

Reconsidering the *Auctoritas* of Augustus*

GREGORY ROWE

For Barbara Levick

It is surely time for some reaction from the ‘traditional’ and conventional view.¹

ABSTRACT

Res Gestae 34.3 (‘auctoritate omnibus praestiti’) is conventionally taken to reflect Augustus’ conception of the fundamental nature of his rule, and a great deal of attention has consequently been given to the word *auctoritas*. But no other source repeats this idea or gives weight to *auctoritas*. The passage is best understood as alluding to a specific event, probably Octavian’s becoming princeps senatus in 28 B.C.

Keywords: Augustus; *Res Gestae*; *auctoritas*; *princeps senatus*

I INTRODUCTION

As everyone knows, Augustus in the second-to-last chapter of the *Res Gestae* says that, after transferring the *res publica* to the discretion of the Roman senate and people and receiving the name *Augustus* and other honours,²

Post id tem[pus a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti, potest]atis au[tem n]ihilo ampliu[s habu]i
quam cet[eri, qui m]ihi quoque in ma[gis]tra[t]u conlegae f[uerunt].

Ἀξιόμ[α]τι πάντων διήνεγκα, ἐξουσίας δὲ οὐδέν τι πλεῖον ἔσχον τῶν συναρξάντων μοι.

After this time I surpassed everyone in *auctoritas*, but I possessed no more *potestas* than the others who were my colleagues in each magistracy.

The conventional interpretation of this passage holds: (1) that *auctoritas*, as contrasted with *potestas*, signifies informal and non-coercive power; (2) that Augustus emphasizes his *auctoritas* in the *Res Gestae* in order to make a fundamental claim about the nature of his rule; (3) that Augustus’ claim has explanatory value, because he did in large measure rule through informal influence.

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¹ R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), viii.

² *Res Gestae* 34.3. Except where noted, I have used the text of J. Scheid, *Res gestae divi Augusti. Hauts faits du divin Auguste* (2007), and I have based my translation on P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (1967). On every point I have also consulted T. Mommsen, *Res gestae divi Augusti: ex monumentis Ancyrano et Apolloniensi* (2nd edn, 1883); A. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (2009); and S. Mitchell and D. French, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Ankara. 1. From Augustus to the End of the Third Century AD* (2012) = *I.Ankara*, no. 1.

This reading, so basic to our conception of Augustus and the principate, is less than a century old. The Latin of the first clause is missing from the Ancyra copy of the *Res Gestae*, and Mommsen in his edition of the text (1883) had suggested reading, '[praestiti omnibus dignitate]'. Then in 1924 Premerstein saw, from the fragments of the *Res Gestae* from Pisidian Antioch published by Ramsay eight years earlier, that the correct reading was 'a]uctoritate'. Premerstein wrote, 'With this weighty expression ... Augustus characterized his actual position of power as princeps much more openly and truthfully' than Mommsen's '[dignitate]' had suggested.³ The following year, Heinze articulated what has become the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3, surveying prior usage of *auctoritas* and paraphrasing the passage:⁴

'I possessed no more capacity to exercise coercive power than that to which I was entitled in each case by virtue of the office entrusted to me, within the limits established by collegiality; my pre-eminence rested on the influence that was voluntarily accorded to me, more than to any other, as the most authoritative leader in political matters.' This is Augustus' authentic statement of his conception of the 'principate', and it is of great historical significance, for it truly reveals to us the roots of this unique institution.

Today, *auctoritas* is ubiquitous, above all in the work of Galinsky, who has built an interpretation of all of Augustan culture around *auctoritas*, which he calls 'a higher kind of moral leadership' and compares to the methods advocated by management guru Tom Peters.⁵ Historians, too, routinely use *auctoritas* as shorthand for all extra-legal aspects of Augustus' rule. In a recent collection of essays on Augustus, for example, we are told that Augustus' *auctoritas* lay behind candidates' decisions to inform him of their intention to stand for office (Ferrary), Livia's influence (Purcell), and Augustus' control of military promotions (Raaflaub).⁶ A few have questioned the truth of Augustus' claim — Augustus' formal powers, they rightly note, were not negligible — but no one has questioned its transcendental significance.⁷

³ A. von Premerstein, 'Zur Aufzeichnung der Res gestae divi Augusti im pisidischen Antiochia', *Hermes* 59 (1924), 95–107, at 104–5: 'Mit dem inhaltsschweren Ausdruck *auctoritate* ... hat Augustus seine tatsächliche Machstellung als Princeps viel offener und wahrheitsgemäßer gekennzeichnet.' Subsequently Premerstein, in *Vom Werden und Wesen des Prinzipats* (1937), propounded the thesis that Augustus' *auctoritas* was formally conferred or confirmed by senatorial decree. In modified versions, this view, for which there is no evidence, has found some adherents (A. Magdelain, *Auctoritas principis* (1947); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'The settlement of 27 B.C.', *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, Coll. Latomus 196 (1986), 345–65; J. W. Rich, *Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement* (Roman History 53–55.9) (1990), 140), but is generally rejected (J. Béranger, *Recherches sur l'aspect idéologique du principat* (1953), 114–31; J.-L. Ferrary, 'À propos des pouvoirs d'Auguste', *Cahiers du Centre Gustave-Glotz* 12 (2001), 101–54, at 113–15).

⁴ R. Heinze, 'Auctoritas', *Hermes* 60 (1925), 348–66, at 355 = *Vom Geist des Römertums. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (1938), 43–58, at 49: "An zwingender Machtbefugnis habe ich nie mehr besessen, als mir jeweils, innerhalb der durch die Kollegialität gezogenen Schranken, kraft der mir übertragenen Ämter zustand; meine Vorrangstellung beruhte auf dem Einfluß, den man mir, mehr als irgendeinem anderen als dem in politischen Fragen maßgeblichsten Führer freiwillig einräumte." Das ist die authentische Erklärung des Augustus über seine Auffassung des "Prinzipats" und sie ist von eminenter geschichtlicher Bedeutung, weil sie uns wirklich die Wurzeln dieser einzigartigen Institution aufdeckt.' Heinze's paraphrase is quoted approvingly by Wickert in his Pauly-Wissowa article 'Principes' (*RE* 22.2, col. 2287); see also Béranger, op. cit. (n. 3), 116–21. For the bibliography on *auctoritas* see E. S. Ramage, *The Nature and Purpose of Augustus' 'Res Gestae'* (1987), 142–6; R. T. Ridley, *The Emperor's Retrospect: Augustus' Res Gestae in Epigraphy, Historiography and Commentary* (2003), 222–7; Scheid, op. cit. (n. 2), 91–2.

⁵ K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: an Interpretive Introduction* (1996); see now Galinsky, *Augustus: Introduction to the Life of an Emperor* (2012). Cf. M. Lowrie, *Writing, Performance, and Authority in Augustan Rome* (2009), 285: '*auctoritas* is ... a capacity to make things happen through words.'

⁶ J. C. Edmondson (ed.), *Augustus* (2009), 108 (Ferrary); 179 (Purcell); 218 (Raaflaub). Ferrary's essay is an abridged translation of Ferrary, op. cit. (n. 3).

⁷ Syme, op. cit. (n. 1), 523; Brunt and Moore, op. cit. (n. 2), 82–4; cf. Scheid, op. cit. (n. 3), 91: 'Dans la recherche moderne, ce concept a été surévalué. L'*auctoritas* n'est, en effet, jamais isolée, elle est toujours liée dans l'esprit des Romains à un réel pouvoir institutionnel, sans oublier la vaste clientèle et la fortune du Prince. Autrement dit, elle

But what evidence is there for the centrality of *auctoritas*? For before Premerstein read ‘a]uctoritate’, neither the word nor the passage attracted particular attention. The problem was identified by John Crook in his review of Galinsky’s monograph:⁸

Auctoritas is the book’s *Leitmotiv*, and, pliant in G(alinsky)’s hands, it signifies just about all the qualities he would have us attribute to Augustus. Well, Curmudgeon-Reviewer just notes that nobody went on about *auctoritas* in relation to the Augustan principate before, within C(urmudgeon)-R(eviewer)’s lifetime, in the early 1920s, the Antioch-in-Pisidia copy of the *Res Gestae* revealed that Augustus had said ‘*auctoritate* omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem ...’ *Hinc illae lacrimae*.

Crook might have added that before the copy from Pisidian Antioch was discovered, no one had thought to say that the principate had been founded on Augustus’ *dignitas*, either.

The questions that need to be asked are: What evidence is there outside the *Res Gestae* for the importance of *auctoritas*? Did others especially associate *auctoritas* with Augustus, or Augustus with *auctoritas*? When *auctoritas* is attributed to Augustus, is there any echo of the *Res Gestae*? Is *auctoritas* associated with the constitutional transactions and honours of 28–27 B.C.? Is Augustus said to be pre-eminent in *auctoritas*? Is *auctoritas* contrasted with *potestas*? Above all, did anyone ever express the idea that the principate had been founded on Augustus’ *auctoritas*? To understand *auctoritas*, we must look not only to the Republican writers whose usage Augustus would have known, but also to subsequent writers who would have known Augustus’ usage.

This paper falls into three parts. In the first part, I argue that subsequent usage of the word gives no support to the idea that *auctoritas* was, as Galinsky puts it, ‘a principal concept’. Indeed, the word’s usage, and its non-usage — its absence from all later expressions of imperial ideology — effectively exclude the possibility that Augustus and other Romans gave the word and the passage anything like the significance they have achieved in modern scholarship. In the second part, I return to *Res Gestae* 34.3, and ask whether we have been right to read the passage as a definition of Augustus’ power. I argue that the passage has been fundamentally misunderstood: the words ‘a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti’ are not emphasized and do not have transcendental significance, but instead allude to a specific event. In the third part, I set out arguments for identifying the event as Octavian’s being named *princeps senatus* in 28 B.C.

II *AUCTORITAS*

What significance did *auctoritas* have for Romans in the wake of the *Res Gestae*? On the terms of the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3, we would expect *auctoritas* to have become the cornerstone of imperial ideology. We would expect to find the word, and the phrase ‘a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti’, repeated and alluded to on coins, in monumental inscriptions, in literature — as we find, for example, the *corona ciuica*, the laurel branches, the *clipeus uirtutis*, and the virtues of *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas*, all of which are mentioned in *Res Gestae* 34.2, on coins of Augustus and Tiberius.

We may break the question into two parts. First, did Romans especially associate *auctoritas* with Augustus? It would, of course, be meaningless to enumerate the times

est la résultante de la situation institutionnelle, politique et sociale du Prince.’ (‘In modern research this concept has been overvalued. For *auctoritas* is never isolated, it is always connected in Roman thinking to a real institutional power, not to mention the vast clientela and wealth of the emperor. In other words, *auctoritas* is the product of the institutional, political, and social position of the emperor.’)

⁸ J. A. Crook, review of Galinsky, op. cit. (n. 5, 1996), in *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), 287–8.

Romans used *auctoritas* without referring to Augustus. But we now have a substantial corpus of loyalist sources from the reign of Tiberius where we would expect to find *auctoritas* used as it is said to have been used in the *Res Gestae*: coins; a growing number of long, ideologically-saturated senatorial decrees; the universal history of Velleius Paterculus; and Valerius Maximus' collection of *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. These sources bring us as close as we might wish to the world of the *Res Gestae*. Like the *Res Gestae*, the senatorial decrees commemorating Germanicus and the younger Drusus and the *SC de Cn. Pisone patre* were composed for epigraphic publication and inscribed in multiple copies in Rome and the provinces.⁹ And Velleius Paterculus, who entered the senate in A.D. 7, was very probably present when Augustus' will was opened and the *Res Gestae* was read aloud. Velleius records that after his death Augustus was given divine and human honours and the name *Diuus*, and he recalls that Augustus left instructions for regulating the *comitia* 'written in his own hand'.¹⁰

But the Tiberian loyalists do not use *auctoritas* in the way the word's supposed significance in the *Res Gestae* would suggest. *Auctoritas* never appears on the coinage of Tiberius or any other emperor.¹¹ The senate in its decrees attributes *auctoritas* to itself and to loyal officers, but not to Augustus or Tiberius. *Auctoritas senatus* (or *huius ordinis*) is used in the sense of *senatorial decree*, a usage also found in the *Res Gestae*.¹²

Duo et octoginta templa deum in urbe consul sex[tu]m ex [auctori]tate senatus refeci nullo praeter misso quod e[ol] tempore [refici debeba]t.

I restored eighty-two temples of the gods in the city in keeping with a senatorial decree, neglecting none that required restoration at that time.

In a corrupt passage of the *SC de Pisone*, the senate instructs soldiers to hold in the greatest *auctoritas* officers who revere the name of the Caesars, which protects *urbs* and

⁹ We now know that the *Res Gestae* was also published at Sardis, apparently in an alternate Greek translation; see P. Thonemann, 'A copy of Augustus' *Res Gestae* at Sardis', *Historia* 61.3 (2012), 282–8. Accumulating evidence now suggests that the *Res Gestae* was diffused and displayed immediately: in A.D. 14 at Ancyra (see Mitchell and French, op. cit. (n. 2), on *I.Ankara* 2, drawing on the work of A. Coşkun); before A.D. 17 in Sardis (Thonemann, op. cit., 288). Also note that the casual mention of Cn. Piso as eponymous consul at *Res Gestae* 16.2 should guarantee that both the Roman original and the provincial copies were inscribed before Piso's downfall in A.D. 20.

¹⁰ Velleius 2.124.3. On Velleius' career see G. V. Sumner, 'The truth about Velleius Paterculus: Prolegomena', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 74 (1970), 257–97.

¹¹ The view of M. Grant, *From Imperium to Auctoritas: a Historical Study of Aes Coinage in the Roman Empire, 49 B.C.–A.D. 14* (1946), that 'CA' on the bronze coinage of ?28–27 B.C. stood for 'C(aesaris) a(uctoritate)' rather than e.g. 'c(ommune) A(siae)' has never found much acceptance. *Inter alia* Béranger, op. cit. (n. 3), 126–9 points out that the expected word order would be *auctoritate Caesaris* (but see Seneca, *Cl.* 1.15.1 (n. 39 *infra*)). For a catalogue of personified abstractions on Roman coinage see A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The emperor and his virtues', *Historia* 30 (1981), 298–319.

¹² *Res Gestae* 20.4; the Greek is [δόγμα]τι συνκ[λ]ήτου. Cf. *AE* 1983, 210 (*SC* from Larinum), line 12: 'eludendae auctoritatis eius ordinis gratia' ('in order to evade the senatorial decree'); *AE* 1996, 885 (*SC de Cn. Pisone patre*), lines 30–1: 'Germanico Caesari, qui a principe nostro ex auctoritate huius ordinis ad rerum [tra]nsmarinarum statum componendum missus esset' ('Germanicus Caesar, who in keeping with a senatorial decree was sent by our princeps to organize overseas affairs'); *Roman Statutes* 37 (*Tab. Siarensis*), fr. i, lines 23–4: 'in iis regionibus, quarum] curam et tutelam Germanico Caesari ex auctori]tate senatus ipse mandasset' ('in those regions, whose care and protection he himself (Tiberius) committed to Germanicus Caesar in keeping with a senatorial decree'). At *Res Gestae* 12.1, Mitchell and French, op. cit. (n. 2) = *I.Ankara*, no. 1 rightly prefer Mommsen's restoration '[senatus consulto eodem tempore]' to '[ex senatus auctoritat]e' (Volkman, accepted by Scheid). As they say, the restoration better fits the space and corresponds more closely to the Greek. It also makes more sense for an embassy of senators to be sent directly 'by senatorial decree' than indirectly 'according to the terms of a senatorial decree'; for the force of the preposition *ex* see E. Badian, 'Notes on the *Laudatio* of Agrippa', *Classical Journal* 76 (1980), 97–109, at 99–100.

imperium.¹³ Valerius Maximus uses *auctoritas* thirty-seven times in all, often in the sense of personal influence. He even names seven men who he says were pre-eminent in *auctoritas* in their time, sometimes employing wording very close to that of *Res Gestae* 34.3, as when he says that the Samnite wise man Herennius Pontius ‘surpassed the rest in *auctoritas* and *prudencia*’.¹⁴ Valerius also mentions Augustus eighteen times and Tiberius seven, but he associates *auctoritas* with the emperors only once, when he says that the jurist Cascellius could not be constrained by the *gratia* or *auctoritas* of any man to grant a *formula* legitimizing the Triumvirs’ grants of property.¹⁵ Only in Velleius Paterculus is *auctoritas* attributed to Augustus or Tiberius in a positive sense. Velleius uses *auctoritas* twenty-two times, three times in connection with Augustus and Tiberius: after Naulochus, the army of Sex. Pompeius was under Octavian’s *auctoritas* and *fides* when Lepidus annexed it (36 B.C.); in Pannonia affairs were conducted with moderation and efficiency under Tiberius’ *auctoritas* (A.D. 6–9); Cappadocia was reduced to stipendiary status not by force of arms but by Tiberius’ *auctoritas* (A.D. 17).¹⁶

If some of these instances seem vaguely compatible with the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3, the overall pattern of usage is not. One instance is decisive. Velleius devotes several breathless lines to the period after the civil wars, when he says ‘the ancient and pristine form of the republic was recalled’, and he uses the word *auctoritas* in this context. But Velleius does not attribute *auctoritas* to the emperor. Instead, Velleius says that *auctoritas* was restored to the courts (*iudicia*):¹⁷

Finita uicesimo anno bella ciuilia, sepulta externa, reuocata pax, sopitus ubique armorum furor, restituta uis legibus, iudiciis auctoritas, senatui maiestas, imperium magistratuum ad pristinum redactum modum; tantummodo octo praetoribus adlecti duo.

The civil wars were ended after twenty years, foreign wars suppressed, peace restored, the frenzy of arms everywhere lulled to rest; validity was restored to the laws, *auctoritas* to the courts, and dignity to the senate; the power of the magistrates was reduced to its former limits, with the sole exception that two were added to the eight existing praetors.

On the other hand, echoes of the imperial ideology expressed in the *Res Gestae* — precisely in *Res Gestae* 34 — are not hard to find in these sources. The senate, for example, repeatedly invokes universal consensus (cf. *Res Gestae* 34.1), and says that it ‘learned the virtues of *clementia* and *iustitia* from its *maiores*, above all its *principes*, Augustus and Tiberius’ (cf. *Res Gestae* 34.2).¹⁸ No one seems to have told the Tiberian senate,

¹³ AE 1996, 885, lines 162–4: ‘senatum arbitrari eorum (sc. *militum*) curae atq(ue) officii esse, ut apud eos ii, | qui quandoq(ue) ei<s> praessent, plurimum auctoritatis <haberent>, qui fidelissima pietate | salutare huic urbi imperioq(ue) p(opuli) R(omani) nomen Caesarum coluissent.’

¹⁴ Valerius Maximus 7.2.ext.17: ‘auctoritate et prudentia ceteros praestans.’

¹⁵ Valerius Maximus 6.2.12: ‘nullius enim aut gratia aut auctoritate compelli potuit ut de aliqua earum rerum, quas triumviri dederant, formulam conponeret.’

¹⁶ Velleius 2.80.1: ‘hic uir (sc. Lepidus) omnium uanissimus neque ulla uirtute tam longam fortunae indulgentiam meritis exercitum Pompei, quia propior fuerat, sequentem non ipsius, sed Caesaris auctoritatem ac fidem, sibi iunxerat’; 2.111.4: ‘quanto cum temperamento ** simul utilitatis res auctoritate imperatoris agi uidimus!’; 2.39.3: ‘Raetiam autem et Vindelicos ac Noricos Pannoniamque et Scordiscos novas imperio nostro subiunxit provincias. ut has armis, ita auctoritate Cappadociam populo Romano fecit stipendiariam.’

¹⁷ Velleius 2.89.3 (Loeb trans.). Cf. 2.126.2 (Tiberius’ ascension), where *auctoritas* is restored to magistrates (‘magistratibus’, an emendation for ‘militibus’ in the witnesses to Velleius’ text).

¹⁸ Universal consensus: *Roman Statutes* 37, fr. ii, col. b, lines 22–3 (‘quo facilius pietas omnium ordinum erga domum Augustam et consens[us] uniuersorum ciuium memoria honoranda Germanici Caesaris appareret’); W. Eck and A. Pangerl, ‘Ein Senatsbeschluss aus tiberischer Zeit?’, in S. Cagnazzi (ed.), *Scritti di storia per Mario Pani* (2011), 143–50, col. 1 (‘[ex -- o]mniumque cons[ensu]-- r]ecognouerit un[iuersis?]’). Virtues: AE 1996, 885, lines 90–2 (‘item senatum, memorem clementiae suae ius[titiae]q(ue) animi magnitudinisque, uirtutes quas a maioribus suis acce[p]isset, tum praecipue ab Diuo Aug(usto) et Ti. Caesare Aug(usto) principibus suis didicisset’).

Velleius Paterculus, and Valerius Maximus that the principate had been founded on Augustus' *auctoritas*.

Let us turn to the second part of the question: When Romans did associate *auctoritas* with Augustus, did they give the word special significance? Surprisingly, the question seems never to have been asked. No one seems to have collected and evaluated all instances of *auctoritas* in connection with Augustus. Galinsky, for example, in the thirty-page chapter he devotes to '*Auctoritas*: a Principal Concept', cites only three instances outside Cicero where the word *auctoritas* actually occurs. One is from Cassius Dio, who explains that an *auctoritas* of the senate was an expression of the senate's will that fell short of being a full decree.¹⁹ One is from Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid*. Virgil in a famous simile describes an anonymous statesman who is 'pietate gravem' ('respected for his *pietas*'), which Servius glosses: 'cuius illis auctoritas ob pietatem est gravis' ('whose *auctoritas* carries weight for them, because of his *pietas*').²⁰ The third instance is from Quintilian, who says at one point that Polyclitus' sculptures failed to capture the *auctoritas* of the gods, and at another that the Doryphoros would be equally suited for military service or the palaestra.²¹ From this Galinsky concludes that the Prima Porta Augustus, whose posture derived from that of the Doryphoros, embodies *auctoritas*: 'The fact that the statue conveys *auctoritas* is clear from precedents and comparable works.'

Galinsky represents only an exaggerated example of a general tendency, on the one hand, to distort the significance of *auctoritas* when it does occur, and on the other, to divine its workings when it does not. No ancient source, for example, uses the word *auctoritas* in the context of candidates' declarations of intention to stand for office, or Livia's influence, or military promotions. Even the most rigorous discussions, such as those of Heinze and Béranger, have been selective rather than systematic.²² They have presumed rather than tested the significance of *auctoritas*.

What follows is a survey of what I believe to be all the instances in classical Latin when *actor* or *auctoritas* is associated with Augustus.²³ We find that the words are used in four broad senses. Three have nothing to do with the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3: *auctoritas* is used in the sense of military *leadership* and legislative *initiative*, and Augustus is called the *actor* of peace and prosperity. In the fourth usage, *auctoritas* does designate informal moral *authority*, but none of the instances offer any real support for the conventional interpretation.

(1) Cicero in his *Philippics* and final letters repeatedly invoked Octavian's *auctoritas*, his military *leadership*, telling the senate by turns in *Philippics* 3 that Octavian should be given *auctoritas* (legitimate command, *imperium*), and that Caesar's veterans and the defectors from M. Antony were already following Octavian's *auctoritas* (private initiative, unsanctioned command), then continuing to speak of Octavian's *auctoritas*

¹⁹ Galinsky, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1996), 12, citing Cassius Dio 55.3.4–5. This passage, where Dio transliterates *auktoritas* because he can find no single Greek equivalent, is often invoked to demonstrate the ineffability of *auctoritas*. But Dio is talking about the *auctoritas* of the senate, not the emperor. Cf. Béranger, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 120: 'L'historien grec ne voit aucun rapport entre l'*auctoritas*, sens technique, et l'exercice de pouvoir souverain. L'idée d'une parenté n'effleure pas son esprit. Il dissocie les sphères.' ('The Greek historian sees no connection between *auctoritas* in the technical sense and the exercise of sovereign power. The idea of a relationship never enters his mind. He treats them as separate spheres.')

²⁰ Galinsky, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1996), 20–4, citing Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.151.

²¹ Galinsky, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1996), 24–8, alluding to Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.12.21 and 12.10.7–8 without giving the references.

²² Heinze, *op. cit.* (n. 4); Béranger, *op. cit.* (n. 3).

²³ The collection was assembled principally by searching for the string 'actor' in the Epigraphische Datenbank Clauss-Slaby (<http://www.manfredclaus.de/gb/index.html>) and the Packard Humanities Institute CD Rom 5.3 Latin Texts (© 1991), using the program Diogenes 3.1.6 by P. J. Heslin (© 2007). I will be grateful to be informed of any omissions.

after he had received *imperium*.²⁴ As we have seen, Velleius Paterculus says that after Naulochus Sex. Pompeius' army was under Octavian's *auctoritas*.²⁵ And Augustus himself may have used *auctoritas* in the sense of military leadership in the *Res Gestae*, when he says that colonies were founded either 'm[ea auctoritate]' or 'm[eis auspiciis]'.²⁶

Italia autem XXVIII colonias, quae uiuo me celeberrimae et frequentissimae fuerunt, me[
auctoritate? –is auspiciis?] deductas habet.

Italy too has twenty-eight colonies founded by my authority (or under my auspices), which were densely populated in my lifetime.

Both expressions are equivalent to *colonias deduxi*. Neither the illegal Triumviral commands nor formal *imperium* — which was synonymous with *potestas* — can be what Augustus had in mind when he invoked his *auctoritas* at *Res Gestae* 34.3.

(2) The most common usage of *auctoritas* in connection with Augustus was in the technical sense of legislative or administrative *initiative*. Thus, in the only two epigraphic instances outside the *Res Gestae* conjoining *auctoritas* and Augustus, a college of *symphoniaci* is permitted by the senate to assemble for the sake of *ludi* by the terms of a *lex Iulia* passed 'ex auctoritate Aug(usti)'; and the senator P. Paquius Scaeva of Histonium is dispatched as proconsul to Cyprus outside the lot by senatorial decree and 'auctoritate Aug(usti) Caesaris'.²⁷ Ovid and Manilius call Augustus *iustissimus auctor* and *maximus auctor* of laws, respectively.²⁸ And in the *Res Gestae* Augustus may well call himself *auctor* of laws.²⁹

Legibus noui[s] m[e auctore l]atis m[ultra e]xempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro
[saecul]o red[uxi et ipse] multarum rer[um exe]mpla imitanda pos[teris tradidi].

By new laws passed on my initiative I brought back into use many exemplary practices of our ancestors which were disappearing in our time, and in many ways I myself transmitted exemplary practices to posterity for their imitation.

Augustus is also identified as the *auctor* of various specific measures: dividing Italy into *regiones*; splitting a Thracian kingdom between two kings; stopping publication of the *acta senatus*; a senator's deciding to have four children; and constructing the Portus Iulius.³⁰ This technical usage of *auctor* and *auctoritas* was never exclusive to emperors.³¹ Furthermore, inasmuch as Augustus was acting as *auctor* of a measure by bringing it before the senate or people, he was exercising formal *potestas*, as the *Res Gestae* itself shows.³² So this usage offers no support for the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3, either.

²⁴ *Auctoritas* as *imperium*: Cicero, *Phil.* 3.5 ('tribuenda est auctoritas'); cf. 3.14. As unsanctioned command: *Phil.* 3.7 ('quarta legio ... C. Caesaris auctoritatem atque exercitum persecuta est'); cf. *Phil.* 3.38. Subsequent references to Octavian's *auctoritas*: *Phil.* 5.46 (Cicero moves a decree calling Octavian *dux et auctor*); 10.21; 11.20, 37, 39; *Fam.* 10.28; *Brut.* 18.4. On *auctoritas* in the *Philippics* see G. Manuwald, *Cicero, Philippics 3-9. Introduction, Text and Translation, References and Indexes* (2007), 322-3.

²⁵ Velleius 2.80.1 (n. 16 *supra*).

²⁶ *Res Gestae* 28.2.

²⁷ *ILS* 4966 (Rome): 'Dis Manibus | collegio symphonia|corum, qui sacris publi|cis praestu sunt, quibus | senatus c(oire) c(onuocari) c(ogi) permisit e | lege Iulia ex auctoritate | Aug(usti) ludorum causa'; *ILS* 915: 'proco(n)s(ule) iterum extra sortem auctoritate Aug(usti) Caesaris | et s(enatus) c(onsulto) misso ad componendum statum in reliquum prouincia Cypri.'

²⁸ Ovid, *Met.* 15.832-3; Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.384-6.

²⁹ *Res Gestae* 8.5.

³⁰ *Regiones*: Pliny, *HN* 3.45; kings: Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.64; *acta senatus*: Suetonius, *Aug.* 36.1; children: Suetonius, *Tib.* 47.1; Portus Iulius: Servius, *ad Georg.* 2.162; cf. Livy 4.20.7 (Temple of Jupiter Feretrius).

³¹ *Diz. ep.* 1.767-9, s.v. 'auctor' (Kuebler); cf. e.g. *ILS* 5977 (Sigus, Numidia, A.D. 138): 'ex auct(orbitate) P(ubli) Cassi Se[cundi] leg(ati) | Aug(usti) a(gri) p(ublici) Sig(uitanorum) || a(gri) a(cepti) C(irtensium).'

³² *Res Gestae* 6.2 (legislation passed 'per trib[un]ici[a]m p[otestatem']).

(3) Augustus was praised as the *auctor*, the *source*, of peace and prosperity. *Auctoritas* would be meaningless in this context and is never used. Thus Virgil in *Georgics* 1 (29 B.C.) calls Augustus *auctor frugum*, and Ovid in *Ex Ponto* 1 (A.D. 13) calls him *auctor pacis*.³³ At an unknown date Augustus issued an edict saying that he hoped to be remembered as *optimi status auctor*.³⁴

Ita mihi saluam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere, quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in uestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero.

May I be allowed to stand the republic safe and sound on its base, and from this to reap the fruit that I seek: that I may be called the *auctor* of the best *status*, and that when I die I may take with me the hope that the foundations of the republic that I have laid will remain in place.

Because this edict is often invoked in discussions of *Res Gestae* 34.3, two points should be emphasized. First, Augustus' wish was only partly fulfilled. Others repeated the ideology of the best possible *status*, but after Augustus' death they gave credit for it to Tiberius, and never called either Augustus or Tiberius its *auctor*. Thus a denarius of 16 B.C. records vows of the senate and people on Augustus' behalf because it was 'through him that the republic was in a greater and more peaceful *status*'.³⁵ In the *SC de Pisone* (A.D. 20), the senate says that it 'enjoys the present *status* of the republic, than which no better could be hoped for, by favour of its *princeps*', Tiberius.³⁶ Second, as these other items of evidence make clear, *status* refers to a state of peace and tranquillity, not a form of government. So there is no connection between Augustus' wishing to be called *auctor* of the best *status* and his saying that he surpassed all in *auctoritas*.

The conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3, though, holds that *auctoritas* signifies informal moral authority, and others did in fact credit Augustus with *auctoritas* in this sense. Let us examine the specific instances.

(4) Cicero, in the earliest surviving association of *auctoritas* with the future emperor, tells Atticus in a letter from November 44 B.C. that Octavian has spirit enough, but lacks *auctoritas*.³⁷ As we have seen, Valerius Maximus records that the jurist Cascellius would not bow to Octavian's *auctoritas* (28 B.C.?).³⁸ And Seneca in the *De clementia* recalls a sordid episode when Augustus' *auctoritas* barely saved a knight from a mob:³⁹

Trichonem equitem Romanum memoria nostra, quia filium suum flagellis occiderat, populus graphiis in foro confodit; uix illum Augusti Caesaris auctoritas infestis tam patrum quam filiorum manibus eripuit.

Within my memory the people in the Forum stabbed Tricho, a Roman knight, with their writing-styluses because he had flogged his son to death; Augustus Caesar's *auctoritas* barely rescued him from the indignant hands of fathers no less than of sons.

³³ Virgil, *G.* 1.24–8; Ovid, *Pont.* 1.1.31–2. At *Pont.* 1.1.5–6 Ovid makes a joke, saying that his poems are barred from entering public monuments (i.e. libraries) by *suus auctor* — Ovid as the *auctor* of the poems, Augustus as *auctor* of the monuments. Cf. Pomponius Porphyrio, *Commentum in Horati Epodes* 9.3–4 (*auctor* of victory at Actium).

³⁴ Suetonius, *Aug.* 28.2.

³⁵ *RIC* Augustus 358: 'IOM SPQR V S PR S IMP CAE QVOD PER EV R P IN AMP ATQ TRAN S E' (*Ioui Optimo Maximo senatus populusque Romanus uota suscepta pro salute Imperatoris Caesaris quod per eum res publica in ampliore atque tranquilliore statu est*).

³⁶ *AE* 1996, 885, lines 13–14: 'praesentis status | r(ei) p(ublicae), quo melior optari non potest, quo beneficio principis nostri frui contigit.'

³⁷ Cicero, *Att.* 16.14.2: 'sed in isto iuvene, quamquam animi satis, auctoritatis parum est.'

³⁸ Valerius Maximus 6.2.12 (n. 15 *supra*).

³⁹ Seneca, *Cl.* 1.15.1 (Loeb trans.).

Then there are a number of miscellaneous instances where *auctoritas* denotes one sort of moral authority or another: the Elder Pliny says that the doctor Antonius Musa had Augustus' *auctoritas* (support) when he prescribed a regime of cold baths and saved Augustus' life; Frontinus cites the *auctoritas* of Augustus' *commentarii* on ajutages (*moduli*); in Tacitus' *Annals*, Nero tells Seneca that when Augustus allowed Agrippa and Maecenas to retire from public life, Augustus' *auctoritas* was sufficient to put him beyond suspicion of envy; Suetonius says that, while on Rhodes, Tiberius learned that notice of divorce had been sent to Julia in his own name 'ex auctoritate Augusti'.⁴⁰ Lastly, the Hadrianic jurist Pomponius says that inasmuch as Augustus had greater *auctoritas* in law, he was the first to establish that jurists could give responses in keeping with his *auctoritas*.⁴¹

Of these isolated, and mostly trivial, examples, only the passage from Seneca's *De clementia* might be said to offer any support for the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3. For Seneca, *auctoritas* is apparently a moral quality rather than a formal power. It is something in which Augustus is implicitly supreme, and something that Augustus actively exercises. On the other hand, the passage does not recall *Res Gestae* 34.3 in any specific way. In this sense it is worth remembering that *De clementia* is an extended and explicit meditation on the *corona ciuica* and the virtue of *clementia*, both mentioned in *Res Gestae* 34.2.⁴² None of the other instances recall *Res Gestae* 34.3 or emphasize *auctoritas*, either — still less do they suggest that the principate had been founded on Augustus' *auctoritas*. In effect, the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3 rests on only the passage itself. So it is to the passage that we now turn.

III *RES GESTAE* 34.3

In fact, the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3 is based on two misconceptions. The first concerns emphasis. The emphasis at *Res Gestae* 34.3 is not on the first clause, but on the second: not on surpassing all in *auctoritas*, but on possessing no more *potestas*. It is true that Augustus sets his account of the constitutional changes and honours of 28–27 and 2 B.C. (*Res Gestae* 34–5) apart from his account of his other honours (*Res Gestae* 1–14) and places it at the close of the document. But the rhetorical principle that the final position is emphatic holds for *Res Gestae* 34.3 as well. Indeed, the principle has been inadvertently acknowledged by scholars beginning with Heinze, who have instinctively switched the clauses when paraphrasing the sentence. Even the scrupulous Scheid writes, 'Même si Auguste ne possédait pas formellement un pouvoir supérieur à celui de ses collègues dans l'une de ces fonctions, il l'emportait sur eux en prestige' ('Even if Augustus did not formally possess a power superior to that of his colleagues in one of these offices, he surpassed them in prestige').⁴³ Nor is it legitimate to give the

⁴⁰ Pliny, *HN* 29.5/6; Frontinus, *Aq.* 31.1–3; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.55; Suetonius, *Tib.* 11.4: 'comperit deinde Iuliam uxorem ob libidines atque adulteria damnatam repudiumque ei suo nomine ex auctoritate Augusti remissum.' In this last case, as Susan Treggiari has kindly explained to me, Augustus cannot have acted as Tiberius' *tutor*, since Tiberius was of full age and a *tutor* was concerned only with financial transactions (see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (1991), 460), so *auctoritas* has a moral sense, not a formal legal one. Treggiari compares Augustus' compelling Agrippa to divorce Marcella (Dio 54.6.5) and Tiberius to divorce Vipsania (Suetonius, *Tib.* 7.2–3).

⁴¹ Pomponius, *Enchiridion*, *Dig.* 1.2.2.49: 'primus Diuus Augustus, ut maior iuris auctoritas haberetur, constituit ut ex auctoritate eius responderent.' Galinsky and others make much of the notion that *auctoritas* was personal and non-transferable.

⁴² S. M. Braund, *Seneca, De clementia* (2009), ad loc. rightly passes over 'auctoritas' without comment.

⁴³ Scheid, op. cit. (n. 2), 92. Cf. Syme, op. cit. (n. 1), 523: 'he excels any colleague he might have, not in *potestas*, but only in *auctoritas*.'

adversative particle *autem* concessive force ('même si').⁴⁴ Instead, the emphasis is on possessing no more *potestas*, and *potestas* is in fact the running theme of the whole chapter, as the new reading of '[po]tens' at *Res Gestae* 34.1 in place of Mommsen's '[potitus]' makes clearer than ever.⁴⁵ *Res Gestae* 34 unfolds in three chronological phases and carefully situates Octavian/Augustus' *potestas* with respect to the Roman senate, people, and magistrates:

- (1) After the civil wars (31/30 B.C.), Octavian was by universal consent powerful over all things ('[po]tens re[ru]m om[n]ium').
- (2) In his sixth and seventh consulships (28–27 B.C.), Octavian transferred the *res publica* from his power ('ex mea potestate') to the discretion of the Roman senate and people.
- (3) After this time, Augustus had no more power ('[potest]atis ... [n]ihilo ampliu[s]') than his colleagues in each magistracy.

In other words, the sense of *Res Gestae* 34.3 is surely the *opposite* of the conventional reading.⁴⁶ Augustus is not emphasizing the fact that he surpassed all in *auctoritas*. He is saying,

I surpassed all in *auctoritas* — *but it did not matter, because* — I possessed no more *potestas*.

This is the plain meaning of the Latin, and the logical conclusion of the chapter, in which Augustus describes relinquishing the *potestas* he was acknowledged to have had after defeating Antony.⁴⁷

The second misconception concerns the referent of *Res Gestae* 34.3. It is unlikely that in *Res Gestae* 34.3 Augustus is making a transcendental claim about the nature of his rule, for two reasons. The first is that this reading rests on a distortion of Augustus' words. Augustus says, 'a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti', 'I surpassed all in *auctoritas*'. But Heinze in his paraphrase has changed the verb into a noun: 'meine Vorrangstellung beruhte auf dem Einfluß ...' ('my pre-eminence rested on the influence ...'). The difference is subtle but all-important, and emerges clearly if we replace *auctoritas* by another word. It is the difference between saying (for example), 'I surpassed all in *pietas*', and saying, 'my pre-eminence was based on *pietas*'. By the time we arrive at a typical formulation like Béranger's 'Auguste déclare sans ambages que son pouvoir repose sur une prééminence personnelle' ('Augustus declares unambiguously that his power rests on a personal pre-eminence') the original Latin — including the word *auctoritas* itself — has been completely effaced.⁴⁸

The second reason that *Res Gestae* 34.3 is unlikely to embody a transcendental claim is that every other clause of the *Res Gestae* refers to a specific, datable event or set of events.

⁴⁴ cf. Brunt and Moore, op. cit. (n. 2): 'After this time I excelled all in influence, *although* I possessed no more official power than others who were my colleagues in the several magistracies' (emphasis added).

⁴⁵ For '[po]tens' see P. Botteri, 'L'integrazione mommseniana a *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 34,1, "potitus rerum omnium" e il testo greco', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 144 (2003), 261–7; Scheid, op. cit. (n. 2), ad loc.

⁴⁶ It seems clear that at *Res Gestae* 34.3, where *auctoritas* is contrasted with *potestas*, the particle *autem* has adversative force. But note that in the other nine instances where Augustus uses *autem*, the particle seems only to mark a transition (*in addition, moreover*). In seven of the instances the Greek translation from Ancyra and Apollonia has δέ without corresponding μέν (1.4, 14.2, 22.2, 23, 27.2, 28.2, 29.2), as at 34.3; in the other two it has οὐν (4.2) and τε (15.1). Note that in the 'different and superior' Greek translation from Sardis, Thonemann, op. cit. (n. 9), restores καὶ πάλιν for *autem* at *Res Gestae* 22.2.

⁴⁷ And so the sting in Tacitus' assessment, that Octavian was 'secure in his power' ('potentiae securus') in 28 B.C., when he 'abolished what he had ordered during the Triumvirate and established the legal principles by which we would enjoy peace and a princeps' (*Ann.* 3.28.2).

⁴⁸ Béranger, op. cit. (n. 3), 117. Cf. Syme, op. cit. (n. 1), 322: 'it was in virtue of *auctoritas* that Augustus claimed pre-eminence for himself.'

Literally every other clause: the title means what it says; the document is a catalogue of Augustus' honours, benefactions, and deeds. Even when Augustus makes a broader claim, he refers to specific events: to specific instances of mercy, when he says that as victor he spared the lives of all citizens who asked for mercy, and preserved foreign peoples who could safely be pardoned (*Res Gestae* 3.1–2); to specific laws and exemplary practices, when he says that by new laws he restored many exemplary practices of the ancestors, and himself transmitted exemplary practices to posterity (8.5); to specific conquests, when he says that he extended the territory of all provinces bordering on peoples not subject to Roman *imperium* (26.1).

This is an important clue. It suggests that at *Res Gestae* 34.3 it is not the word *auctoritas* that matters so much as the event the clause refers to. Instead of seeking a transcendental sense for the passage, we should ask: What specific event or events occurred during Augustus' sixth and seventh consulships, such that he could claim that from then on he had supreme *auctoritas*, but equal *potestas*?

IV *PRINCEPS SENATUS*

I think that this question can be answered, and that both clauses of *Res Gestae* 34.3 allude to identifiable events and express their significance. The first clause alludes to Octavian's becoming *princeps senatus* in 28 B.C., and the second clause alludes to his reviving the practice of alternating the *fasces* with his fellow consul Agrippa the same year.

The supporting evidence comes from the *Res Gestae* itself and from Cassius Dio. Everyone has always seen that the Greek of *Res Gestae* 34.3 is equivalent to the Greek of 7.2, with the single difference that at 7.2 Augustus specifies that he held the first place of *axioma* in the senate. The Greek reads,

Res Gestae 34.3: Ἀξιόμ[α]τι πάντων διήνεγκα, ἐξουσίας δὲ οὐδέν τι πλεῖον ἔσχον τῶν συναρξάντων μοι.

Res Gestae 7.2: Πρῶτον ἀξιόματος τόπον ἔσχον τῆς συνκλήτου ἄχρι ταύτης τῆς ἡμέρας, ἧς ταῦτα ἔγραφον, ἐπὶ ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα. ('I held first place of *axioma* in the senate up until the day when I wrote this for forty years.')

But no one so far as I am aware has drawn the simple conclusion that the Latin of *Res Gestae* 34.3 is also synonymous with the Latin of 7.2:

Res Gestae 34.3: Post id tem[pus a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti, potest]atis au[tem n]ihilo ampliu[s habu]i quam cet[er]i, qui m[i]hi quoque in ma[gis]tra[t]u conlegae f[uerunt].

Res Gestae 7.2: P[ri]nceps s[enatus fui] usque ad e[um d]iem, quo scrip[seram] [haec, per annos] quadra[ginga].⁴⁹ ('I was *princeps senatus* up until the day when I wrote this for forty years.')

Yet Dio as transmitted by Zonaras defines *princeps senatus* precisely as the one who surpassed others in *axioma*:⁵⁰

Τῶν δὲ προσκαίρωσ ἀρχόντων πρεσβεῖα μὲν ἐδέδοτο τοῖς δικτάτορσι, δευτερεῖα δὲ γε τοῖς τιμηταῖς, ἡ δὲ τρίτη τάξις τοῖς ἱπάρχοις νενέμητο καὶ οὕτω ταῦτα ἐτέτακτο, κἂν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἦσαν κἂν ἀπηλλάγησαν. εἰ γὰρ τις ἐκ μείζονος ἀρχῆς εἰς ὑποδεεστέραν κατέστη, τὸ τῆς προτέρας ἀξίωμα εἶχεν ἀκέραιον. εἰς δὲ τις, ὃν πρίγκιπα μὲν τῆς γερουσίας ὀνόμαζον, (λέγεται δ' ἂν καθ' Ἑλληνας πρόκριτος), συμπάντων προεῖχε τὸν χρόνον ὃν

⁴⁹ Scheid, *op. cit.* (n. 2), places 'fui' at the end of the sentence.

⁵⁰ Zonaras 7.19.10 = a fragment from Dio, Book 6 (Loeb Dio, vol. 1, 178–83; Loeb trans.). Cf. Premerstein, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 105–6; Béranger, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 129–30.

προεκρίνεται, (οὐ γὰρ διὰ βίου τις ἐς τοῦτο προεχειρίζεται), καὶ **προέφερε τῶν ἄλλων τῷ ἀξιώματι**, οὐ μὴν καὶ δυνάμει ἐχρητό τι.

Of the occasional magistrates dictators were given the first rank of seniority, censors second, while masters of the horse had third place. This same principle was followed, whether they were still in office or had retired; for if one descended from a higher office to a lower one, he still retained the rank of his former position undiminished. There was, however, one man, styled *princeps* of the senate (he would be called *prokritos* by the Greeks), who was superior to all for the time that he was thus honoured (a person was not chosen to this position for life) and surpassed the rest in *axioma*, without, however, wielding any power (*dynamis*).

Dio also accounts for the conjunction of *auctoritas* and *potestas* when he associates alternating the *fascēs* and becoming *princeps senatus* in his account of the year 28 B.C.⁵¹

1. Τότε μὲν ταῦτ' ἐγένετο, τῷ δὲ ἐξῆς ἔτει ἕκτον ὁ Καῖσαρ ἦρξε, καὶ τά τε ἄλλα κατὰ τὸ νομιζόμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ πάνυ ἀρχαίου ἐποίησε, καὶ τοὺς φακέλους τῶν ράβδων τῷ Ἀγρίππᾳ συνάρχοντί οἱ κατὰ τὸ ἐπιβάλλον παρέδωκεν, αὐτός τε ταῖς ἐτέραις ἐχρήσατο, καὶ διάρξας τὸν ὄρκον κατὰ τὰ πάτρια ἐπήγαγε. ... 3. ἐν δ' οὖν τῷ τότε παρόντι τά τε ἄλλα ὡσπερ εἴηστο ἔπραξε, καὶ τὰς ἀπογραφὰς ἐξετέλεσε, καὶ ἐν αὐταῖς **πρόκριτος τῆς γερουσίας** ἐπεκλήθη, ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ ἀκριβεῖ δημοκρατίᾳ ἐνενόμιστο.

1. The following year Caesar held office for the sixth time and conformed in all other respects to the usages handed down from the earliest times, and, in particular, he delivered to Agrippa, his colleague, the bundles of rods as it was incumbent upon him to do, while he himself used the other set, and on completing his term of office he took the oath according to ancestral custom. ... 3. At this particular time, now, besides attending to his other duties as usual, he completed the taking of the census, in connection with which his title was *princeps senatus*, as had been the practice when Rome was truly a republic.

In short, ‘a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti’ means, ‘I was *princeps senatus*’, and Augustus’ point is that despite holding this pre-eminent position, he had no more *potestas* than his fellow magistrates — as demonstrated by his alternating the *fascēs* with Agrippa.⁵²

Dio has more to tell us about *princeps senatus* and its significance for Augustus. First, Dio emphasizes that naming the *princeps senatus* at the conclusion of the census had been Republican practice.⁵³ Varro said in the manual of senatorial procedure he prepared for Pompey that formerly the first senator to give his opinion was the one enrolled as *princeps senatus* by the censors, but in his day the first speaker was chosen *ad hoc* from among consular senators by the presiding magistrate; Cicero’s evidence confirms this.⁵⁴ So *princeps senatus* takes its place among the Republican revivals of Augustus’ sixth and seventh consulships. Second, Dio explains that the *princeps senatus* was the senator who had seniority in office-holding (*presbeia*), as Octavian undoubtedly did in 28 B.C., when he was consul for the sixth time. Third, Dio specifies that *princeps senatus* was not a lifelong position, which explains Augustus’ emphasis on his continuous tenure of

⁵¹ Dio 53.1.1–3 (Loeb trans.).

⁵² Syme always emphasized the significance of alternating the *fascēs* in 28 B.C.; see *The Augustan Aristocracy* (1986), 1: ‘The ruler handed over the twelve *fascēs* to his colleague M. Vipsianus Agrippa. The practice of the Republic thus returned: rotation month by month of the “insignia imperii”. Normal government (it follows) was visibly heralded on February 1st of the year 28.’ Cf. *Tacitus* (1958), 365.

⁵³ Dio 53.1.3: ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ ἀκριβεῖ δημοκρατίᾳ (‘just as in the true republic’); cf. 57.8.2 and 73.5.1: κατὰ τὸ ἀρχαῖον (‘in the ancient fashion’). On *princeps senatus* see Béranger, op. cit. (n. 3), 40–3; M. Bonnefond-Coudry, ‘Le *princeps senatus*: vie et mort d’une institution républicaine’, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* 105 (1993), 103–34; F. X. Ryan, *Rank and Participation in the Republican Senate* (1998).

⁵⁴ Varro ap. Aulus Gellius, NA 14.7.9. See below for Cicero.

the position, both at *Res Gestae* 7.2 ('per annos] quadra[ginta') and at 34.3 ('post id tem[pus').⁵⁵

Dio also clarifies the relationship between *Res Gestae* 34.3 and the rest of the text. As we saw above, Augustus says that he held 'first place of *axioma* in the senate' at *Res Gestae* 7.2, but that he 'surpassed *all* in *axioma*' at 34.3. On the face of it, the difference between the two passages would seem to reflect the difference between *princeps senatus* and *princeps tout court*.⁵⁶ Thus Magdelain paraphrased the first clause of *Res Gestae* 34.3, 'princeps omnium fui'.⁵⁷ But Dio in his explanation of *princeps senatus* employs the same sequence of phrases as the *Res Gestae*: the *princeps senatus* (πρίγκιπα μὲν τῆς γερουσίας) was the one who excelled all (συμπάντων προεἶχε) and who surpassed others in *axioma* (προέφερε τῶν ἄλλων τῷ ἀξιώματι).⁵⁸ It follows that '[omnibus]/πάντων in the first clause of *Res Gestae* 34.3 is to be construed closely with 'cet[er]i'/ τῶν συναρξάντων in the second clause: 'I surpassed all of them in *auctoritas*, but I had no more *potestas* than the others who were my fellow magistrates'. In other words, '[omnibus]' refers to the set of all past and present magistrates, and is synonymous with *senatus*.⁵⁹ In fact, Dio equates *princeps senatus* and *princeps* 'of the rest' in another passage. Speaking of Tiberius, Dio says:⁶⁰

Τὸ δ' ὅλον Καῖσαρ, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ Γερμανικὸς ἐκ τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Γερμανικοῦ πραχθέντων, **πρόκριτός τε τῆς γερουσίας** κατὰ τὸ ἀρχαῖον καὶ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἀνομάζετο, καὶ πολλὰκις γε ἔλεγεν ὅτι 'δεσπότης μὲν τῶν δούλων, αὐτοκράτωρ δὲ τῶν στρατιωτῶν, **τῶν δὲ δὴ λοιπῶν πρόκριτός εἰμι.**'

In general he was called Caesar, sometimes Germanicus (from the deeds of Germanicus), and *princeps* (*prokritos*) *senatus*, the last in accordance with ancient usage and even by himself. He would often declare: 'I am master of the slaves, imperator of the soldiers, and *princeps* (*prokritos*) of the rest.'

⁵⁵ Two notes regarding the date. First, regarding the year when Octavian became *princeps senatus*: Rich, op. cit. (n. 3), 132, citing Dio 52.42.1–5 (Octavian undertakes a *lectio senatus*), asserts that Octavian became *princeps senatus* in 29 B.C., and that Augustus' calculation of forty years (*Res Gestae* 7.2) omits both the first and last years; Scheid, op. cit. (n. 2), 38, concurs. Neither, however, gives cause for impugning Dio's express statement (53.1.3) that Octavian became *princeps senatus* after the completion of the census in 28 B.C. Second, regarding 'post id tem[pus]': the words are generally taken to refer to 16 January 27 B.C., the date when Octavian was given the cognomen *Augustus*. But he received the *clipeus uirtutis* at some later date; we do not know when. I take 'post id tem[pus]' to refer back to the previous explicit temporal marker, 'in consulatu sexto et septimo' (*Res Gestae* 34.1), and to mean, 'from the time of my sixth and seventh consulships on'. One of the hallmarks of Augustus' style in the *Res Gestae* is the heavy use of explicit absolute and relative temporal markers, which are set out like stepping stones through the text.

⁵⁶ I am grateful to Robin Lane Fox for insisting on this point.

⁵⁷ Magdelain, op. cit. (n. 3), 76.

⁵⁸ Zonaras 7.19.10 = Dio, frag. from Book 6. There is a long-standing debate about the identity of the *ceteri* at *Res Gestae* 34.3, a minimalist interpretation holding that they were only Augustus' colleagues in the consulship (down to 23 B.C., then again briefly in 5 and 2 B.C.), and a maximalist interpretation holding that they also included his colleagues in the *ensoria potestas* and the *tribunicia potestas* (Agrippa and Tiberius, in both cases). Most scholars take 'in ma[gis]tra[t]u' strictly and favour the first interpretation. But note that at *Res Gestae* 22.2 Augustus can speak of 'other magistrates' even in reference to times when he did not hold a magistracy himself ('aliorum autem ma[gis]tratu[m]'). It is also important to remember that the content of the clause is negative ('potest[at]is au[tem] n[on] h[ab]u[it] ampliu[s] habu[it]'), corresponding to *Res Gestae* 6.1 ('[summa potestate solus]', ἐπι μὲν γιστη [ἐξ]ουσίᾳ [μ]όνοσ, 'alone with the highest power'). Finally, note that on the interpretation proposed here, the reading 'quōque' ('also') at *Res Gestae* 34.3, which has generally been rejected in favour of 'quōque' (from *quisque*, 'each'), may give better sense: 'I surpassed all of them in *auctoritas*, but I had no more *potestas* than the others who were *also* my colleagues in a magistracy.'

⁵⁹ This answers Andrew Lintott's objection that, despite the parallel with *Res Gestae* 7.2, *princeps senatus* is irrelevant to 34.3, because neither the senate nor individual senators, *qua* senators, had *potestas*. As Dio shows, *princeps senatus* designated not only a rôle within the senate — which Dio does not mention — but a position with respect to past and present magistrates.

⁶⁰ Dio 57.8.2 (Loeb trans.).

The scholarly consensus is that Dio here misunderstood Tiberius, who was talking about *princeps tout court*, not *princeps senatus*, and that in translating Tiberius' formula Dio should have used the standard Greek translation of *princeps*, *hegemon*, rather than *prokritos*. But the phrase 'hegemon of the rest' is unexampled. Dio appears to have had it right after all.⁶¹

Augustus' own interest in *princeps senatus* is reflected in the *elogia* he composed for the Forum Augustum, where he records that M'. Valerius Maximus (*dict.* 494 B.C.) and Q. Fabius Maximus (*dict.* 221, 217 B.C.) were each 'princeps in senatum lectus' ('enrolled in the senate as *princeps*').⁶² More importantly, Augustus' concern for his own position in the senate is signalled in the first chapter of the *Res Gestae*:⁶³

Eo [nomi]ne senatus decretis honorif[i]cis in ordinem suum m[e adlegit C. Pansa et A. Hirti]o consulibus, con[sula]rem locum s[ententiae dicendae simul dans, et i]mperium mihi dedit.

For that reason the senate by honorific decrees enrolled me in its order in the consulship of Gaius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius, at the same time assigning me a consular place for giving my opinion, and gave me *imperium*.

In the same way, Augustus records that Gaius and Lucius, on achieving manhood, had been allowed to attend sessions of the senate (*consilia publica*). The chapter closes the *honores* section of the text:⁶⁴

Et ex eo die, quo deducti [s]unt in forum, ut interessent consiliis publicis decrevit sena[t]us.

And the senate decreed that from the day when they were led into the Forum they should take part in the councils of state.

So this reading reveals something new about the architecture of the *Res Gestae* and about Augustus' conception of his and his successors' careers.

That leaves *auktoritas*. If 'a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti]' alludes to *princeps senatus*, what does *auktoritas* mean, precisely? Dio says that *axioma* was a function of seniority.⁶⁵ Cicero also links *auktoritas* to a speaker's rank:⁶⁶

Primum igitur scito primum me non esse rogatum sententiam praepositumque esse nobis pacificatorem Allobrogum, idque admurmurante senatu neque me invito esse factum. sum enim et ab observando homine perverso liber et ad dignitatem in re publica retinendam contra illius voluntatem solutus, et ille secundus in dicendo locus habet auctoritatem paene principis, voluntatem non nimis devinctam beneficio consulis. tertius est Catulus, quartus, si etiam hoc quaeris, Hortensius.

First then you may care to know that I have *not* been given first voice in the senate, the pacifier of the Allobroges [i.e. C. Calpurnius Piso, cos. 67 B.C.] being put in front of me — at which the house murmured but I myself was not sorry. I am thereby relieved of any obligation to be civil to a cross-grained individual and left free to maintain my political standing in opposition to his

⁶¹ cf. *OCD* 1st and all subsequent editions, s.v. 'princeps' (Balsdon): 'Cassius Dio, for instance, in recording Tiberius' very typical remark (57.8.2), "I am *dominus* (lord, master) of my slaves, *imperator* of my troops, and *princeps* of the rest", loses the point by using, for *princeps*, not ἡγεμών, but πρόκριτος, which means *princeps senatus*.'

⁶² *ILS* 50 (M'. Valerius Maximus): 'princeps in senatum semel lectus est'; *ILS* 56 (Q. Fabius Maximus): 'princeps in senatum duobus lustris lectus est'.

⁶³ *Res Gestae* 1.2.

⁶⁴ *Res Gestae* 14.1.

⁶⁵ cf. Ryan, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 347–9.

⁶⁶ Cicero, *Att.* 1.13.2 (Loeb trans.); note that C. Calpurnius Piso did not hold the formal title *princeps senatus*, then in disuse.

wishes. Moreover the second place carries almost as much *auctoritas* as the first (*princeps*), while one's inclinations are not too much fettered by one's sense of the consular favour. Catulus comes third, Hortensius, if you are still interested, fourth.

It is in this sense that I think we need to understand *auctoritas* at *Res Gestae* 34.3: as a function of Augustus' formal rank, and so as metonymy for *princeps senatus*.⁶⁷ It is true that this precise usage is not attested in relation to Augustus — and that the absence of parallels was the first of my charges against the conventional interpretation — but I do not think that this represents a problem for my interpretation. The point of the passage is that Augustus' superior *auctoritas* was immaterial, because he had no greater *potestas* than his fellow magistrates. *Res Gestae* 34.3 is not a declaration that Augustus' real power was extra-constitutional; it is an affirmation that he conformed to collegiality. On this reading, there is no reason to expect *auctoritas* to have been repeated.⁶⁸

V CONCLUSION

On this basis, I propose the following paraphrase of *Res Gestae* 34.3:

Post id tem[pus a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti, potest]atis au[tem n]ihilo ampliu[s habu]i
quam cet[eri, qui m]ihi quoque in ma[gis]tra[t]u conlegae f[uerunt].

From the time of my sixth and seventh consulships on, I surpassed all of them in *auctoritas* (as recognized by my being named *princeps senatus* during my sixth consulship), but I had no more *potestas* than my colleagues in each magistracy (as demonstrated by my reviving the practice of alternating the *fasces* the same year).

To be clear: I concur that *auctoritas* connoted prestige and influence. I wish only to dispell the numinous haze that has surrounded the word, and to tie *auctoritas* concretely to a particular event and a particular institution. At a minimum, I hope to have shown that the conventional interpretation of *Res Gestae* 34.3 — that the word *auctoritas* itself is significant, that Augustus emphasizes it, and that Augustus' claim has a transcendental sense and explanatory power — is wholly untenable.

Fergus Millar once called Syme's *Roman Revolution* 'the first great step in a long campaign to free Roman history from the domination of a faction of abstract nouns'.⁶⁹ Yet even Syme was not immune to the charms of *auctoritas*.⁷⁰ The campaign continues.

University of Victoria
gdrowe@uvic.ca

⁶⁷ Perhaps relevant is the most common use of *auctoritas* in relation to Augustus, in the sense of legislative or administrative *initiative*. In the Republic, when there was open discussion of issues in the senate, the first speaker was functionally the initiator of the senate's decisions. Thus Cicero treats *auctor* and *princeps* (meaning first speaker) as synonyms: 'in ipsa sententia, quoniam princeps ego sum eius atque auctor' ('in the motion itself, since I am its *princeps* and *auctor*'; *Dom.* 5/10); 'Cn. Pompeio auctore et eius sententiae princeps' ('with Cn. Pompey the *auctor* and *princeps* of this motion'; *Pis.* 15/35). Augustus also collocates *auctor* and *princeps senatus* in his *elogium* for M. Valerius Maximus: 'faenore gravi populum senatus hoc eius rei auctore liberavit ... princeps in senatum semel lectus est' ('with Valerius as *auctor* of the motion, the senate freed the people from burdensome debt ... he was enrolled as *princeps* in the senate once'; *ILS* 50). Lastly, note a Tiber *terminus*-stone of Claudius, the only time *princeps senatus* appears in imperial titulature before the reign of Pertinax, when it was briefly revived: 'ex auctorit[ate] | Ti(beri) Claudi Caesaris | Aug(usti) Germanic[i] | principis s[en(atus)]' (*ILS* 5926).

⁶⁸ Others may call this *petitio principii*, but I will defend it as correct, nonetheless.

⁶⁹ *Journal of Roman Studies* 63 (1973), xi.

⁷⁰ See Syme, *op. cit.* (n. 1), Index s.v. 'auctoritas'.