustus’. In its place she offers ‘period of leadership’, ie. his ‘leadership’.<sup>59</sup> This correction allegedly justifies the conclusion that by A. D. 14 *principatus* does not bear the meaning of ‘constitutional settlement’ that it does first under Claudius.<sup>60</sup> COOLEY’S conceptual confusion leads her to perceive in translations of Velleius a meaning which is not there. ‘The Principate’ as political *system* is not at issue. Velleius is using *principatus* to mean ‘the rule’ of Augustus, for which a translation of ‘regime’ or ‘principate’ is perfectly acceptable. The edict of Claudius exhibits the same use: there the established sense of ‘rule’ or ‘regime’ is deployed in a

56 COOLEY (2019) 73.

57 COOLEY (2019) 73, 74, 79; GRUEN (2005) 33–4.

58 BÉRANGER (1953) 28: ‘Il n’y a donc pas obligatoirement correspondance entre “principatus” et collation des pouvoirs constitutionnels. Sans doute le mot est-il employé au sens restreint pour désigner le règne particulier du *princeps*-empereur. Néanmoins, les modernes ont superposé abusivement à la notion antique la notion d’un régime politique spécial, obéissant à ses propres lois’ (also 55–6). COOLEY adopts the Claudian date from BÉRANGER without citing the epigraphic evidence underpinning it.

59 COOLEY (2019) 74, 75. For the translations see SHIPLEY (1924); WOODMAN (1983) ad loc.; ‘principate’ is also used here by YARDLEY and BARRETT (2011).

60 COOLEY (2019) 75. There is an unresolved tension between COOLEY’S recognition that Velleius wrote under Tiberius and her claim that the correct analysis of his text clarifies the use of *principatus* in A. D. 14. Nor, when recycling the Claudian date of BÉRANGER, does COOLEY consider that Velleius wrote only a few years before Claudius or how a new meaning of *principatus* might have emerged in the middle of the century. But of course the Claudian evidence does not offer a new meaning of *principatus*.

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statement that functions mainly as a chronological marker. The only difference between the two instances is that Velleius uses *eius* to identify whose principate he is referring to, while Claudius supplies the name.

COOLEY's attempt to demonstrate that *principatus* does not mean 'a constitutional settlement' by A. D. 14 turns out to be a red herring. That meaning is a modern notion. The real problem lies in the claim, which seems to start with BÉRANGER, that *principatus* in the sense of the 'regime' of a *princeps* emerges first under Claudius. That meaning is evident already in Velleius.

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