

CATONIS NOBILE LETUM AND THE LIST OF ROMANS IN HORACE ODES 1.12

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*Romulum post hos prius an quietum
Pompili regnum memorem an superbos
Tarquini fascis, dubito, an Catonis
nobile letum.*

33-36

"THIS STANZA IS ONE OF THE MOST BEWILDERING passages in Horace's odes," writes Fraenkel (294), in puzzlement over the poet's uncertainty about which Roman to mention first after the Greek heroes listed in lines 25-32. Surely, he reasons, it has to be Romulus. Other problems in the stanza include the identity of the Tarquinius in line 35—Superbus or Priscus?¹—and, above all, the reference to Cato Uticensis. "The presence of Cato," observe Nisbet and Hubbard (155), "is a notorious stumbling-block." Suspicion of the text dates back at least to Bentley, who proposed replacing *an Catonis* with *anne Curti*.² Other conjectures include *an catenis nobilitatum Regulum* (Hamacher) and *an catenis, nobile, laetum Regulum* (Housman), which eliminate Cato and make room for a description

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¹A far less plausible candidate is the obscure L. Tarquinius Collatinus (one of the first consuls), as proposed by Treloar (see the criticisms of Jocelyn). Nor is it credible that the phrase *superbos Tarquini fascis* "fuses Priscus and Superbus in enigmatic fashion" (N. E. Collinge, *The Structure of Horace's Odes* [London 1961] 31, following Fraenkel 295, n. 2).

²R. Bentley (ed.), *Q. Horatius Flaccus*³ 1 (reprinted Berlin 1869) 35-36.

of Regulus.³ In the two recent Teubner editions, *Catonis* is retained by Borzsák but obelized by Shackleton Bailey.⁴ "Yet," to quote Nisbet and Hubbard again, "*nobile letum* is so applicable to Cato's suicide that one is reluctant to reject the transmitted reading."⁵ Indeed it is, and the presence of Cato may be defended both formally, as intrinsic to the prefatory function of the above stanza, and poetically, as a contributory element in Horace's attempt to dissociate Augustus from the civil wars and link him with the great men of the republic's heyday.⁶

The special problems regarding Tarquin and Cato cannot be solved without first addressing the general problem of how the stanza fits into the structure of the poem. Interpretation of this matter has been hampered by the theory that the poem falls into five groups of three stanzas each, in imitation of the five metrical triads of Pindar's Second Olympian (which Horace recalls in the opening lines: *quem virum aut heroa* . . . ?). According to this scheme, the first three stanzas constitute the invocation and statement of theme (lines 1–12), while succeeding triads present lists of gods (13–24), heroes (25–36),⁷ and men (37–48), and the last three stanzas are occupied by a prayer linking Jupiter and Augustus (49–60). On this view, the stanza comprising lines 33–36 must go with the two stanzas about mythical Greek heroes. Fraenkel, a proponent of the triadic theory, argues that the stanza simultaneously rounds off the section on heroes and makes a transition to the Roman *viri* in 37–48.⁸ Essentially the same view is taken by Nisbet and Hubbard, though they are fully aware of the difficulties it involves and suggest that "[p]erhaps the divisions of the poem are not quite so clear-cut as is sometimes supposed" (155). Indeed, the difficulties inherent in regarding

³See J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear (eds.), *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman* 1 (Cambridge 1972) 94–96. Along the same lines, S. Heyworth ("Two Conjectures," *PCPS* 210 [1984] 72–73) suggests that *Catonis* is a gloss which replaced an adjective agreeing with *Reguli* (e.g., *fidelis* or *severi*).

⁴S. Borzsák (ed.), *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Leipzig 1984); D. R. Shackleton Bailey (ed.), *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Stuttgart 1985). Shackleton Bailey looks for a reference to another king and suggests *anne Tulli flebile*.

⁵Nisbet and Hubbard 157. The Elder Pliny describes Utica as *Catonis morte nobilis* (*HN* 5.24). Could this be a reminiscence of Horace's memorable phrase?

⁶On the ideological aspect of the poem, see La Penna 95–104.

⁷Or strictly speaking "demigods" (*semidei*); Horace's use of *heros* (line 1) is determined by his Pindaric model (*Ol.* 2.2).

⁸Fraenkel 294–296. See also Treloar, with the criticisms of Jocelyn 68–73; for the continuing debate between Treloar and Jocelyn, see A. Treloar, "Horace *Odes* 1.12.33–6: A Reply," *Antichthon* 6 (1972) 60–62, *id.*, "Horace, *Odes* 1.12 Yet Again: A Rejoinder," *Antichthon* 7 (1973) 60–61, A. J. Dunston, "Horace, *Odes* 1.12 Yet Again," *Antichthon* 7 (1973) 54–59, and H. D. Jocelyn, "Horace, *Odes* 1.12.33–6: Some Final Remarks," *Antichthon* 7 (1973) 62–64. Schmidt proposes an ingenious but to my mind unconvincing variation on the traditional triadic analysis: *viz.*, Triad 1: *proem*; Triad 2: *quem deum?* (= Jupiter); Triads 3–4: *quem heroa?* (= Julius Caesar); Triad 5: *quem virum?* (= Augustus).

Numa, Tarquinius (whether Priscus or Superbus), and Cato as "heroes"—not to mention other problems, such as the essential difference between a Pindaric metrical triad and the syntactical and thematic triads proposed for Horace's ode—necessitate abandoning the triadic theory in its extreme form, as Williams and Syndikus have argued persuasively.⁹ Even so, the divisions remain fairly clear-cut and I follow the analysis of Helm¹⁰ that the poem falls into groups of 3+3+2+4+3 stanzas, with the slight modification that the sections on gods and heroes are not sharply differentiated (3+[3+2]+4+3). By this analysis, the three-stanza invocation at the beginning is balanced by the three-stanza prayer at the end, while the four-stanza section on *viri*, though shorter than the combined passages on gods and heroes (as piety would seem to require), forms a climax in both position and length as the last and longest of the three internal sections.

Line 33 thus opens the section on *viri* (with Romulus, through his apotheosis, smoothing the passage from demigods to mortals). That lines 33–36 constitute an introduction and not a conclusion is supported further by various formal features, several of which have been pointed out by Syndikus. Most significant is the partial parallelism with the introduction to the section on the gods in 13–16. Here, Horace asks rhetorically what theme he should take up before the praises of Jupiter (*quid prius dicam solitis parentis / laudibus . . . ?*), thereby echoing and responding to the questions posed at the beginning of the poem (*quem virum aut heroa? . . . quem deum? cuius . . . nomen . . . ?*). These opening questions are an instance of the rhetorical figure of *dubitatio*, defined by Quintilian in terms which apply well to our ode: *adfert aliquam fidem veritatis et dubitatio, cum simulamus quaerere nos unde incipiendum, ubi desinendum, quid potissimum dicendum, an omnino dicendum sit* (*Inst.* 9.2.19).¹¹ Similarly in 33–36 Horace poses the question, albeit indirectly, not directly as before, of which Roman to celebrate first (*prius . . . memorem*)—a strange way to end a list but a perfectly natural beginning, *dubitatio* being a figure which is "most common in *exordia*" (Race 20). Where the two passages differ, of course, is that in the divine sphere it is impossible to imagine any subject superior to Jupiter (*quid prius dicam . . . ?*), whereas in the human sphere—restricted in this ode to Roman history for reasons of patriotism and panegyric—the choice is not so obvious (*dubito*, 35). Not that there is any real doubt about whom Horace believes to be the greatest Roman: manifestly he is Augustus, the vicegerent of Jupiter on earth (51–52). But the structure of the ode demands that the list end and not begin with Augustus. By contrast with his unequivocal acknowledgment of Jupiter's primacy, the poet

⁹Williams, *Tradition and Originality* 170–174; Syndikus 1.136–138. I acknowledge a general debt to Syndikus's excellent discussion of the poem.

¹⁰R. Helm, review of G. Daniels, *Die Strophengruppen in den Horazoden*, in *Philologische Wochenschrift* 62 (1942) 635; cf. Syndikus 1.138.

¹¹See Race 20–21, 123.

therefore begins by considering the full range of possibilities in 33–36 and then, by way of the list in 37–44, works up to the expected climax in 45–48.

The hesitation expressed by *dubito* and its attendant indirect questions gives way to a decisive future indicative in the following stanza as the poet settles upon his theme (*gratus insigni referam Camena*, 39), and then, in succeeding stanzas, to the perfect and present tenses (*tulit*, 42; *crescit*, 45; *micat*, 46). Here too there is a parallel with the section on gods and heroes, in which the introductory mode of rhetorical interrogation (*quid prius dicam* . . . ?, 13) is replaced in the following list by straightforward present, perfect, and future tenses in praise of Jupiter (*generatur*, 17; *viget*, 18), Athena (*occupavit*, 19 [*occupabit*, R. Stephanus]), and the remaining gods and heroes (*neque te silebo*, 21; *dicam*, 25). In both passages the contrast between the initial question or hesitation and the plain declarations that follow sets off the introductory stanza. A few other features point in the same direction: 1) the expansive description of the Dioscuri calming storms at sea (27–32) provides a cadence to the whole list of gods and heroes (just as the description of Orpheus in 7–12 rounds off the initial invocation and the images in 45–48 add a flourish to the closing of the list of men [Syndikus 1.137]); 2) the phrase *post hos* in line 33, being more obtrusive than the simple connectives (*tamen*, *neque*, *et*, etc.) or asyndeta used elsewhere to articulate the lists of names, accentuates the break between divine and human, Greek and Roman, that occurs at this point; 3) except in the case of Romulus, Horace refers in this stanza primarily to things (*quietum* . . . *regnum*, *superbos* . . . *fascis*, *nobile letum*) rather than people, which is in keeping with his affected indecision about whom to mention first; 4) *Regulum* seems to echo *Romulum* and there is a parallelism between the two sets of four names in 33–36 and 37–40 which binds together the two stanzas and places the second, as it were, in resposion to the first (Becker 114, note 3); 5) Ausonius' burlesque of lines 33–36, in which he ponders which of three Greek *grammatici* to mention first, constitutes the preface to his poem.¹² He at least, one may infer, read Horace in the manner proposed.

The failure of critics to see the introductory function of lines 33–36 has been largely responsible for their perplexity over the mention of Tarquin and Cato. For, in the first place, it seemed implausible to regard these figures—or even Numa—as heroes on a par with Romulus, Hercules, and the Dioscuri; and, conversely, if Cato can count as a hero, why not Regulus and the others who died noble deaths? In the second place, any plausibility which might have been gained by restricting the notion of “Roman hero” to legendary times appeared to be sacrificed by the inclusion of Cato, involving as it does a chronological leap from the sixth century to the poet's own lifetime. Once the introductory role of the stanza is perceived, its details

¹²Auson. Prof. Burd. 8.1–4 *Romulum post hos prius an Corinthi, / anne Sperchei pariterque nati / Atticas musas memorem Menesthei / grammaticorum?*

become easier to interpret. No longer is the question: "How can Tarquin and Cato be regarded as heroes?" Instead, we should ask: "By what principle of selection are Romulus, Numa, Tarquin, and Cato chosen to introduce the list of great Romans?" Moreover, the chronological difficulty posed by Cato disappears if we abandon the preconception that lines 33–48 ought to present a more or less orderly progression from the legendary figures of early Rome to the present day; this is clearly not the case in lines 37–44 (whose tendency is to move backwards in time rather than forwards), so why force lines 33–36 to conform to a non-existent pattern? Instead, 33–36 should be regarded not as the first installment of a continuous series but as a preface with its own internal logic.

What logic is this? Karl Hiemer gave the correct explanation in an article of 1907¹³ but it needs to be revived in view of its neglect in recent criticism and continuing mistrust of the text (exemplified by Shackleton Bailey's obelizing of *Catonis*). Following Hiemer, then, I believe that the four names in 33–36 are chosen to embrace the whole of (pre-Augustan) Roman history. Thus Romulus and Numa represent the foundation of the city and the institution of kingship; Tarquin, who on this interpretation *must* be Tarquinius Superbus,¹⁴ stands for the fall of the monarchy and the institution of the *res publica* by Brutus and Collatinus; the death of Cato, finally, symbolizes the end of traditional senatorial government brought about by the victory of Julius Caesar. The four names span the extent of Roman history from its beginnings to recent times and allude to its main turning points and phases: foundation, monarchy, republic (beginning and end thereof). This is Horace's way of indicating the great range of themes available to him and the consequent difficulty of choice.¹⁵ In lines 37–48 he proceeds to answer the question posed in 33–36 by offering a carefully considered selection from the limitless possibilities that have been intimated, marking the resolution of his doubt with a direct and personal affirmation (*gratus insigni referam Camena*). The list which follows omits further mention of the early and recent times alluded to in lines 33–36 and centers upon the glorious warriors of the flourishing republic, whom the structure of the passage thereby portrays as the true precursors of Augustus.¹⁶

¹³K. Hiemer, "Zwei politische Gedichte des Horaz," *RhM* 62 (1907) 229–246, at 230; cf. T. Birt, "Beiträge zum Verständnis der Oden des Horaz," *Philologus* 79 (1924) 1–50, at 37; Becker 114, n. 3. Syndikus (1.146, n. 50) rejects the theory on the weak ground that an epochal conception of Roman history is not discernible elsewhere in Horace.

¹⁴A conclusion already made inescapable, in my view, by the obvious pun in *superbos . . . fascis*; cf. Syndikus 1.145. Horace applies the adjective to Tarquin directly in *Sat.* 1.6.12–13 *contra Laevinum, Valeri genus, unde Superbus / Tarquinius regno pulsus fugit*, etc.

¹⁵Cf. Syndikus 1.137, 144–145.

¹⁶Cf. R. Merkelbach, "Augustus und Romulus (Erklärung von Horaz *carm.* I 12, 37–40)," *Philologus* 104 (1960) 149–153, who points out that Romulus and Numa, as

There are questions to be raised and objections met. Firstly, why both Romulus and Numa, when Romulus alone could adequately represent the foundation of Rome? Because, I think, they represent different but complementary aspects of Rome's origin: its territorial and military basis on the one hand, and its moral and religious basis on the other. A familiar antithesis from Livy's history (1.21.6), it is hinted at here by the epithet *quietum*, implying a contrast between Numa's peaceful reign and the belligerent reign of Romulus. The pairing therefore suggests that Rome's greatness rests not just on valor but the civilized virtues of piety and justice. An analogous combination of qualities will be discovered later in the single figure of Augustus (*egerit iusto . . . triumpho, reget aequus*), who therefore excels the first two founders and himself presides over a new—and greater—era in Roman history. Secondly, what is Tarquinius Superbus doing in a list of praiseworthy leaders? Nisbet and Hubbard point out that there were achievements of Tarquin—particularly his extension of Roman territory—of which a Roman could feel justly proud.¹⁷ On the other hand, the adjective *superbus* ought to be pejorative when applied to a symbol of constitutional authority and especially so in the case of one who so notoriously abused his power.¹⁸ Tarquin, then, is an anomaly in the ode: the only villain amongst heroes. Horace is not proposing to praise him, or even the expansion of Rome during his reign, but rather evokes the stirring saga of his expulsion and subsequent repulse.¹⁹ It is not hard to explain why such an exception was necessary. The logical name to mention was, of course, that of Brutus, but therein lay the risk of calling to mind his namesake, the tyrannicide—an artistic and personal offense in a poem which celebrates the *Iulium sidus* and "Caesar's" divinely sanctioned rule on earth.²⁰ A disparaging reference to Tarquin delicately avoids the embarrassing name.²¹

opposed to the heroes of the republic, provided Augustus with only a partial model. The same could be said of Cato, who never attained the consulship or led a great campaign against foreign enemies.

¹⁷Nisbet and Hubbard 156; cf. Plüss 114–116, Jocelyn (1971) 75–76.

¹⁸For Horace's association between Tarquin and the *fascēs*, cf. Vergil *Aen.* 6.817–818, Prop. 3.11.47–48.

¹⁹Thus, e.g., E. C. Wickham (ed.), *Quinti Horati Flacci Opera Omnia*³ 1 (Oxford 1896) 66; T. E. Page (ed.), *Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Liber 1* (London 1910) 64.

²⁰*Odes* 2.7 is quite a different matter, and even there the tone is critical of Brutus; see J. L. Moles, "Politics, Philosophy, and Friendship in Horace *Odes* 2.7," *QUCC* 25 (1987) 59–72. Vergil was bound to include the name of L. Junius Brutus in his much more complete Roman pageant (*Aen.* 6.817–823) but strikingly tempers praise with criticism by transferring "Tarquin's" epithet *superbus* to Brutus (*animamque superbam / ultoris Bruti*).

²¹Since the mention of Tarquin already conjures up Brutus, I cannot agree that "when [the reader] reaches the name of Cato, he knows that he should be reading L. Junius Brutus" (Williams, *Figures of Thought* 18). According to Williams, the substitution

Which brings us to *Catonis nobile letum*. Some of the perplexity occasioned by the inclusion of Cato, particularly the misconception that the stanza ought to be devoted to legendary figures of early Rome, is dispelled by the recognition that lines 33–36 form a self-contained introduction, not the first part of a continuous chronological summary. Another perceived difficulty, one stressed by Bentley and others, is the alleged impropriety of praising Julius Caesar's enemy in a poem devoted to his adopted son and heir. There is, in fact, virtually no evidence to support the idea that a mention of Cato would have been in itself offensive to Augustus. After his death, the name of Cato became a political football, inspiring a series of tendentious pamphlets *pro* (Cicero, Brutus, and M. Fadius) and *contra* (Caesar). The argument of Octavian's (presumably youthful) *Rescripta Bruto de Catone* is unknown, but is more likely to have taken the form of an attack on Brutus rather than Cato, who died well before the events in which Octavian became directly involved. And even if he disapproved of Cato's politics, Augustus was capable of a generous estimate of him as a defender of the constitution (*quisquis praesentem statum civitatis commutari non volet et civis et vir bonus est*, Macr. 2.4.18). It hardly needs to be added that there were aspects of Julius Caesar's career from which Augustus wished to distance himself and that, perhaps accordingly, there are few unambiguously enthusiastic references to Caesar in Augustan poetry.²²

To this largely negative evidence I would add that laudatory references to Cato Uticensis occur elsewhere in Horace and Vergil, the poets most closely associated with Augustus; that Livy too may have painted a flattering portrait of him; and that during this same period his glorious death was on the way to becoming a stock rhetorical *exemplum*.²³ In the first ode of Book 2 Horace speaks of "all parts of the earth subdued except the

of Cato for Brutus creates a complex association of thought between the expulsion of Tarquin and the assassination of Caesar.

²²Syme 317–318; on the absence of Caesar in *Odes* 1.12, which is accentuated by the presence of Cato, see La Penna 98–100. Syme's view needs to be modified, though not, I feel, rejected, in the light of White's recent reevaluation of the evidence.

²³Poetry: Hor. *Odes* 2.1.23–24 (for other possible allusions, see La Penna 101 [on *Odes* 3.3.1] and Nisbet and Hubbard 265–266 [on *Odes* 1.22.5]); Vergil *Aen.* 8.670; cf. later, Manil. 1.797, 4.87. Livy's judgment: fr. 55 W. Rhetoric: Sen. *Controv.* 8.4; 10.3.5, *Suas.* 6.1–2, 4, 10. On Cato's reputation in the Augustan age, see further Syme 19–20, 506–507; *id.*, *A Roman Post-Mortem: An Inquest on the Fall of the Roman Republic* (Sydney 1950) 9; L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1949) 178–180; Pecchiura 37–44; Nisbet and Hubbard 156; G. Zecchini, "La morte di Catone e l'opposizione intellettuale a Cesare e ad Augusto," *Athenaeum* 58 (1980) 49–50; R. Fehrle, *Cato Uticensis* (Darmstadt 1983) 22–48, 301–302. Glorification of his suicide reached its apogee in the works of Seneca, e.g., *Prov.* 2.9–12, *Constant.* 2.1–3, *Tranq.* 16.1, *Ep.* 104.29–33.

fierce soul of Cato" (*et cuncta terrarum subacta / praeter atrocem animum Catonis*, *Odes* 2.1.23–24), a description which is predominantly eulogistic despite the complicated tone of *atrocem*—reflecting Pollio's sober historical analysis?—and which would surely have been avoided in such a prominent poem had there been any risk of offense to Augustus. (In this connection, it is worth stressing that in both passages it is not Cato's politics so much as his personal integrity and courage which Horace praises.)²⁴ But the best rebuttal to the objection of impropriety is supplied by Vergil, who in his description of the shield of Aeneas represents Cato as a judge in Elysium, standing for law and order in symbolic opposition to the anarchic Catiline:²⁵

*hinc procul addit
Tartareas etiam sedes, alta ostia Ditis,
et scelerum poenas, et te, Catilina, minaci
pendentem scopulo Furiarumque ora trementem,
secretosque pios, his dantem iura Catonem.* *Aen.* 8.666–670

Like Horace's ode, Vergil's description of the shield culminates in the praise of Augustus and this is sufficient to prove that the presence of Cato in an encomium directed towards Augustus did not constitute a political gaffe; on the contrary, it went along with the many other attempts of the Augustan regime to legitimize itself by latching onto republican slogans and symbols. Like Horace, again, Vergil frames his praise of Cato in apolitical, hence uncontroversial, terms. Those like Wickham who see in Horace's references to Tarquin and Cato "the first instance and the latest of devotion *pulchra pro libertate*" overstate the case. It is not so much because of his devotion to political freedom that Cato is included, but because his courageous suicide conveniently symbolized for Horace the end of an era.²⁶

²⁴This too is the theme of *Epist.* 1.19.12–14 (*quid si quis vultu torvo ferus et pede nudo / exiguaeque togae simulet textore Catonem, / virtutemne repraesentet moresque Catonis?*), where the identity of the Cato in question is uncertain; in support of Cato Uticensis, however, compare the details about his austere expression and attire in *Plut. Cat. Min.* 1.2, 44.1. It may also be possible that Horace is using the name generically, to mean "a Cato," "one of the Catos." For the strategy of praising Cato Uticensis for his character rather than his politics, cf. *Cic. Att.* 12.4.2, *Pecchiura* 26–27.

²⁵Servius takes this to be the Censor rather than Cato Uticensis, but the latter identification—generally accepted by modern scholars—is strongly indicated by the contemporaneity of Cato Uticensis and Catiline, and by Cato's famous role in the senatorial debate on the Catilinarian conspirators. The expression *dare iura*, moreover, is appropriate for one who had attained his highest office as urban praetor (cf., e.g., *Ovid Fasti* 1.207 *iura dabat populis posito modo praetor aratro*).

²⁶For the idea that the republic died with Cato, cf. *Sen. Constant.* 2.2, *adversus vitia civitatis degenerantis et pessum sua mole sidentis stetit solus et cadentem rem publicam, quantum modo una retrahi manu poterat, tenuit, donec abstractus comitem se diu sustentatae ruinae dedit simulque extincta sunt quae nefas erat dividi; neque enim Cato post libertatem vixit nec libertas post Catonem; Tranq.* 16.1 *Cato . . . incumbens*

Viewed in this light, the mention of Cato, whose death stood out as one of the few admirable deeds in a troubled age, is not particularly surprising—indeed he was an almost irresistible choice when measured against other candidates such as Pompey, Caesar, and Cicero, whose squalid or unmentionable ends would have struck a discordant note in Horace's patriotic fanfare. Over these ambiguous figures the suicide of Cato held obvious advantages both as an epochal symbol and as a paradigm of patriotism and adherence to principle. Nor was Horace the first to use the figure of Cato to represent the old republic. Aside from the lost political pamphlets referred to earlier, I am thinking of Sallust's account of the senatorial debate on the fate of the Catilinarian conspirators (*Cat.* 50–54), wherein he assigns the leading roles to Caesar and Cato and through his contrast of their attitudes and characters foreshadows their later political opposition in the period leading up to, and during, the civil war, when it was now the existence of the very constitution, and not just the lives of a few conspirators, which was at stake.

Having attempted to clarify the meaning of lines 33–36 and to justify the presence of *Catonis nobile letum*, let me conclude with an analysis of the poetic logic of the whole section on Roman *viri* (33–48) and the final prayer to Jupiter (49–60). After the introductory stanza ranging over Roman history (33–36), but focussing, as we have seen, upon the earliest and latest periods, the next two stanzas (37–44) are devoted to the praises of six famous republican names: Regulus, the Scauri, Aemilius Paullus, Fabricius, Curius, and Camillus.

*Regulum et Scauros animaeque magnae
prodigum Paulum superante Poeno
gratus insigni referam Camena
Fabriciumque.*

*hunc et incomptis Curium capillis
utilem bello tulit et Camillum
saeva paupertas et avitus apto
cum lare fundus.*

The list is sketchy and impressionistic, but the principle of selection and order is not difficult to discern.²⁷ All these men, first of all, played important roles in the great military crises of the fourth to second centuries: the capture of Veii and the Gallic occupation (Camillus), the Samnite Wars (Curius), the war with Pyrrhus (Fabricius), the first and second Punic

*gladio simul de se ac de re publica palam facere [cogitur]; to gain a mental image of the period, Seneca bids us imagine the people on one side, the *optimates* and knights on the other, and Cato and the republic in the middle: *duos in medio relictos, rem publicam et Catonem* (*Ep.* 104.31).*

²⁷See, e.g., Schmidt 143–144.

Wars (Regulus and Paullus), and the struggle with the Cimbri and Teutones (the Scauri). Chronological order is subordinated to categorization, the six names dividing into two groups of three. What unites the first three is the theme of self-sacrifice for the state. This is clear enough in the case of Regulus, who returned to certain death in Carthage with the senate's rejection of terms, and of Aemilius Paullus, who refused to leave the battlefield of Cannae. The reference to "Scauri" calls to mind M. Aemilius Scaurus and the son whom he drove to suicide for cowardice in battle, but might also (as suggested by Nisbet and Hubbard) include M. Aurelius Scaurus, another patriot like Regulus who died in captivity for his courageous words. Even in seemingly desperate situations, all these men in one way or another unwaveringly placed their loyalty to the state above their own lives and left an example of self-sacrifice to live on in memory as an inspiration to their own and later generations. Such was the perseverance and courage which won a world empire. For the second group of three names, the unifying theme is explicit. Fabricius, Curius, and Camillus—all were honed for war by the hardships of their austere agricultural upbringing (*utilem bello tulit . . . saeva paupertas*). Though restricted to these three, in Horace's compartmentalizing manner, the same idea is perhaps intended to apply to the whole group retrospectively (just as the second trio consists of patriotic warriors like the first).

The shape of the Roman section begins to emerge. We have seen that lines 33–36 form a prefatory stanza in which Horace indicates the richness of potential themes by surveying the whole frame of Roman history. The great advantage for Horace of this approach is, I suggest, that it lends a semblance of comprehensiveness to his highly selective treatment of Roman history in 33–48 while at the same time permitting him to pass quickly over eras which are too distant and constitutionally alien (the monarchy) or too controversial (the civil wars) to be germane to his representation of Augustus as the culmination of republican virtues and achievements.²⁸ It is interesting to compare Vergil's method in his description of the shield of Aeneas, which, as we have seen, includes a mention of Cato and culminates in the praise of Augustus like Horace's ode. In his similarly sketchy and tendentious summary of Roman history Vergil lingers over the legendary past and then hurries on, via the story of the Gallic occupation, to recent times as represented by the figures of Catiline and Cato.²⁹ So far, there

²⁸In this respect, Horace's rhetorical *dubitatio* functions here somewhat like a *praeteritio* (defined as "a 'by-passing' of subjects in order to arrive at one of more relevance or propriety" [Race 21]).

²⁹On this practice of referring to the distant past and then hastening forwards to the present, cf. A. Wallace-Hadrill in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. Michael Whitby et al. (Bristol 1987) 226. For this reference, and for the comparison with Vergil's description of Aeneas' shield, I am indebted to an anonymous referee.

is a certain resemblance to Horace's introductory stanza (lines 33–36). But from Cato, Vergil proceeds in straight chronological order to the victory of Augustus at Actium. Horace, on the other hand, has a somewhat different agenda: not so much to link Augustus with the earliest origins of Rome as to portray him as the continuator and ideal representative of a line of selfless, stern, and tenacious statesmen. Whereas Vergil skips quickly from regal to first-century Rome, using Cato as a stepping-stone to the Augustan age, Horace, having paid brief homage to the distant and recent past, doubles back from the death of Cato in order to concentrate upon the glorious military history of the republic and its underlying virtues. The relationship of these virtues to the professed ideals, policies, and example of Augustus is clear and need not be belabored here.³⁰ In their celebration of bravery, patriotism, and frugality, the verses find many echoes elsewhere in Horace and other literature of the Augustan period. Unspoken, but implicit, is a condemnation of the selfish leisure, luxury, and ambition of the aristocracy of the late republic and a call for a return to the mainstream of Roman greatness. It is noticeable in this regard that with the exception of Regulus (who sets the tone, as it were) the list of names is in reverse chronological order, moving backwards from comparatively recent times—the Scauri—to the legendary era of Camillus, Rome's "second founder" and thus, like Romulus and Numa, a prototype of Augustus.

The next stanza (45–48) brings the sketch of Roman history to a close:

*crescit occulto velut arbor aevo
fama Marcelli; micat inter omnis
Iulium sidus velut inter ignis
luna minores.*

Like 33–36, it has been the subject of much discussion and disagreement, though its basic function is clear. This is to form the climax of the list of Roman *viri* and build a bridge to the concluding prayer and praises of Augustus—and it does so subtly. Marcellus and Julius are old and established names which blend easily with the preceding list of republican heroes. The shift, however, in verbal tense (*tulit*, 42; *crescit*, 45; *micat*, 46) abruptly transfers attention from the past to the present. To whom do the names refer? Marcellus could be the hero of the second Punic War or the nephew and son-in-law of Augustus. The *Iulium sidus* may allude to Julius Caesar, Augustus, or the Julian *gens* as a whole. Schmidt and White have recently revived the view that Horace is making a direct reference to Julius Caesar,³¹ but I find this difficult to accept for the following reasons. Above all, the list of gods, heroes, and men ought to culminate

³⁰See Williams, "Odes 1.12" 149, *Figures of Thought* 13–19.

³¹Schmidt 144–146; White 351–353.

with Augustus, and the list ends at line 48. The concluding three stanzas constitute not a continuation of this list but a self-contained prayer to Jupiter, which is in counterpoise with the three-stanza invocation to Caliope at the beginning. The initial questions—"what man or hero? what god?"—having been answered in the central part of the ode, the function of the final prayer is to forge a conceptual relationship between the two great figures who enclose the list of names at its beginning (Jupiter) and end (Augustus). A tribute to Julius Caesar as one who *micat inter omnis* leaves little room for Augustus to shine. Moreover, it calls for an awkward change of reference within the space of a few lines—awkward inasmuch as *Iulium sidus* (47) and *Caesaris* (51), each appearing in the same position of the stanza and with the same emphasis (reinforced again by *Caesare* in line 52), are most naturally taken to mean the same person, the former being a grand periphrasis and the latter a clarification, whose encomiastic epithet *magnus* (50) derives force from the preceding metaphor of *micat inter omnis*.³² If Julius Caesar, not Augustus, is meant by *Iulium sidus*, the switch to *magni Caesaris* is abrupt. Two other points may be mentioned. First, if *Iulium sidus* refers to Julius Caesar, it calls attention to his deification—but *divus Iulius* does not belong in a list of *vir*i. Second, the phrase *Iulium sidus* must be metaphorical, not literal. A literal reading requires Horace to say that the star of Julius Caesar—that is, the comet sighted after his death³³—shines among all other stars as the moon shines among the stars, which makes a complete muddle of the comparison. Although *Iulium sidus* undoubtedly contains an allusion to this comet, its primary meaning is not "Julius' star" but "the star consisting of Julius (or the Julians)," and Horace is saying that this metaphorical "star" outshines all other great Romans as much as the moon outshines the (real) stars. Of course, it is still possible to refer the phrase to Julius Caesar even with the metaphorical interpretation, but the case for Caesar is weakened if there is only a secondary allusion to his comet. The *Iulium sidus* must therefore primarily refer to Augustus or the Julian *gens* of which Augustus was the latest and most glorious representative (it makes little difference, and any ambiguity is dispelled in the next stanza). That Horace hedges slightly by choosing a description flexible enough to indicate Augustus without entirely excluding the thought of Julius Caesar is part of the subtlety of which I spoke before.

³²For *magnus Caesar* in reference to Augustus, cf. Vergil G. 4.560, Prop. 2.1.26, 2.31.2 (also 2.7.5), Ovid *Fasti* 4.124, 859, *Epic. Drusi* 72; Catullus had applied the same title to Julius Caesar (11.10).

³³This was interpreted as a sign of Caesar's apotheosis and of heaven's favour to Octavian. For both reasons it was much exploited in Augustan iconography and poetry. See K. Scott, "The *sidus Iulium* and the Apotheosis of Caesar," *CP* 36 (1941) 257–272; S. Weinstock, *Divus Iulius* (Oxford 1971) 370–384; Schmidt 145; Zanker 33–37.

The problem of Marcellus is perhaps more difficult, but I agree with those who think he must be the hero of the second Punic War.³⁴ The great general, five times consul and only the third winner of the *spolia opima*, is fully at home in the company of the preceding magnates, whereas the teen-aged nephew and son-in-law of Augustus had as yet achieved nothing of great note. Significant, too, is the parallel of *Aeneid* 6, wherein the young Marcellus rides upon the coattails of his illustrious ancestor and is lauded for his great promise rather than his actual accomplishments (*Aen.* 6.855–886). Nevertheless, Horace's choice of Marcellus senior for this place of honor in the climactic stanza most likely reflects the dynastic marriage between Julia and Marcellus junior and involves a compliment to the latter. For this reason, Peerlkamp's conjecture *Marcellis* has its attraction,³⁵ but in my view damages the delicate fabric of a stanza whose main purpose is not, *pace* Williams, to celebrate the imperial marriage but to place Augustus in perspective with the republican past. Marcellus, the third-century general, is singled out (undoubtedly for ulterior political reasons but nonetheless plausibly on the basis of his record) as the prime representative of republican greatness (cf. *Aen.* 6.855–856 *aspice, ut . . . Marcellus . . . viros supereminet omnis*). His fame grows with the imperceptible lapse of time, like the height (or girth) of a tree—an image to me more suited to the slow, continuous growth of an old and well-established reputation than to the rapid growth of a new one (though admittedly this can be argued both ways). In prosaic terms, the worth of Marcellus' achievements has passed the test of time and continues to win new admirers in every generation.³⁶ (It is safe to conjecture that the marriage of Marcellus to Julia resulted in a fresh boost to the fame of his ancestor.) Against this noble representative of the past stands the *Iulium sidus*, outshining all other luminaries in the person of Augustus. By contrast with the image of steady growth, this is one of dazzling splendor and preeminence, suggesting a greatness that is already fully realized (cf. Plüss 117). The collocation of Marcellus and the *Iulium sidus* therefore emphasizes the comparability—indeed superiority—of Augustus to the great military heroes of old.³⁷ (A blatant reference to Marcellus junior would spoil this idea by eliminating the contrast between

³⁴See Nisbet and Hubbard 161–162; White 353, n. 47. For the opposing view, e.g., Syndikus 1.147; Schmidt 144.

³⁵See, e.g., Williams, *Tradition and Originality* 271; "Odes 1.12" 154, n. 10.

³⁶Cf. *Sil. Pun.* 6.63 (on Regulus) *longum semper fama gliscente per aevum* (cited by Nisbet and Hubbard).

³⁷Horace's poetic collocation may be compared in form and intention to the architectural juxtaposition—at a later date—of facing portrait galleries next to the temple of Mars Ultor, one of which displayed members of the Julian family and the other the *summi viri* of Roman history; see Schmidt 139–141 and Zanker 210–215, who observes (211): "The juxtaposition of the two portrait galleries thus justified the position of the princeps' family in the new Rome by proclaiming its unique historical importance."

past and present. Furthermore, the hint of competition and crescendo in the balancing descriptions *crescit* and *micat inter omnis* is inapt for two such unequal figures as the *princeps* and his nephew; the glory of the *Iulium sidus* demands a more substantial yardstick.) Working counter to this competitive idea, however, the subtext of the marriage between Julia and Marcellus junior expresses the grafting of the splendid new onto the stalwart old stock and points to the continuation and fruition of republican tradition in the family of Augustus. The overall message, complex and subtly conveyed, is one of both continuity with and superiority to the achievements of the past.

The climactic description of the *Iulium sidus* therefore halts and reverses the nostalgic, regressive tendency of the preceding stanzas and crosses the epochal boundary fixed by *Catonis nobile letum*, from the recent past into the present day. With the juxtaposition of Marcellus and *Iulium sidus* it is brought home to the reader that the republic lives on in an altered but even more brilliant form. The death of Cato marked the end of an era but ushered in a new and better one in which Augustus is restoring the glory of the past after the unfortunate, and here unmentionable, interlude of dictatorship and civil wars. Taking up the great tradition, he will extend the conquests of his republican predecessors to the ends of the earth (53–56) and rule with justice (57) under the care of Jupiter (50–51), to whose heavenly reign he provides the earthly counterpart (57–60). With this the poem neatly returns to Jupiter, from whom—since line 18—it seemed to have been receding ever farther, and combines in a unified, synchronous vision the realms of god and man and of heaven and earth that have thus far been treated as disparate and loosely related.

To summarize, I have argued that lines 33–36 constitute a preface to the parade of great men in lines 37–48. In the form of a rhetorical *dubitatio*, they present a skeleton synopsis of Roman history featuring the pivotal moments of the foundation, the expulsion of the kings, and, with *Catonis nobile letum*, the end of the old *res publica*. In effect, however, the stanza functions as a *praeteritio* which allows Horace to bypass the early and recent periods of Roman history and to open up the field for his real subject: the direct line between the patriotic warriors of the fourth to second centuries and Augustus, who is thereby freed of association with the period of civil strife out of which he had actually risen to power. Whatever admiration Horace had for Cato should not be attributed to a lingering allegiance to the old order. Cato's death is a moral *exemplum*, certainly, but more importantly it suggests the end of an era and sets the stage for the theme of the heaven-blessed regime inaugurated by Augustus. Beginning in lines 45–48, and emphatically so in the last three stanzas, Horace breaks the mold of historical closure informing lines 33–36 and channels the nostalgic idealization of lines 37–44 into a celebration of the dawning era, which is the fulfilment of all that was best in the past. Those who find the reference

to Cato tactless are missing the point. Horace's poem is not about the superiority of the past but the assimilation and eclipsing of the past by the present and future.

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