Tacitus makes much of Tiberius’ dependence upon Augustus. This article examines four citations of Augustan precedent which occur in the *Annals*: 1.77.1–3; 2.37–38.5; 4.37–38.3 and 6.3.1–3. In each case, I explore how the citation of precedent functions within the individual incident that Tacitus narrates, observing the ways in which the meaning(s) of Augustus’ *dicta* are constructed, manipulated and even contested by the individuals Tacitus describes. I conclude by making some suggestions about the role of Tiberius’ dependence upon Augustan precedent in the narrative as a whole.

In the *Annals*, Tiberius’ devotion to, and dependence upon, the actions and especially the words of Augustus are constantly drawn to the reader’s attention.¹ Augustus survives in the narrative in his actions and words. What Augustus did or said, or, more frequently, what others, including Tiberius, *said* that Augustus did or said, is therefore the focus around which the numerous episodes involving Tiberius’ relationship with the Augustan past are built.² This article examines four of these examples: 1.77.1–3; 2.37–38.5; 4.37–38.3 and 6.3.1–3. Two of these

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¹ On Tiberius’ deference to the actions and words of Augustus, see Tac. *Ann.* 4.37.1–3, discussed below. The text I have followed is Borzsák 1992. The translations are Woodman 2004, with alterations as indicated. All references are to the *Annals* unless otherwise indicated.

² Incidents in which Tiberius’ relationship with the Augustan past is referred to cover not only the formal acts of Augustus (to which an oath was sworn), but also his customary practices, remembered actions and sayings, and the protection of his divinity. Broadly, these examples fall
passages (1.77.1–3 and 4.37–38.3) are well known and are customarily offered as
the classic or paradigmatic statements of Tiberius’ general dependence upon
Augustan precedent. Of the remaining passages, 2.37–38.5 is representative
of a number of occasions on which Tacitus presents Tiberius engaging with
expectations generated by Augustus and brought to his notice by his peers, whilst
6.3.1–3 is an anomalous incident wherein the lack of an Augustan precedent is,
itself, taken by Tiberius as a precedent. In all of these cases, the communication of
an explanation, which then functions as an interpretation, is central. Each example
features a characteristic aspect of (Tacitus’) Tiberius’ methods of communicating
his ideas. In 1.77.1–3, Tiberius is silent, leaving others to articulate (his?) views on
his behalf. 2.37–38.5 and 4.37–38.1 involve the citation of Augustus by (Tacitus’)
Tiberius who uses a specific incident to expound a general aspect of his policy.
Finally, 6.3.1–3 is an example from a letter of Tiberius—a form of communication
characteristic of his later years as presented in the Annals.¹ In each case, I explore
how the citation of an Augustan precedent functions within the individual incident
that Tacitus narrates, observing the ways in which the meaning(s) of Augustus’
dicta are constructed, manipulated and even contested by the individuals Tacitus
describes. I conclude by making some suggestions about the role of Tiberius’
dependence upon Augustan precedent in the narrative as a whole.

1. “TOUCHES OF THE TILLER” AND READING TACITUS:²
INTERPRETING TIBERIUS’ DEVOTION TO
AUGUSTUS IN THE ANNALS

Words spoken by Augustus lie at the heart of Tiberius’ relationship with
Augustan precedent as it is presented in the Annals.³ The case in favor of the
idea that the historian was reporting the ipsissima uerba of either Augustus or
Tiberius is far from strong and yet, at the same time, scholars have been reluctant
to dismiss references to Augustan precedent in the speeches made in the Annals as
entirely Tacitean.⁴ Thus, whilst the idea that the historical Tiberius constantly and
publicly adhered to Augustan precedent has never been questioned (and will not be

¹ into two categories—either Tacitus notes the relationship between Augustan precedent and Tiberius’
actions, or this relationship is articulated by an individual within the narrative: 1.14.4; 1.72.2–3;
1.77.1–3; 2.37–38.5; 2.50.2; 2.59.2–3; 3.6.3; 3.18.1; 3.24.4; 3.29.1–2; 3.54.2; 3.68.1; 4.37–38.3;
4.42.3; 6.3.1–3. Other, less comprehensive, collections of examples may also be found in Shotter
² Other examples from the list supra (n.2) will be referred to in passing and in the notes.
³ On Tiberius as a letter writer in the Annals, see Morello 2006: 331–55.
⁴ Levick 1999 [1976]: 83 “There were few touches of the tiller that some Augustan precedent,
or utterance at least, would not justify.”
⁵ 1.77.2; 4.37.2–3; Agr. 13.2: consilium id diuus Augustus uocabat, Tiberius praeceptum.
⁶ On instances of direct speech in the Annals, see now Wharton 1997: 119–25 in preference to
Miller 1968: 1–19. On ipsa verba as a part of the literary rhetoric employed by ancient authors,
see also, Laird 1999: 126–43.
questioned here), it is incidents from the *Annals* which make up the major part of the evidence for Tiberius’ *public statements* about his reliance on Augustus. The *Annals* also provide the largest collection in a single source of authorial references to, and citations of, Augustan precedent.7 This suggests that attention needs to be given to the way in which *Tacitus* (as well as Tiberius and others) used Augustan precedent. That is, I take it as axiomatic that when Tacitus emphasizes or focuses upon something, this tells us as much (if not more) about the ideas *he* was exploring as it does about the historical situation he was describing. My argument shall, therefore, proceed on two fronts, seeking to contribute both to a discussion of the *Annals* and to a discussion of Tiberius’ principate. Clearly, Tacitus both selected and in some cases, I shall argue, carefully constructed incidents in order to draw attention to Tiberius’ dependence upon Augustan precedent. Ultimately, however, citations of Augustan precedent were important for both Tiberius and Tacitus: Tiberius chose to emphasize his relationship with Augustus, making it known that he was taking Augustus as “the model of his administration and decrees” because this helped him to explain and negotiate his position as a successor.8 Tacitus also chose to emphasize Tiberius’ dependence on Augustus in the *Annals*, making it central to his characterization of Tiberius, because of his interest in succession and the potential roles of a successor or successors to Augustus. Emphasis upon emphasis, and rhetoric upon rhetoric as it were.

Tiberius’ relationship with Augustus and Augustan precedent is by no means a new issue. With few exceptions, however, treatments of Tiberius’ attitude towards his predecessor have been concerned to explore the (historical) personal and political implications of Tiberius’ willingness to continue the policies of Augustus into his own principate.9 In this context, Tiberius’ publicly proclaimed adherence to Augustan precedent (for which Strabo 6.4.2 provides rare contem-

7. See n.2 (supra) and n.70 (infra).

8. Strabo 6.4.2 is widely taken as contemporary evidence supporting Tacitus’ picture of Tiberius’ reliance on Augustan precedent: Levick 1999 [1976] 82 n.3; Lassere 1983: 885–86, and Dueck 2000: 105–106. In Strabo’s words, Tiberius was a model for Tiberius’ “administration and decrees”: *χαλεπὸν δὲ ἄλλω̋ [διά] ἄλλω̋ τὴν τηλικαύτην ἡγεµονίαν ἢ ἑνὶ ἐπιτρέψαντα ὡ̋ πατρί̋ οὐδέποτε γο/υπσιλονπερισπομενεν εὐπορ/εταπερισπομενεσαι τοσαύτη̋ εἰρήνη̋ καὶ ἀφθονία̋ ἀγαθ/ομεγαπερισπομενεν ὑπ/εταπερισπομενερ/κσιε ῾ Ρωµαίο̋ καὶ το/ιοταπερισπομενε̋ συµµάχοι̋ αὐτ/οµεγαπερισπομενεν, ὅσην Κα/ιοταπερισπομενεσάρ τε ὁ Σεβαστὸ̋ παρέσχεν ἀφ/θυοτεσνγλριγητ ο/υπσιλονασπερπερισπομενε παρέλαβε τὴν ἐ/κσιουσία̋ αὐτοτελ/εταπερισπομενε, καὶ ν/υπσιλονπερισπομενεν ὁ διαδε/κσιάµενο̋ υἱὸ̋ ἐκε̋ιοταπερισπομενε νον παρέχει Τιβέριο̋, κανόνα τ/εταπερισπομενε̋ διοικήσεω̋ καὶ τ/οµεγαπερισπομενε/ιοτασυβομεγα πατρί̋ ὁ διαδε/κσιάµενο̋ υἱὸ̋ ἐκε̒ιοταπερισπομενε νον, καὶ αὐτὸν οἱ πα/ιοταπερισπομενεδε̋ αὐτο/υπσιλονπερισπομενε Γερµανικό̋ τε καὶ ∆ρο/υπσιλονπερισπομενεσο̋ υπουργο/υπσιλονπερισπομενετε̋ τ/οµεγαπερισπομενε/ιοτασυβοmεγα πατρί̋ (*But it were a difficult thing to administer so great a dominion otherwise than by turning it over to one man, as to a father; at all events, never have the Romans and their allies thrived in such peace and plenty as that which was afforded them by Augustus Caesar, from the time he assumed the absolute authority, and is now being afforded them by his son and successor, Tiberius, who is making Augustus the model of his administration and decrees, as are his children, Germanicus and Drusus, who are assisting their father* [Horace L. Jones . Loeb edition]). Strabo’s language here suggests that Augustus is being taken as a “standard,” compare 2.4.2: ἕρατσαθενίζε δὲ τὸν μὲν Εὐήµερον Βεργα/ιοταπερισπομενεον καλε/ιοταπερισπομενε ν, Πυθέα/ιοτασυβαλπηα δὲ πιστεύει ν, καὶ τα/υπσιλονπερισπομενετα µηδὲ ∆ικαιάρχου πιστεύσαντο̋ τὸ 

temporary evidence) has been explained as an inevitable consequence of Tiberius’ personality (his conservatism, his lack of imagination, and his devout attitude towards the newly deified Augustus), but it has also been construed as a deliberate strategy for ensuring the legitimacy of the new princeps. This latter view was most successfully pursued by Barbara Levick who, whilst not willing to rule out some genuine personal devotion to Augustus (the man and god), nevertheless suggested that, rather than doggedly following all the actions and words of Augustus, Tiberius might have found Augustan precedent “convenient to cite” and that it might have been used to justify Tiberian “touches of the tiller.” The idea that Tiberius might use Augustan precedent strategically was subsequently taken up by Josiah Ober; in contrast to Levick, however, he suggested that Tiberius may actually, in one particular instance at least, have invented an Augustan precedent and used it to justify his own policy decisions. Three possible strands of interpretation have thus emerged from previous scholarship on this issue, each of which has used, to a greater or lesser extent, the citations of Augustan precedent in the *Annals*: either Tiberius’ use of an Augustan precedent was inevitable (and was therefore inflexible), or his use of an Augustan precedent represented a deliberate and strategic imitation, or it represented a deliberate and strategic invention. In so far as it is possible to use the *Annals* to form hypotheses about the circumstances of the historical Tiberius, the case-studies which follow extend and add further complexity to the second of these views (Levick’s). I shall suggest that there is not only deliberate and strategic imitation of Augustan precedent, but that this imitation also involved a deliberate and strategic interpretation of Augustan precedent. In addition, I shall argue that a second important potential corollary of Levick’s hypothesis has not been explored. In the *Annals*, Tiberius is shown deploying Augustan precedent strategically not only in order to create

10. Earlier scholarship on Tiberius’ devotion to Augustus is collected by Ober 1982: 327 n.66. On Augustus’ affection for Tiberius and Tiberius’ personal devotion to Augustus, see Suet. Aug. 51.3, *Tib*. 21.4–6 and Tac. *Ann*. 4.52.2 with Levick 1999 [1976]: 82. Shotter 1966 examines the emotion Tacitus reports Tiberius displayed when Augustan precedent was abandoned or Augustus was not shown sufficient respect. That there was something inherently Tiberian in this attitude is often maintained. See, e.g., Miller 1959: 206: “Tiberius lacked constructive imagination and therefore followed faithfully the policies of Augustus”; and, more recently, Gradel 2002: 140: “The long reign of the conservative Tiberius has its main relevance in this context for adding a further twenty-three years to the final Augustan scheme. . . . Under another emperor, with ideas of his own, the principate might well have continued to develop; but Tiberius’ faithful, even rigid, adherence to the Augustan scheme ensured that it did indeed turn into a system in its own right.”


14. I note that Ober’s article was not cited, nor his ideas endorsed, by either Levick or Seager in the revised editions of their influential biographies of Tiberius (Levick 1999 [1976]; Seager 2005 [1972]).
space for those “touches of the tiller” which would allow him to develop his own policies, but also as a means of responding to other people’s use of Augustan precedents, thus allowing Tiberius both to clarify genuine uncertainties and also to establish and maintain control over the interpretation of the Augustan past in the face of alternative memories of Augustus’ actions and words. The extent to which our understanding of Tiberius’ deference towards Augustus’ actions and words is, like so much of our picture of Tiberius, disproportionately dependent upon those actions and words attested in and by the Annals nevertheless makes the conflation of the Tacitean and historical Tiberius peculiarly complicated. Tacitus, more than any other ancient author, was extremely interested in Tiberius’ relationship with Augustan precedent, including and describing citations which do not appear in the accounts of the same instances given by Suetonius and Dio. I shall also suggest, therefore, that there is something distinctly Tacitean about the presentation of Tiberius’ deference to Augustus in the Annals and that this may be attributed to Tacitus’ interest in succession and his exploration of what being a successor to Augustus might entail, preoccupations which led him consistently to foreground Tiberius’ dependence upon the actions and words of Augustus. This means that Tiberius’ use of, and adherence to, Augustan precedent needs to be considered not only in terms of the historicity or plausibility of these instances, but also in terms of the role they play within Tacitus’ narrative itself.

2. WHO SAYS TIBERIUS IS BOUND BY AUGUSTAN PRECEDENT?

INTERPRETING SILENCE, 1.77.1–3

After describing a serious outburst of violence in the theatre, Tacitus gives an account of Haterius Agrippa’s tribunician intervention against proposals allowing praetors to flog actors which were raised during a discussion taking place “before the fathers.” His intervention prompted a rebuke from Asinius Gallus, but met with silence from Tiberius:

actum de ea seditione apud patres, dicebanturque sententiae ut praetoribus ius urgarum in histriones esset. intercessit Haterius Agrippa, tribunus plebei increpitusque est Asinii Galli oratione, silente Tiberio, qui ea simulacra libertatis senatui praebat. ualuit tamen intercessio, quia diuus

15. Tacitus gives vivid portraits of D. Haterius Agrippa (RE 7.2513–14) and Asinius Gallus (RE 15). Both were prominent politicians whom Tacitus on different occasions holds up as representative examples of the way in which politics was conducted during Tiberius’ principate: Haterius (2.51.1; 3.49.1–51.2; 6.4.4); Asinius Gallus (1.12.1–3; 1.13.2; 2.32.2; 2.33.1–4). Some might be tempted to read this incident prosopographically—a clash between a man Tacitus later represents as a Tiberian “insider” (a friend of Germanicus and Drusus) and a man he presents as an opponent of the new princeps—but, although some element of seeking to please Tiberius may have been a factor in Haterius’ intervention (see below), the main issue on which I wish to focus is the treatment of Augustan precedent.
Augustus immunes uerberum histriones quondam responderat, neque fas Tiberio infringere dicta eius.

Tac. Ann. 1.77.1–3

There was discussion of the mutinousness before the fathers, and proposals were expressed that praetors should have the prerogative of flogging in the case of actors. Haterius Agrippa, tribune of the plebs, intervened and was berated in a speech by Asinius Gallus—with silence from Tiberius, who would present the senate with such representations of freedom. The intervention was nevertheless effective, because Divine Augustus had once said in a reply that actors were immune from beating, and it was not permissible for Tiberius to infringe his words. 16

The incident has been widely cited as evidence for Tiberius’ dependence upon Augustan precedent. 17 It is, however, worthwhile to consider how the concluding observation (neque fas Tiberio infringere dicta eius) is reached. How did the senate come to be considering proposals which contravened an Augustan response? What does Haterius Agrippa’s intervention demonstrate about the use of Augustan precedent in the early years of Tiberius’ principate? And why does Tacitus suggest that the effectiveness of the tribune’s intervention depended upon the presence of an Augustan response (ualuit tamen intercessio, quia ...)?

According to Suetonius (Aug. 45.3–4), Augustus had placed restrictions on the time and place at which magistrates might punish actors. The prohibition referred to in our passage, which seems to constitute a general ban on whipping actors, seems to indicate another Augustan policy on the matter. This has led one commentator to suggest that the Augustan response referred to in our passage, which “seems inconsistent with what Suetonius reports,” may indicate a later statement of Augustus (I shall return to this interpretation presently). 18 There were, therefore, at least two, seemingly inconsistent, Augustan precedents in relation to the whipping of actors. In addition, Suetonius knew of times when Augustus had been strict in punishing lawlessness amongst actors and gives as examples the treatment of Stephanio, who was whipped with rods through three theatres, Hylas, who was scourged in the atrium of his house, and Pylades, who was exiled. 19

16. No English translation can preserve the studied ambiguity in the final clause of Tacitus’ Latin about in whose opinion it was not fas. I have chosen to keep fas unqualified, where Woodman emphasizes the attitude and agency of the princeps by taking the dative Tiberio with both fas and infringere: “Tiberius did not allow himself to infringe his words.”

17. Cf. Furneaux 1896 [1883] ad 1.77.4, 4.37.1–3; Miller 1959 ad loc.: “Tiberius lacked constructive imagination and therefore followed faithfully the policies of Augustus”; Koestermann 1963 ad loc; Goodyear 1981 ad loc.; “Tiberius’ deference to Augustan precedent was not restricted to his formal pronouncements”; and Seager 2005 [1972]: 149.

18. Goodyear 1981 ad loc.

19. Stephanio was accused of having a relationship with a Roman matron who had her hair cut short like a boy and, in Suetonius’ account (Aug. 45.3–4), Pylades was accused of obscenity. (D.C. 54.17.4–5, however, reports that Pylades was recalled from exile by Augustus but rebuked
F. R. D. Goodyear and Henry Furneaux both maintain that the proposal put forward for consideration in this meeting was intended to restore powers previously exercised by magistrates at Rome. That is, they argue that the proposal which became the subject of discussion in A.D. 15 was not introducing something new but rather sought to “restore the position prior to [Augustus’] intervention.”20 If this is the case, then these proposals (which sought to restore to praetors a general power to whip actors) contravened both attested Augustan precedents—the original narrowing of their power to whip and the broader ban implied by the Augustan response referred to in this passage.

Before proceeding further, it is constructive to consider the implications of these observations. In a meeting of the Fathers, only months after the deification of Augustus, and in the presence of Tiberius, a proposal was put forward and considered, which contravened all attested Augustan precedent. The significance of this aspect of the story has, to my knowledge, been commented upon. It suggests either that the proposer did not consider that all Augustan precedent was always binding on Tiberius (i.e., the precedent itself was not binding), or that the proposer did not consider that the diverse and confusing plethora of Augustan activities in relation to the punishment of actors could constitute a binding precedent (i.e., where there was Augustan precedent it was binding, but there was no binding precedent to follow here because Augustus’ attested attitudes were contradictory), or that the proposal was made in ignorance of Augustan precedent and that this precedent was only produced during the course of the discussion (i.e., Augustan precedent was binding and there was a binding precedent which should have been followed, but it had been overlooked). All three possibilities are instructive. If the proposal was intended to depart from Augustan policy, then this is an important indication of the way in which Tiberius’ contemporaries understood his role as successor to Augustus. Like the earlier attempt to ignore Augustan practice mentioned at 1.14.4 where Tiberius nominated twelve candidates for the Praetorship, as Augustus had done, but the senate asked him to add further nominations, the proposal in this instance (and any sententia supporting it) manifested no specific expectation that Augustan precedent would be binding or unchangeable.21 It might therefore be conjectured that, at least

20. Goodyear 1981 ad loc. Furneaux 1896 [1883]: “But this resolution appears to have aimed at the restoration of the general power as existing ‘omni loco et tempore, lege vetere’ [Suet. Aug. 45].”

21. Allegations that Augustan precedents were being ignored occur elsewhere in the Annals: Tiberius accuses Germanicus of ignoring Augustan practice at 2.59.2–3 and complains that Augustus’ laws were being held in contempt at 3.54.2. Once (3.29.1), Tiberius’ reference to an Augustan precedent met with derision.
in the very early months of his principate, the idea that Tiberius was bound meticulously to uphold all the actions and words of Augustus was not, in fact, the natural assumption of all of Tiberius’ contemporaries.

Alternatively, the proposal might have been made in the knowledge of some or even all of Augustus’ previous actions and sayings about the punishment of actors, but under the impression that these were so contradictory that they did not constitute anything which could be recognized as a precedent which could be followed. This, in turn, suggests that the originator of the proposal believed not only that the senators had a role to play in policy-making, but also that this role might include the systematization of matters left uncertain on Augustus’ death. Finally, if the proposal was made in ignorance of the details of one or more of these Augustan precedents, then this too is instructive, suggesting that far from being at the forefront of people’s minds, Augustus’ facta and dicta might be unknown, even forgotten.22

Thus, at the heart of a story intended to highlight Tiberius’ devotion to Augustan precedent, lies a precedent which, in the year following Augustus’ death and deification, had already been neglected. Read in this way, Tacitus’ story both proclaims Tiberius’ dependence upon Augustan dicta but also problematizes that dependence, suggestively questioning the ease with which the Augustan past could be imported into the Tiberian present. In order to explore these ideas further, we must next consider Haterius’ intervention.

Haterius’ intervention decisively blocked the proposals.23 Others may have argued against the proposals (although I think this unlikely given that the overall mood of the meeting seems to have been in favor of measures to curb violence), but it was Haterius’ veto which was crucial.24 His exercise of his right of intercessio effectively put an end to the matter—barring Gallus’ rebuke, no doubt a

22. Augustan precedents do occasionally get forgotten. An incident of this kind arose in relation to the procedure for the incorporation of new Sibylline oracles (6.12.1–3). Here, Tiberius had to remind the senate of Augustus’ recommended practice.

23. In the republican period there are, of course, numerous instances of tribunes using their rights of intercessio to prevent the passage of proposed legislation. In the more dramatic of these instances, the intercessio consisted of a physical act, such as snatching the proposal from the hands of a herald or clapping a hand over his mouth (Plu. Cat. Mi. 28.1–2; Cic. Cl. Frg. 30). See further, Bleicken 1968 [1955]: 5–9; Meier 1968; Lintott 1999: 124–25. The exercise of tribunician privileges was often controversial and, by Tacitus’ time, Pliny (Ep. 1.23) complained that some people believed that they had become inanis umbra et sine honore nomen. Pliny himself, however, preferred to believe that his tribunician powers were meaningful. In Tiberian Rome, when the maiestas of the senate was restored (Vell. 2.126.2), the almost stereotypical scenario of a senator upbraiding a tribune might be seen as emblematic of a return to the traditional operation of politics. Under Tiberius, there were restrictions placed on the privileges and powers of tribunes (13.28.2); however, prior to this, a tribunician intervention was successfully exercised by Junius Otho (6.47.1). Later, Rusticus Arulenus was dissuaded from using his right to intervene but on political rather than legal grounds (Thraesa persuaded him that it would ruin his future career) (16.26.5).

24. Livy’s description (45.21.6–7) of the custom that tribunes would listen to arguments from both sides before exercising their veto, sometimes reconsidering their own position as a consequence, may mean that Haterius used his veto to support one side in a debate or discussion, but there is no suggestion in the description of the incident by Tacitus that this was the case.
consequence of his frustration. What is particularly interesting about this passage is that Tacitus purports to explain (by reference to the Augustan response) why the intervention was effective. Ordinarily, a tribune’s veto exercised in the interests of the populus Romanus ought to have been valid ipso facto and, in practice, his reasons for exercising the veto may have been obvious. A vetoed motion might, however, be considered afresh or the original veto itself might be the subject of a further debate. Tacitus’ account is too summary to permit speculation on this point in this instance, but he does seem to suggest that the validity of Haterius’ veto was contingent upon an acceptance of the explanation offered in support of it. I shall return to this below.

What Tacitus has supplied as an explanation of the effectiveness of the veto might also be taken to indicate the reason(s) for exercising the veto—there was a relevant Augustan response and Tiberius considered himself bound to uphold it (uuluit tamen intercessio, quia diuus Augustus immunes uerberum histriones quondam responderat, neque fas Tiberio infringere dicta eius). What, then, does Haterius’ exercise of his tribunician intercessio suggest about the relationship between the Tiberian present and the Augustan past? Did it, on the one hand, serve to clarify Tiberius’ attitude to Augustan precedent or did it, on the other, serve to clarify (perhaps introduce) an Augustan precedent which had to be followed? To put it another way: if the proposal to allow praetors to whip actors was made in the knowledge that it contradicted Augustan precedent, but upon the assumption that Tiberius might not consider himself bound to uphold all Augustan precedent, then Haterius’ intervention served to make clear that Tiberius considered (or Haterius thought that Tiberius did or should consider) himself bound to do so. If, alternatively, the proposal was put forward either on the basis that there was no binding precedent to follow here, or in ignorance of this particular precedent, but on the assumption that, if there were a binding Augustan precedent, Tiberius would follow it, then Haterius’ intervention served to clarify that there was, indeed, a

25. There may appear to be a procedural peculiarity in the way that Gallus is permitted to rebuke with impunity a tribune exercising his right of intercessio. Actions which were viewed as ignoring the tribune’s veto led to C. Cornelius being charged with maiestas under the Sullan lex Cornelia de maiestate: Cic. Corn. 1 fr 4–5; 30 with Crawford 1994: 68–69 and Cic. Vat. 5. Griffin 1973: 202 n.55 reads Cornelius’ offence slightly differently (“the gravamen of the case was his reading of the codex himself because that prevented his fellow-tribune’s use of the veto”) but it is clear that the veto was used, then allegedly ignored. Cicero had to undertake considerable special pleading in order to win this case. He argued that Cornelius had observed the veto, and had only read over his law in order to review it for himself: Cic. Var. 5 with Crawford 1994: 69. In this case, I would suggest that Gallus’ rebuke was simply a frustrated outburst (not intended to challenge the veto). Such an outburst might also lend weight to the hypothesis that Haterius did not accompany his original intervention with an explanation of his veto, but only produced his Augustan “trump card” after Gallus’ rebuke. Gallus thus rebuked Haterius not on the grounds that he disputed the presence or potency of the Augustan response, but from frustration at a typical (or sycophantic) interruption and without knowing the reasons for his intervention.

26. See infra n.31.

27. On the possible fate of a vetoed motion, see Lintott 1999: 84–85.
precedent which could be followed. Either way, this little episode suggests that the incorporation of the Augustan past into the Tiberian present was by no means straightforward.

So far, I have been asking questions about the (hypothetical) historical circumstances surrounding the incident—how did it come about and what did Haterius’ intervention serve to clarify? There are elements of Tacitus’ narration of the incident which also deserve closer attention. Tacitus’ narrative of the discussion begins with proposals which were vetoed, but continues by describing the numerous other proposals aimed at curbing violence which were passed. Haterius’ intervention is thus presented as an isolated incident not in keeping with the overall tenor of the meeting and, moreover, one for which he was rebuked. In the light of this, the use of *quondam* in the passage is interesting. *quondam* must carry the implication that what Augustus said “once (upon a time)” should continue to apply. But, as we have already seen, Augustus’ attitude toward the punishment of actors was not consistent and it might have been possible for a diligent tribune (or a diligent flatterer of Tiberius) to select a particular precedent from among a number of available options. *quondam* is, thus, potentially ironic. Tacitus suggests that, in the light of several, even contradictory, actions and words of Augustus, the response produced by Haterius represented a particular and selective interpretation of Augustus’ position. The specificity of this interpretation is clearly (perhaps ironically) underlined in Tacitus’ narrative. This, also, problematizes the way in which we read the concluding observation about Tiberius’ general unwillingness to infringe Augustus’ *dicta*. The incident to which this concluding statement is appended not only involves the production of an apparently neglected Augustan response, but the production of this response is also insinuated to be the consequence of a clever manipulation, elevating a response which supported Haterius’ veto over others which did not.

Tacitus’ implication that it was the *explanation*, rather than the *intercessio* itself, which ensured the effectiveness of the veto also requires investigation. Why does Tacitus suggest that the tribune’s *intercessio* was not, itself, sufficient to block the proposals but that its success, in this instance, depended upon the presence of a response of Augustus which Tiberius was obliged to uphold (*ualuit tamen*

28. Numerous decrees were passed (1.77.4) including a ban on senators entering the homes of pantomimes, restricting contact between pantomime actors and equestrians in public and giving praetors the power to penalize unruly spectators. On restrictions on the participation by members of the upper strata of Roman society in theatrical and gladiatorial events, see Levick 1983.

29. I am indebted, on the significance of *quondam*, to the observations of Ellen O’Gorman, *per litteras*.

30. *OLD* s.v. “quondam” 1(c).

31. A conscientious tribune might reasonably consider that the treatment of actors fell within his remit as the champion of the people’s interests—not, of course, because of an interest in the wellbeing of the actors themselves, but because of their popularity. Another tribune is found, later in the *Annals*, exercising his right of *auxilia* to secure the release of some unruly fans who had been taken into custody by the praetor (13.28.1).
intercessio, quia ...)? In other words, why does the effectiveness of the tribune’s intervention appear to need an explanation? In the passage *tamen* and *quia* both emphasize the contingency of the effectiveness of Haterius’ *intercessio*. This, in turn, seems to assume both that an explanation was required before the veto could be effective and that there needed to be an arbiter of the success or failure of the veto. Or so, at least, the passage has been read: “Tiberius allowed Haterius Agrippa to veto the motion put to the senate by the praetors, that actors should be rendered liable to flogging, because Augustus had declared them immune.”

Tiberius’ silence on this matter, and the absence of any suggestion that the veto was subsequently debated, suggest that, in order to understand the force of *tamen* and *quia*, we must continue to unpack the passage.

Each of the sentences which describe Haterius’ intervention and its result ends with an extrapolation from the particular incident to Tiberius’ general policy. At the end of the first sentence, Tacitus remarks that Tiberius’ silence was intended to encourage liberty in the senate, a liberty which, paradoxically, the presence of the princeps undermined (*ea simulacra libertatis senatui praebebat*). At the end of the second sentence, he notes Tiberius’ general unwillingness to infringe the *dicta* of Augustus (*neque fas Tiberio infringere dicta eius*). Each sentence thus ends by drawing attention to a key characteristic of Tiberius’ principate as it is described in the *Annals*. We might, indeed, conjecture that the story itself was included because it illustrated these two points so neatly. The veto was *not* technically dependent upon the justification offered in support of it, but it suited Tacitus to suggest that it was since this allowed him to imply that it was the fact that Haterius cited a response of Augustus which carried the day. The whole episode has been carefully constructed in order for Tacitus to draw attention to and emphasize the importance of Augustan precedent in Tiberius’ principate.

Who, then, said that Tiberius was bound to follow the *dicta* of Augustus? The statement that it was *not* *fas* for Tiberius to infringe Augustus’ *dicta* is the strongest of all the statements made to this effect in the Tacitean corpus. The explanation constitutes what is effectively an etymology of *nefas* (*ne-... fas*), constructing the infringement of Augustus’ words as impiety and sacrilege and focusing attention on the divinity of Augustus. We might, on the one hand, read the explanation as constituting Tacitus’ account of Haterius’ justification. If this is the case, then the language of the passage highlights the forcefulness with which Haterius presented Tiberius’ adherence to the Augustan response. As a tactic, such strong language functioned to prohibit flexibility. It was hardly a neutral recollection of an (apparently neglected) Augustan response. On this reading, Tacitus shows Haterius seeking to impose devotion to (a particular interpretation of) an Augustan precedent upon all who were present. This too has potential implications for the way in which we might understand the function that Augustan precedent could have in the relationship between Tiberius and the senate. By explaining the reasons

for his intervention Haterius might well have hoped to win favor with Tiberius. On
the other hand, his explanation might also have been an attempt to hoist Tiberius
by his own petard. By casting Tiberius’ obligations not to infringe Augustus’
response in such strong language, Haterius placed Tiberius (who also possessed a
veto by virtue of his *tribunicia potestas*) in a position where he was obliged to
support (or, at least could not oppose) his *intercessio*. Thus, Haterius’ statement
(if it is to be understood as Haterius’ statement), effectively committed Tiberius
on this issue, despite the *princeps’* silence.

I suggested above, however, that the way in which the incident is constructed
in the *Annals* demonstrates Tacitus’ particular interest in the importance of the
Augustan response. The claim that Tiberius would not infringe Augustus’ words,
which, in the passage, adds what is, in effect, an explanation for the success of
the *intercessio*, might, therefore equally constitute a Tacitean gloss on Haterius’
citation of an Augustan response—a gloss which proceeded from the particular
incident to a statement of Tiberius’ universal policy.

No doubt Tiberius advertised his intention of, as Strabo says, taking Augustus
as a model. This did not, however, as Levick has demonstrated, bind him to
replicate all the actions and words of Augustus. It might, nevertheless, mean
that he could be expected, encouraged or persuaded to uphold particular *dicta*
when these were brought to his attention. I have imagined one such scenario
above. It is also possible, however, that Tacitus took it upon *himself* to explain
the implications of a citation of a response of Augustus. If this is the case, then
the strong language of the explanation, the suggestion that it was sacrilege for Tiberius
to infringe Augustus’ *dictum*, is not to be imputed to Tiberius’ contemporaries, but
comes from Tacitus as the narrator of the incident. This gloss would constitute the
boldest statement Tacitus makes anywhere in his writing about the nature of the
limits placed upon Tiberius by his dependence on Augustus. In one sense, this is
only a difference in emphasis (in this incident who, in the reader’s perception, has
chosen to stress Tiberius’ dependence on Augustus’ *dicta* in such strong terms?),
and, of course, in one sense it is all an indication of the narrator’s decisions. Given
the paucity of non-Tacitean statements about Tiberius’ dependence on Augustan
precedent, however, the difference in emphasis is important.

3. WHAT DID AUGUSTUS MEAN? INTERPRETING
AUGUSTUS, 2.37.1–38.5

But did it obviously follow (for Tiberius’ contemporaries or for Tacitus) that
once an Augustan *dictum* had been cited, Tiberius had to follow it? Certainly
Tiberius, like the rest of the senate, had sworn an oath to uphold the formal

33. No statement in terms this strong is attributed even by Tacitus to Tiberius himself: 4.37.4.
Elsewhere, Tacitus remarks that Tiberius took Augustus’ *consilium* as his *praeciput* (*Agr.* 13.3.)
but this is not as bold a claim as may occur here.
pronouncements of Augustus and this, along with any indication he gave that he was taking Augustus as a model, must have generated widespread expectations that he would follow the less formal actions and words of Augustus as well. At the same time, however, Tiberius’ ability to interpret the actions and words of Augustus (e.g. by distinguishing between dicta and lex) could, on occasion, be a means of explaining a departure from Augustan precedent.

In the Annals, Tiberius is often shown having to assert his ability to interpret the actions and words of Augustus in the face of other, competing, interpretations made by people whose experience of Augustus is represented as giving rise to expectations about how Tiberius should act. These people regularly articulate their expectations by references to Augustus. The frequency with which these kinds of encounters occur has, so far, gone unrecognized. Nevertheless, incidents of this kind are important, since they add further complexity both to our understanding of Tacitus’ interpretation of the use of Augustan precedent during Tiberius’ principate, and also to those hypotheses which we might make about the context within which Tiberius himself and his contemporaries were operating. Among these various instances, the speech attributed to Cremutius Cordus (4.34.2–35.4) in which Tacitus depicts him reminding Tiberius of Caesar’s leniency towards Cicero and Augustus’ leniency towards Livy (“the Pompeian”), not only pleads for Tiberius to follow Augustan practice but also draws specific attention to the way in which, in Tiberian Rome (in the Annals), people are judged in terms of words as well as actions: uterba mea, patres conscripti, arguuntur, adeo factorum innocens sum. Agrippina (4.52.2) offers a somewhat different basis for her claims to authority in an argument with Tiberius. More than any experience of life under Augustus, she claims insight into Augustus’ thoughts because his divine spirit has transmigrated into his granddaughter: non in effigies mutas diuinum spiritum transfusum: se imaginem ueram, caelesti sanguine ortam, intellegere discrimen, suscipere sordes (“his divine spirit had not been transfused into mute likenesses: she was his real image, the offspring of his heavenly blood. She understood the crisis, she said, and was adopting tatters”).

An early direct speech generated by Tacitus for Tiberius in the Annals explores the way in which the meaning of an Augustan precedent could be contested (2.37.1–38.5). The impoverished senator M. Hortulus petitioned Tiberius for

34. See further, Martin and Woodman 1989 ad loc. who note that Agrippina is “resorting to the popular language of Pythagoreanism (transfusum) which believed in the transmigration of souls.” A particularly important vehicle for exploring the interplay of expectations about Augustan precedents and the potential role for Divus Augustus under Tiberius were maestas trials which sometimes functioned as “test cases,” in order to clarify particular points of interpretation as Bauman has shown (Bauman 1974: 71–104).

35. On direct speech in the Annals, see supra n.6. The incident was accepted as plausibly taken from senatorial acta by Syme 1958: 281–82. Goodyear 1981: 304, whilst dismissing the claim that the speech might rely on the acta senatus, nevertheless believed that something of the substance of the speech might have been transmitted. It will be clear that my argument is not affected by the historicity or otherwise of the incident.
financial assistance in order that his family not sink into poverty. References to Augustus recur throughout Tacitus’ humorous account of the scene. Augustus first plays a key role in Hortalus’ petition: Hortalus claimed that his children became his, not through any wish of his own, but because the princeps advised him to have children: hos ... non sponte sustuli sed quia princeps monebat. It was in fact a command from Augustus which induced him to marry in the first place: iussus ab imperatore uxorem duxi. He thus considered his children alumni of the divine Augustus and (in Tacitus’ [re-]imagining of the scene) appealed to Augustus’ statue, thus dramatically invoking his authority visually as well as verbally.

Augustus then plays a role in Tiberius’ response. Tiberius’ speech begins with a statement of reasons for being careful with the expenditure of the state. He goes on to complain about the breach of proper procedure as well (the introduction of private matters into a public meeting), and, returning to the problem of state expenditure, explains that Augustus had not intended that money should always be given to Hortalus:

dedit tibi, Hortale, diuus Augustus pecuniam, sed non compellatus, nec ea lege, ut semper daretur. languescet alioque industria, intendetur socordia, si nullus ex se metus aut spes, et secure omnes aliena subsidia expectabunt, sibi ignau, nobis graues.

Tac. Ann. 2.38.3

Divine Augustus gave you money, Hortalus, but without being entreated and without any condition that it should always be given. Besides, industriousness will languish and listlessness will intensify, if no dread or hope comes from within oneself and all, without any concern, expect support from someone else, shirkers on their own account and weighing heavily upon us.

Tacitus claimed that the senate clearly wished to relieve Hortalus’ distress and it was this which prompted Tiberius into a perverse and obstinate refusal of their (unspoken) desires (inclinatio senatus incitamentum Tiberio fuit quo promptius adversaretur, 2.38.1). And yet, as Goodyear noted, Tiberius’ reasons for initially declining to give more money seem reasonable enough. In the end,

36. Recent discussion of the Hortali has centered on the discovery of a fragment of the fasti which mentions a Marcus Hortalus, praetor peregrinus for A.D. 25. An overview of the contested interpretations of the inscription and its implications for the Hortali is provided by Gordon et al. 1997: 216 n.119. A family tree was attempted by Geiger 1970.
37. On the humor of this account, see Sumner 1966: 81 with Goodyear 1981 ad loc.
38. Suetonius Tib. 47 repeats the claim that Hortalus bore sons after encouragement from Augustus, but, unlike Tacitus, Suetonius believed that Hortalus had not brought his situation to the attention of Tiberius: plerosque modestia et pudore deterruit, in quibus Hortalum, Quinti Hortensi oratoris nepotem, qui permodica re familiarii auctore Augusto quattuor liberos tulerat.
39. O’Gorman 2000: 60–61 shows how Hortensius the orator, Hortalus and his children are represented as imagines in this passage.
40. Goodyear 1981 ad loc.
in Tacitus’ account, a compromise was reached whereby Tiberius gave money to Hortalus’ children in the form of a one-off grant of two hundred thousand sesterces.

The passage has generally been used to illustrate the ongoing problem of senatorial degradation which faced both Augustus and Tiberius. Luxury, extravagance and consequent bankruptcy, coupled with the repercussions of the proscriptions, meant that many of the old families of the senatorial elite were no longer able to fulfill the census requirements. Augustus had, it seems, been unfailingly generous towards these men. Tiberius too appears to have been willing to give assistance. Indeed, the case of Hortalus stands out in our sources because it represented an unexpected departure from the norm: *censusque quorundam senatorum iuuit. quo magis mirum fuit quod preces M. Hortali, nobilis iuuenis, in paupertate manifesta superbius accepisset* (2.37.1).

Alongside this general reading, I would like to propose another. This passage is presented by Tacitus as a dialogue about the Augustan past and its influence on the Tiberian present in which Tiberius was faced with the prospect of a different understanding of what Augustus’ actions and words had been and had to assert his own understanding. Tiberius challenged the interpretation of the Augustan past offered by Hortalus (and possibly endorsed by the senate). He said that Hortalus had misunderstood the intentions of the divine Augustus, thereby undermining Hortalus’ claim by reinterpreting Augustus’ actions. In doing so, Tacitus has Tiberius draw attention to the fact that Augustus’ bequest was not made under compulsion, nor following a law (*dedit tibi, Hortale, diuus Augustus pecuniam, sed non compellatus, nec ea lege, ut semper daretur*) and thus, he did not consider himself bound to follow it. Within this speech, therefore, and in contrast to his famous remark that he considered the *facta* and *dicta* of Augustus as law, Tacitus presents Tiberius distinguishing between the formal, legal, pronouncements of Augustus and his non-binding actions. The final outcome (a payment to Hortalus’ sons) represents a compromise—on matters of finance, but *not* on the interpretation of Augustus’ actions and words—between the senate’s desire to relieve the distress of a fellow senator and Tiberius’ wish to be careful with the expenditure of the state and not to encourage dependency on further concessions. It was a compromise in which both sides had drawn on Augustus’ actions and words in order to support their positions.

Like 1.77.1–3, this incident is also widely regarded as reflecting something historical. Indeed, it seems plausible that this kind of exchange, in which both sides offered an interpretation of the Augustan past, would frequently have taken place at a time when institutionalizing, commemorating and defining the actions and words of Augustus was a task high on everybody’s agenda. Suetonius’ statement that Hortalus did not bring his situation to the attention of Tiberius

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should, nevertheless, be noted. At the very least, it suggests that the evidence for the story is insecure. Tacitus’ inclusion of the encounter, and his detailed and dramatic description of the way in which Augustan precedent was used by both Hortalus and Tiberius, again demonstrates his particular interest in Tiberius’ relationship with the actions and words of Augustus.

4. IMITATION AND INTERPRETATION, 4.37.1–38.3

1.77.1–3 is one of the best-known references in the Annals to Tiberius’ deference towards the dicta of Augustus. A second oft-cited passage is 4.37.1–3. In this passage, Tacitus has Tiberius say that he observes Augustus’ actions and words as laws (qui omnia facta dictaque eius uice legis obseruem). The whole speech attributed to Tiberius (4.37.1–38.3) nonetheless demonstrates the complexity of Tacitus'/Tiberius’ treatment of Augustan precedent, allowing Tacitus to explore processes of imitation and interpretation and the potential problems inherent in attempts to follow Augustus. Like 1.77.1–3, discussed above, this is a passage which also requires considerable unpacking.

“scio, patres conscripti, constantiam meam a plerisque desideratam, quod Asiae ciuitatibus nuper idem istud potentiibns non sim aduersatus. ergo et prioris silentii defensionem et quid in futurum statuerim simul aperiem. cum dius Augustus sibi atque urbi Romae templum apud Pergamum sisti non prohibuisset, qui omnia facta dictaque eius uice legis obseruem, placitum iam exemplum promptius secutus sum, quia cultui meo ueneratio senatus adiungebatur. ceterum, ut semel recepisse uniam habuerit, ita per omnis prouincias effigie numinum sacrari ambitiosum, superbun; et uanescet Augusti honor, si promiscis adulationibus uulgatur. ego me, patres conscripti, mortalem esse et hominum officia fungi satisque habere si locum principem impieam et uos testor et meminisse posteros uolo . . . .”

Tac. Ann. 4.37.1–38.3

“I know, conscript fathers, that consistency has been demanded of me by many people, because I did not oppose the communities of Asia when recently they sought the very same thing which is under discussion.

42. See supra n.38.
43. Commentators have read Tiberius’ statement as important evidence for his general policy of adherence to Augustan precedent. Martin and Woodman 1989 ad loc. refer the reader to 1.77.3 and to the treatments of Levick 1999 [1976], Seager 2005 [1972], and Brunt 1984: 425 n.7. Furneaux 1896 [1883] ad loc. also refers the reader to 1.77.4. Cf. Shotter 1989 ad loc. and Koestermann 1965 ad loc. who notes that Tiberius demonstrated, in this passage, his inability to take new directions: “Die Hinweise des Tiberius auf das Vorbild des Augustus, dem er ständig nacheifere, entbehren freilich in der Darstellung des Tacitus nicht des malitiosen Beigeschmackes. Anderseits verdeutlichen sie nur zu sehr, daß der zweite Princeps nicht die Kraft und auch nicht die Gabe besaß, sich von der Politik seines Vorgängers zu lösen und neue Wege der Politik zu beschreiten.”
Therefore I shall expound simultaneously both a defense of my previous silence and what I have decided for the future.

“Since Divine Augustus had not prevented a temple to himself and to the City of Rome from being placed at Pergamum, and given that I observe all his actions and words as if law, I followed the already agreeable example more readily because the cult of myself was being joined by veneration of the senate. Yet, though a single acceptance may prove pardonable, to be consecrated throughout all provinces by the likeness of divinities would be aggrandizing, haughty; and honor for Augustus will vanish if it is vulgarized by indiscriminate sycophancies. Yet, though a single acceptance may prove pardonable, to be consecrated throughout all provinces by the likeness of divinities would be aggrandizing, haughty; and honor for Augustus will vanish if it is vulgarized by indiscriminate sycophancies.

“That I am mortal, conscript fathers, and perform the duties of men, and consider it satisfying if I fill the place of princeps—these things I both call on you to witness and wish posterity to remember.”

The circumstances Tacitus describes as the context for the speech are important for understanding the claim made within the speech that Tiberius was following the actions and words of Augustus like laws. The delegation from Farther Spain wished to follow the example of communities in Asia and set up a shrine to Tiberius and his mother. There were, however, Tacitus says, rumors criticizing Tiberius for having accepted the shrine in Asia since this was seen as “deviating toward self-aggrandizement.” Consequently, Tiberius decided that he needed to respond to these rumors. Three things need to be noted: first, the context in which Tiberius is presented making his speech is a hostile one; second, the speech is necessary because there is confusion about Tiberius’ attitude towards his own (not Augustus’) divinity; third, Tiberius is seen to be “deviating towards self-aggrandizement” and away from what Tacitus says was already his practice of spurning honors. Prima facie, therefore, the original situation as represented by Tacitus was concerned primarily with Tiberius’ actions and the confusion and criticism that they had given rise to.

(Tacitus’) Tiberius’ speech itself is presented as, first, an explanation and justification of these actions (4.37.2–3) and, second, an elaboration of his general policy (4.38.1–3). As was the case in the two instances already discussed, it is the proffering of an explanation which provides the occasion for reference to Augustus to be made. Again, it is worthwhile to consider how these references function in Tiberius’ response (figure 1).

44. 4.37.1: qua occasione Caesar, ualidus alioqui spernendis honoribus et respondendum ratus iis, quorum rumore arguebatur in ambitionem flexisse, huiusce modi orationem coepit.
Complaint
Tiberius demonstrated a lack of consistency when he accepted cult worship in Asia but rejected cult in Farther Spain.

Tiberius’ acceptance of cult in Asia indicated that he was becoming self-aggrandizing and moving away from his previous policy of refusing honors.

Response
Augustus did not prevent a cult to himself and Roma in Pergamum.
Cult in Asia was particularly acceptable since it included the senate.

A single acceptance might be pardonable but to be consecrated throughout all the provinces would be aggrandizing.
Honor for Augustus would vanish if vulgarized by indiscriminate sycophancy.

In relation to the confusion he had caused by accepting cult in Asia, but rejecting one in Farther Spain, Tiberius focused upon the former and offered two different justifications for his actions. First, that his acceptance of a shrine had an Augustan precedent (the temple of Augustus and Roma at Pergamum) and second, that, in Asia, the cult of himself and his mother had been joined by cult offered to the senate. These two justifications are preceded by the statement that the communities in Asia sought precisely the same thing (*quod Asiae ciuitatibus nuper idem istud petentibus*) and they are linked in the speech by the claim that Tiberius observes all Augustus’ actions and words as if law. Tiberius claims, therefore, first that the two requests have been seen as essentially the same and second that his actions in relation to the Asian cult were consistent with Augustan precedent and, consequently, could not represent a lack of *constantia*. But the two justifications do not actually fit together as nicely as his statement supposes. The cult of Tiberius, Livia and the senate, was *not* the same as cult offered only to Tiberius and Livia; nor was the cult of Augustus and Roma the same as the cult of Tiberius, Livia and the senate.

In the narrative, when faced with hostile criticism, Tiberius sought to confuse matters by implying two (false) equivalencies—that the cult under discussion was the same as the cult in Asia and that the cult permitted in Asia was the same as the cult of Augustus and Roma. He bolstered what was at most a tenuous parallel of two shrines (one to Augustus and Roma, the other to Tiberius, Livia and the senate) with a bold statement that this *represented* taking Augustus’ actions and words as if law. Not only does the careful construction of this argument confuse the distinction between the Asian, Spanish and Pergamene cults, but this confusion itself created the space for the addition of an otherwise unnecessary reference to Augustus. Thus, if, instead of stating that the cults were the same, Tiberius had distinguished

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45. Martin and Woodman 1989 ad loc. note the contrast of *constantiam ... desideratam* with *flexisse*.

between them, accepting cult in Asia on the grounds that the senate was also included, whilst rejecting it in Farther Spain because the senate was not included, this would have precisely, and entirely, addressed the complaint. A statement widely regarded as symptomatic of Tiberius’ policy towards Augustus is, within the passage itself, a bold gambit, a tactical (and contentious) rhetorical bluff.

Consider the next mention of Augustus in the speech. Tiberius, attempting to address the rumors that his acceptance of cult in Asia was self-aggrandizing, adopted a conciliatory approach based, again, on two separate grounds (fig. 1). First, that “a single acceptance may prove pardonable” but that to do so throughout all the provinces would indeed be self-aggrandizing and haughty. Second, that if he were consecrated in all the provinces, honor for Augustus would disappear, vulgarized by indiscriminate sycophancies. Here, Tiberius deflated the alleged rumors by directly addressing them, asserting that once was pardonable and that it would not happen again. Reference to Augustus was deployed in order to present what Tiberius said would be his future practice in the best possible light—preventing honor for Augustus from becoming debased. Note, however, that Tiberius’ first statement, his concern that he would appear self-aggrandizing and haughty if he went on accepting these honors, again precisely (and entirely) covers the grounds of complaint that Tacitus presents in the original context for the speech. Reference to Augustus was, again, strictly unnecessary, but functioned within Tacitus’ construction of the speech to add authority to Tiberius’ statement.47

So far, I have suggested that references to Augustus are deployed rhetorically in Tiberius’ responses to his critics. The relationship between Tiberius’ explanation of his past actions and his elaboration of a future policy is, however, complicated. Each of the two sections of the speech (4.27.2–3; 4.28.1–3) contains a statement which has been construed as a characteristic maxim of (Tacitus’) Tiberius. In the first, Tiberius comments that he observes Augustus’ actions and words as if laws. In the second, Tiberius proclaims that he is mortal and content to fulfill the duties of the (human) princeps. How, if at all, do these two statements relate to each other? Does Tiberius’ second statement (concerning his own mortality) constitute a departure from, or a reinforcement of, the view he proclaims in his first statement (that he observes Augustus’ actions and words as if laws)? In other words, how many Augustan precedents are at issue here and how do they relate to each other? In the first part of his speech (4.37.2–3), Tacitus has Tiberius himself cite as a precedent of Augustus (which he followed) his decision to allow a temple to himself and Roma to be set up in Pergamum. In the passage, this is the only Augustan precedent which is clearly labeled and identified as such. In a frequently cited article, L. R. Taylor nevertheless argued that Tiberius’ decision to then reject further cult to himself was a consequence

47. It is tempting to speculate that the addition of references to Augustus here is entirely rhetorical (Tacitean?), since the complaints might have been considered adequately answered without them.
of the fact that he had no Augustan precedent to follow here. Thus, the lack of an Augustan precedent itself became a precedent to which Tiberius adhered. She then argued that Tiberius’ second statement, insisting that he be treated as a mortal, represented yet another Augustan precedent (construed by Taylor and then M. P. Charlesworth as a “formula” provided by Augustus for refusing honors). On one reading, therefore, Tiberius relied entirely on Augustan precedents here, using them to justify both of his past decisions and his future policy. The apparent inconsistency of accepting cult in Asia, but rejecting it in Farther Spain, could, thus, be explained by reference to an unwillingness to depart from Augustus’ refusal of honors. Likewise, on this reading, the two general statements Tiberius makes (that he follows Augustus’ actions and words as laws; that he is to be treated as a mortal) can be read not as two potentially conflicting policies, but as effectively stating a necessary consequence of adopting Augustus’ actions and words as laws: just as Tiberius followed Augustus’ actions and words as laws (in the past), so, in adopting an Augustan refusal of divine honors during his lifetime, he will continue to follow Augustus in the future.

At the heart of this view lies a contradiction, however. In the passage Tiberius does not present himself as lacking an Augustan precedent. Instead, by constructing the case of the Asian cult as the same as that of the Spanish cult, he justifies both on the basis of the Pergamene example. Indeed, the way that Tacitus presents Augustan precedent in the speech of Tiberius suggests that he saw (or wanted to represent) Tiberius’ rejection of cult in Farther Spain as a Tiberian initiative and a departure from an Augustan example. This departure was justified in the speech, not by a lack of Augustan precedent, but by Tiberius’ desire to uphold the honor of Augustus and not to appear self-aggrandizing or haughty. Tiberius’ statement of his policy for the future is also presented in the speech, not as following the example established by Augustus, but as prompted by Tiberius’ own views about his mortality. Tiberius’ rejection of cult in Farther Spain is, therefore, consistent with (what is presented as) his own policy. That this policy is presented by Tacitus as Tiberian is clear from the discussion of people’s reactions to it:

*quod alii modestiam, multi, quia diffideret, quidam ut degeneris animi interpretabantur. optumos quippe mortalium altissima cupere . . . melius*

48. Taylor 1929.
50. Taylor 1929; Charlesworth 1939. Both are cited by Fishwick 1987 vol. 1.2: 198 as “rightly caution[ing] against taking Julio-Claudian ‘refusals’ too literally.”
51. Fishwick 1989 vol. 1.2: 158: “The reign of Tiberius is therefore critical to the development of the imperial cult in the Western Roman empire. Where Augustus had permitted the worship of himself in association with Roma, Tiberius charted a fresh course by emphasising the cult of his deified father. . . . From all our sources have to tell the new direction given to provincial ruler worship looks to have been very much in line with Tiberius’ personal outlook on the awkward problem of divine honours.” See also Fishwick 2002: 41–42. Levick 1999 [1976]: 139 and Martin and Woodman 1989 ad loc. assume that this is a Tiberian innovation.
Augustum, qui sperauerit. cetera principibus statim adesse: unum insatiabiliter parandum, prosperam sui memoriam, nam contemptu famae contemni virtutes.

Tac. Ann. 2.38.4–5

Some interpreted this as modestness, many that he was diffident, others as the sign of a degenerate spirit: it was the best of mortals, they said, who had the highest desires . . . better was the reaction of Augustus, who had hoped. *Principes* enjoyed immediate access to everything else; they should prepare insatiably for one thing alone—a favourable memory of themselves. Contempt for fame meant contempt for virtues.

Not only is Tiberius’ attitude presented as in keeping with his characteristic *modestia*, it is also specifically contrasted with the attitude of Augustus, “who had hoped.”\(^{52}\) On this reading, Tiberius’ two key statements (that he observes Augustus’ actions and words as laws; that he was to be treated as a mortal), present a general attitude towards Augustan precedent from which, in matters of his own divinity, Tacitus suggests that Tiberius departed.

The passage points to two of the central ideas pursued in this article. Augustus’ actions and words were, for Tiberius, binding as laws and yet, like laws, they required explication and interpretation.\(^{53}\) By explaining that the inclusion of the senate in the Asian cult had helped to persuade him to follow the “already agreeable” example of Augustus, by casting further imitation in negative terms (“aggrandizing, haughty”) and by foregrounding his anxieties about preventing the honor of Augustus from being vulgarized, Tiberius effectively and tactfully made his dependence upon this precedent appear contingent and, ultimately, freed himself from the expectation that he would imitate Augustus’ example in this instance. Having done this, Tiberius was then able to clarify how such matters should be dealt with in the future.

Tiberius’ ability to be the interpreter of laws is asserted at the end of his speech (4.38.3), when he prays that the gods and goddesses will grant him an understanding of human and divine law (*proinde socios ciues et deos et deas ipsas precor, hos, ut mihi ad finem usque uitaes quietam et intellegentem humani diuinique iuris mentem duint*). Read in conjunction with the extended interpretation he has already proffered (which he represents as following the *facta* and *dicta* of Augustus as if laws), the speech attempts to assert both Tiberius’ monopoly over the interpretation of law, and also his desire (real or rhetorical) to be held accountable for those interpretations (*illos, ut quandoque concessero, cum laude et bonis recordationibus facta atque famam nominis mei prosequantur*).


\(^{53}\) Martin and Woodman 1989 ad loc. note that *obseruem* “keeps alive the legal flavour (*OLD* 4a).”
The (passive) participation of others in this process of interpreting the law as witnesses and the reference to posterity (uos testor et meminisse posteros uolo) also, like 1.77.1–3 and 2.37.1–38.3, signal the role of collective involvement in propagating imperial exempla. Although, in this part of the speech, Tiberius is looking forward to a time when it is his actions and words that will be remembered, the statement carries clear connotations for the context within which he was currently operating—the actions and words of Augustus had also been collectively witnessed and were remembered.

Tacitus uses the whole incident to explore a process. The speech begins with allegations that Tiberius had departed not (following the complaints as they are presented in Tacitus’ account) from Augustan precedent, but from his own previous practice. The first section of Tiberius’ speech then introduces Augustus and skillfully changes a discussion of Tiberius’ practice into a speech about an Augustan precedent. In what follows, Tacitus explores in detail the way in which Augustan precedent could be used by Tiberius. It is, in effect, a careful examination of just how Augustus’ consilium became Tiberius’ praeceptum. That this is an examination of a process which invited assessment, rather than being simply a kind of automatic imitative response on the part of Tiberius, is signaled at various points in Tacitus’ account: he begins by presenting Tiberius responding to criticism; Tiberius himself is made to acknowledge that his action be assessed in the future; and the episode concludes with a collection of responses to Tiberius’ general policy as it has been articulated in the preceding speech.

Tacitus’ description of Tiberius’ reasons for refusing this request point to some of the key issues facing any (but in particular Augustus') successor: what should or could be done with Augustan precedent and especially with the expectations generated by Augustan practice? How could a successor create space within which to be innovative (for innovation was undeniably necessary)? How should a successor deal with two separate, though obviously related, entities—Augustus the man (the generator of actions and words) and Augustus the god? In this instance, constructing his rejection of cult in Farther Spain in terms of a defense of Augustus’ honor freed Tiberius to implement his own ideas about the nature of the living emperor’s divinity. Thus, Tacitus explores the way in which the promotion of Augustan precedent and the commemoration of Augustus, both important tasks of the successor, could occasionally be in tension with one another, a tension which required Tiberius to be both selective and creative in his interpretation of Augustus’ example. Tacitus also explores how this creativity might create the space for those personalized “touches of the tiller” which allowed Tiberius to distinguish his own from his predecessor’s policies.

Tacitus demonstrates how Tiberius’ ability not only to (selectively) imitate but also to interpret Augustan precedent would be crucial. He uses this passage to explore that process of interpretation, and the freedoms and limitations placed upon Tiberius as a successor. Within the narrative economy of the Annals (and, of course, plausibly outside it), Tiberius needed to establish a monopoly over
reference to the Augustan past, both because he was required to adjudicate in cases of genuine uncertainty, and because it gave him the flexibility he required as a successor to make “touches of the tiller.” In order to do this, he needed to establish and defend his right to be the best interpreter of the collective inheritance—the best interpreter of the Augustan past. But his decisions were always open to scrutiny and, as this incident suggests, even to criticism.

5. WHEN IS THE PAST THE AUGUSTAN PAST? CONTROLLING THE INTERPRETATION OF THE (AUGUSTAN) PAST, 6.3.1–3

One final incident remains to be discussed: Tiberius’ response (by letter) to Iunius Gallio’s proposal that Praetorians who had completed their service be allowed seats in the XIV rows at the theatre. Ruth Morello has shown that Tacitus made “a deliberate literary decision” to characterize Tiberius as a letter-writer in the *Annals.* Tacitus’ version of Tiberius’ letter in response to Gallio’s proposal is particularly interesting in this respect, since, like the incidents already discussed, it too involves a reference to Augustan precedent:

at Iunium Gallionem, qui censuerat ut praetoriani, actis stipendiis, ius apiscerentur in quattuordecim ordinibus sedendi, violenter increpuit, uelut coram rogitan quid illi cum militibus, quos neque dicta imperatoris neque praemia nisi ab imperatore accipere par esset.55 repperisse prorsus quod divus Augustus non prouiderit. an potius discordia et seditionem a satellite Seiani quaesitam, qua rudes animos nomine honoris ad corrumpendum militiae morem propelleret?

Tac. Ann. 6.3.1–3

[B]ut Junius Gallio, who had suggested that praetorians on completion of service should acquire the prerogative of sitting in the Fourteen Rows, he berated violently, asking him, as if to his face, what his business was with soldiers who should properly receive neither words nor rewards except from their Commander. He had certainly devised something for which Divine Augustus made no provision! Or was it rather the case that a satellite of Sejanus had sought discord and mutiny in order to propel raw minds, under the pretext of honor, to corrupt the conventions of soldiery?

The violence of Tiberius’ response (*uiolenter increpuit*) is remarkable. It is a violence which contrasts specifically with the moderate treatment of Togonius

54. Morello 2006: 333. She demonstrates how this characterization both challenges expectations of the epistolary genre and allows Tacitus to explore further aspects of Tiberius’ persona (335).
56. Although not an example discussed by Shotter 1966, the passage fits well with his other examples of the emotions displayed by Tiberius in his defense of Augustan precedent. See also Syme 1958: 426.
in the previous sentence, and which transcends the letter itself, making it as though Tiberius were speaking face to face with Gallio (uelut coram rogitans). Background to the incident is supplied by Dio (58.18.3) who suggests that the proposal came at a time when Tiberius was paranoidly anxious and was seeking to play the senate and the Praetorians against each other. The letter itself is a consummate exercise in political tactics, demonstrating several of the ways in which reference to the Augustan past could be exploited in political debates. Here, reference to Augustus is a part of a double attack in the letter employed in order to discredit Gallio’s proposal and to alienate Gallio himself. The allegation that Gallio sought to implement something the divine Augustus had not provided for underlines the newness of the proposal, placing it outside the conventional realm of Roman debate (the mos maiorum, now extended to include the actions and words of the divine Augustus). Tiberius also chooses to understand that Gallio intended criticism of Augustus, for Gallio seems (Tiberius suggests) to be questioning Augustus’ providentia. Finally, Tiberius’ reference to Augustus is deployed to emphasize Gallio’s presumption: if (the now divine) Augustus had not contemplated such an honor for the praetorians, who else could do so? The second part of Tiberius’ attack (signalled by an potius) accuses Gallio of being a follower of Seianus (6.3.2–3), involved in promoting discordia and seditiones. Caught between two such powerful accusations, Gallio’s actual exile mirrors his isolation in the letter—an isolation which is a consequence of the epistolary tactics used by Tiberius.

But who has brought Augustus into this discussion? Morello reads the letter as a response to “Gallio’s implied criticism of Augustus’ theatre seating schemes.” Certainly, Tiberius’ chose to understand his proposal as implied criticism of Augustus, but had Gallio any idea that his proposal would be interpreted in this way? The incident is presented by Tacitus as a failed attempt at sycophancy. The proposal was intended, in Tacitus’ view, to ingratiate Gallio with Tiberius and, presumably, with the ex-Praetorians. The proposal is attributed to A.D. 32; for close to eighteen years, therefore, Tiberius had been proclaiming and demonstrating his desire to adhere to the precedents of Augustus. How, in these circumstances, did Gallio come to make such a tactical blunder? Four hypotheses might be offered, each of which has significant implications for our understanding of the relationship between the Augustan past and the Tiberian

57. Martin 2001 ad loc. notes the strong contrast marked by at.
58. I am indebted to Ellen O’Gorman for her observations, per litteras, on this letter.
59. Martin 2001 ad loc. notes that prouiderit alludes to providentia, commenting that this was a particular virtue claimed by Tiberius as well. It is interesting that the provision Augustus may have made for seating for soldiers elsewhere in the theater (Rawson 1987: 99) is not explicitly raised as a further objection to Gallio’s proposal.
60. D.C. 58.18.3 locates the story of Tiberius’ response to Gallio within his wider discussion of Tiberius’ growing paranoia and his attempts to play the senators and praetorians off against each other. See also Levick 1999 [1976]: 113–14.
present: either Gallio cavalierly intended to criticize Augustus’ seating scheme, or he did not know about Augustus’ seating scheme, or he did not consider (and did not think that Tiberius would consider) that adding to Augustus’ plans was impermissible, or he did not consider that it was an Augustan precedent which he was transgressing by suggesting changes to the XIV rows.

Tacitus’ presentation of the incident as a failed attempt to win Tiberius’ favour and Tiberius’ suspicion that Gallio’s proposal was intended to ingratiate himself with the Praetorians, both suggest that the proposal itself was intended to be successful. Nothing in Tiberius’ attitude towards Augustus could have been interpreted as indicating that a proposal containing open criticism of Augustus would succeed. The first hypothesis may, therefore, be dismissed. The second hypothesis is also unlikely. It is true that there were Augustan precedents that were unheard of or forgotten. This may have been the case in A.D. 15 and again towards the end of Tiberius’ life when the passage of time had left fewer and fewer people who remembered the actions and words of Augustus. Gallio’s proposal might possibly be explained on these grounds, were it not for the fact that his proposal involved no obscure dictum of Augustus on the flogging of actors or the proper procedure for admitting a new Sibylline Oracle, but seating in the theatre, and, in particular, in the cherished XIV rows. Augustus’ seating scheme, unlike his dicta, may well have been published as a lex Iulia. Certainly his wide-ranging attempts to reinforce social distinctions ought to have been remembered by a man from the very status group for whom, Suetonius states, they had been undertaken. The remaining hypotheses require some further exploration.

Suetonius, who gives an account of the changes instigated by Augustus (43.1), says that Augustus separated the soldiers from the people. He makes, however, no mention of veterans. Elizabeth Rawson plausibly suggested that veterans might be considered an ordo in their own right and proposed that, if they had special seating, this was behind that of the serving (but off-duty) soldiers. It is, I think, conceivable that, in Tiberian Rome, praetorians and ex-praetorians might have been considered a special subset of this ordo, with a collective identity distinct from the veterans and with a close relationship to the city and all that took place within it. If such a group were to be entitled to special privileges, there were good reasons why the XIV rows might be proposed. Ex-praetorian equites had already been allowed to resume their seats in the XIV rows on the completion of service. There were, moreover, other equestrian military positions which entitled one to a seat in the XIV rows as Horace (Ep. 4.15–16) and Ovid (F. 4.383) indicate. In the light of this, Gallio’s suggestion that ex-praetorians might sit in the XIV

63. Rawson 1987: 86 citing Plin. HN 33.32 argues persuasively that this is a law of Augustus rather than Julius Caesar.
64. Suet. Aug. 43.1.
65. I have depended here on the discussion of Rawson 1987: 103–104.
rows, whilst it was undoubtedly novel, might nevertheless have been presented as building not only upon the traditional presence of other military personnel in these rows, but also upon the new status of this group within Tiberian Rome. Thus, the new prominence of the praetorians under Tiberius, might have been held to justify new privileges in the theatre, just as it had done elsewhere.

Were this the reason for Gallio’s proposal, it is conceivable that he thought that Tiberius would be amenable to changing the seating arrangements in this way. It is interesting, however, that, in responding to Gallio, Tiberius is made to focus not on the law of Augustus (the *lex Iulia Theatralis*) but on the implied attack on Augustus’ foresight. This might, then, suggest that seating for veterans (or, particularly, for ex-praetorians) was *not* specifically covered in Augustus’ legislation (and hence absent from Suetonius’ summary). One final possibility must therefore be considered.

If, for his own ends (sycophantic or subversive) Gallio wanted this proposal to succeed, he needed it to be, in principle, acceptable. The choice of the XIV rows may, consequently, have been carefully made. In her analysis of Augustus’ seating scheme, Rawson observes, “continued reference to the *lex Roscia* under the Empire suggests that Augustus made no real change where the seating of the *equites* was concerned.”

If Gallio, like his contemporaries, thought of these rows as being governed by the Republican *lex Roscia*, then he may have hoped that his proposal would be acceptable on the grounds that he was not proposing changes to Augustus’ seating scheme at all.

Tiberius’ sarcastic references to something even Augustus had not foreseen (*reperisse prorsus quod divus Augustus non prouiderit*) is, as we have seen, central to one part of his attack on Gallio’s proposal. But the introduction of Augustus here was quite deliberate and calculated. By interpreting Augustus’ decision to *maintain* Republican practice as, itself, an Augustan precedent, Tiberius skillfully re-cast Gallio’s proposal as an attempt to change Augustan practice and an implied criticism of Augustus’ providential provision for the future. Whether this was done to check flattery or to avoid sedition, the manner in which it was done gives a further insight into the use (abuse?) of Augustan precedent under Tiberius.

6. TIBERIUS AND AUGUSTUS IN THE ANNALS

The view that “imitation [of Augustus] was characteristic of Tiberius,” has generally been accepted as a fundamental part of, and indeed an explanation for, Tiberius’ actions as Augustus’ successor. Nevertheless, the extent to which

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66. Rawson 1987: 102. On the idea that this seating was considered to be governed by the *lex Roscia*, see also Woodman and Martin 1996 ad 3.31.3 and Martin 2001 ad 6.3.1.

67. Brunt 1984: 425, with citations of concurring scholarship in n.7. See also the scholarship cited by Ober 1982: 327 n.66. So great has been the emphasis upon continuity between Augustus
our understanding of Tiberius’ deference towards Augustus’ actions and words is, like so much of our picture of Tiberius, disproportionately dependent upon Tacitus’ Annals has rarely been acknowledged as problematic, since the actions of the Tacitean and the historical Tiberius are regularly (and often plausibly) conflated. It is, of course, almost impossible to write about Tiberius without Tacitus, and I have already suggested that Tacitus’ exploration of the use of Augustan precedent in the instances discussed above presents a possible picture of the kind of environment within which a successor operated—the need to be selective and creative in the use and interpretation of Augustan precedent, in a context in which Tiberius was not the only one referring to the example of Augustus. But, the emphasis upon Tiberius’ deference to Augustus is, in many ways, peculiarly Tacitean—or, at least, it is proportionately greater in Tacitus’ account, reflecting the concerns of his narrative and his choice of subject matter, than in other, and in particular contemporary (Tiberian) accounts. These latter, by contrast, construct Tiberius’ legitimacy through emphasizing the virtues of the princeps—a discourse which focused on Tiberius’ capacity to be the optimus princeps rather than (although obviously not unrelated to) simply being the best imitator of Augustus’ actions and words. Tacitus’ narrative also contains many more incidents which are specifically described in terms of, and attributed to, Tiberius’ deference to Augustus and the Augustan past than do the accounts of Suetonius or Cassius Dio. Moreover, Tacitus frequently attributes statements to Tiberius which explicitly stress his (Tiberius’) dependence upon Augustus. This means that Tiberius’ use of, and adherence to, Augustan precedent needs to be considered not only in terms of the historicity or plausibility of these instances, but also in terms of the role they play within Tacitus’ narrative itself.

and Tiberius, that Tiberius’ policies have been used to recover those of Augustus. See Brunt 1984: 425–26: “imitation was characteristic of Tiberius” and “since Tiberius was no innovator, he was probably carrying out a plan already made by Augustus;” Charlesworth 1939 (Augustus’ formula can be recovered from Tiberius’ words); Taylor 1929: 98–99: “if we had Augustus’ words . . . we should have a parallel. . . . If we had the text of Augustus’ permission . . . we should probably find in it the assertion that his father was worthy of honours such as befitted the gods.”

68. See, for instance, Valerius Maximus’ preface, which invokes Tiberius, as arbiter of virtue and vice, within Valerius’ larger project of moral instruction (with Skidmore 1996: XVI, 53–58 and 60); Vell. 2.103.1–5; 2.126.1–4 (with Woodman 1977: 30–56 and ad loc. and Christ 2003: 61–81), and the depiction of Tiberius at the pinnacle of a didactic pyramid whereby virtues like moderatio are communicated to the rest of the community in the Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre (with Cooley 1998). It might well be objected that Augustus was, now, the model of the optimus princeps, but I think that this is too narrow a reading of a long tradition of thinking about the optimus civis.

69. Suetonius (Tib. 58) gives a summary of Tiberius’ actions in relation to the divine Augustus. He does not, however, dwell on Tiberius’ deference to the Augustan past. Compare, for instance, Suet. Tib. 26 with Tac. 4.37.1–3. Dio lists more examples of Augustan precedent than Suetonius, no doubt also a product of his more detailed narrative, but, like Suetonius, Dio does not intervene to give an authorial judgement on whether dependence upon Augustus was a central personal motivation of Tiberius or to suggest that Tiberius self-consciously modeled himself on his predecessor. Again, compare D.C. 57.9 with Tac. 1.73.1–4 and D.C. 58.18.3–6 with Tac. 6.3.1–3.
In part, as O’Gorman has demonstrated, Augustus’ pervasive presence in the Annals means that it is possible to read references to Augustus as programmatic not only for his successors but for the Annals themselves. The emphasis that Tacitus places on Tiberius’ dependence on Augustus, the number of examples he collects, the interventions he makes as narrator, are also, in part at least, attributable to two ideas to which he draws attention very early in the narrative: the change in the status of the state and the focus not simply on who would succeed, but on what the tasks and roles of a successor would entail. Tacitus’ assumption that, by the death of Augustus, the political and institutional nature of state was profoundly changed, and his (consequent) interest in how a successor (or series of successors) would help to institutionalize that change naturally meant that the treatment of Augustus by his successors would form an important part of his examination. His presentation of Tiberius as innately conservative also owes much to this understanding of the successor’s role, reducing succession to two essentials—the right to be the successor (often won by the elimination of rivals) and the need to systematize the Augustan achievement (a task rendered especially complex by the charismatic personality of the first princeps and the length of his regime which gave rise to multiple, and not always consistent, expectations about the actions and words of Augustus). Whilst securing the succession itself might be reduced to a matter of outliving one’s rivals (obviously no simple task) and accumulating the powers of coercion and control, being a successor was infinitely more complicated.

The speeches Tacitus gives to Tiberius in the Annals allowed him to explore Tiberius’ role(s) as a successor. I have noted throughout the important part that explanations play in these speeches, providing a vehicle for the examination of the incorporation of the Augustan past into the Tiberian present. I have also noted the extent to which the speeches present Tiberius’ (and other people’s) engagement with the Augustan past as both creative and clever: explanations function as interpretations.

7. TIBERIUS AND AUGUSTUS

Tiberius and Augustus had worked closely together for many years. For at least ten years, between his adoption and Augustus’ death, Tiberius had (perhaps even when away campaigning) been intimately concerned with Augustus’ policies and practices. His knowledge of Augustus, coupled with his own personal auctoritas and that which he acquired as Divus Augustus’ heir, gave him

71. On the change in the status of the Republic, 1.4.1.
tremendous authority over the actions and words of his predecessor. Nevertheless, Tiberius appears to have wanted his adherence to the precedents established by Augustus to be noted. This may have been because he was, quite genuinely, devout, conservative, lacking in imagination or devoted to Augustus. It seems at least as likely, however, that proclaiming adherence to Augustus was part of a political strategy aimed at maintaining stability at Rome and throughout the empire by stressing continuity with the past and his own suitability as Augustus’ successor-continuator.73

Such a strategy would have been important for the first man to succeed Augustus (whether he was Tiberius or someone else). The very nature of Augustus’ regime meant that Augustan precedent had developed over his whole lifetime and in his dealings with diverse situations and different people or groups of people. Augustus’ charisma had been a central part of his place within the res publica, alongside his monopoly over the elements of control. His ability to negotiate with others, to please the populus Romanus, and to be the pater patriae could not easily be institutionalized or passed on. His position had been gradually built up, evolving interconnectedly with the expectations and aspirations of his peers. All of these factors meant that being a successor was potentially problematic. Despite Tiberius’ undoubted capabilities and extensive experience, there remained uncertainties associated with succession which existed regardless of how smoothly the succession itself was accomplished and regardless of the successor’s ability to eliminate or outlast his rivals. Key questions remained to be worked out: Augustan precedent would obviously be important, but would it always be well known or easy to understand? What would happen where there were multiple precedents? When, how and by whom might Augustus’ actions and words be used? If Augustus was appealed to by others, how would Tiberius respond? What tactics would he use to maintain a monopoly over the interpretation of Augustan precedent?

I have tried to further the discussion of how Tiberius’ strategy might have operated in practice by looking at four key incidents in the Annals. Tacitus’ interest in, and understanding of, the potential problems of succession—problems which were no doubt underscored by the difficult final years of Augustus’ regime and the immediate social and economic conditions in which the succession took place—extended well beyond the first days or months of Tiberius’ principate, making

73. Levick 1999 [1976]: 223: “one of the most important events of Tiberius’ principate was precisely the death of Augustus and his own accession to sole power; it made the principate a permanency. Equally appropriate is the fact that the two most striking features of Tiberius’ policy as Princeps were, firstly to maintain the form of the new institutions as they had been left by Augustus, to take Augustus’ consilium as praeceptum, holding to be mandatory what his predecessor had regarded as advisable, and secondly to turn it from a sham into what it purported to be.”

74. An uncertainty nicely captured in Vell. 2.124.1 who feared the ruin of the world (cuius orbis ruinam timueramus), with Woodman 1977 ad loc.; Millar 1993: 4–5. The situation of jeopardy and uncertainty can only have been added to by the events of the final years of Augustus’ lifetime when domestic and military crises were compounded by a series of natural disasters. See Newbold
the treatment of Augustus (as a man and as a god) an important theme of his work. The instances that he records repay closer inspection for, whilst collectively they may build a picture of dependence upon the Augustan past, individually Tacitus uses these incidents to explore a much more dynamic process of interpretation and creativity in which the choices of the new princeps and his ability to assert his own capacity to be the best interpreter of Augustus were crucial. Taken together, his selective imitation of the Augustan past and his willingness to explain and interpret that past (often in a context in which there was more than one possible interpretation), make Tiberius’ conservatism both dynamic and, in important respects, creative.

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1974. Natural disasters, including earthquakes, flooding and famine, are detailed in D.C. 55.22.3; 26.1–26.16.4; 28.4.


