

Memory and Authority in Tacitus' Treatment of the *Res Gestae*
Gabriel P. Grabarek (Indiana University)

The disdain which Tacitus held for the principate of Augustus is certainly no secret, nor did he intend it to be. In the few passages which Tacitus dedicates to the history of Augustus' regime in the *Annales*, he directly engages with Augustus' own chief mode of passing his memory on to posterity; the *Res Gestae*. And he does so in the typical Tacitean *modus operandi* of first mentioning the façade of what is being said, and then giving the truer and darker reality in a very duplicitous fashion. Tacitus never directly mentions the *Res Gestae* as a source, nor does he even indirectly refer to its existence, but there is no doubt that Tacitus had it in mind when composing, specifically, sections I.9-10 of the *Annales*. This paper will discuss Tacitus' usage of the *Res Gestae* as a historical source, but more so his ability to turn its very ideology against Augustus and the principate in general.

Tacitus is not attempting to display ignorance by not specifically mentioning the *Res Gestae* here, but literary art. In this way, Tacitus can either echo or controvert its desired aims and assertions without giving in to direct polemic. And so, Tacitus positions sections I.9 and I.10 as a set of scales on which to counter-balance Augustus' official declamation of his reign, and then 'others'' interpretation of it, *dicebatur contra*. Section I.9 could be referred to as a synopsis of Augustus' *Res Gestae* and the message he wished to deliver. Tacitus touches on all of the major themes which are present in the *Res Gestae* and even uses similar verbiage. Section I.10, on the other hand, deals with all of these themes by giving the other side of the argument, namely that all of Augustus' rationales were merely a mask, *obtentui sumpta*. And that although the principate was necessary, its foundation and actuality are clouded by private ambition.