Just and tenacious of his purpose...

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Just and tenacious of his purpose ...

By Laetitia P. E. Parker, Oxford

Iustum et tenacem propositi uirum
non ciuium ardor praua iubentium,
non uultus instantis tyranni
mente quatit solida ...
Horace, *Odes* 3.3.1–4

Who is the man? In the third stanza of the poem, Augustus appears, sipping nectar in company with the demigods, Hercules and Pollux. Hence the common assumption that the righteous and resolute man of stanza one is to be identified with him. Yet the figure evoked hardly fits Augustus better than it fits Hercules or Pollux. It is just possible to claim *iustitia* and *constantia* as standard, non-specific Roman virtues[1], but what "tyrant's face" had Augustus to fear?[2] If, however, the identification with Augustus is abandoned, the *uir* of 3.3.1 becomes much easier to recognize. He is not a ruler, but a man of solitary integrity, able to resist temporal power, the philosophic man with strong Stoic colouring, the *uir bonus et sapiens* of *Epistles* 1.16.73–79[3]. The tyrant's face can be traced back to Sophocles[4], to Tiresias at *OT* 447–448:

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* Professor R. G. M. Nisbet kindly read the first draft of this paper, and I wish to thank him for encouragement and invaluable comments. My thanks are also due to Professor M. Billerbeck for her comments, and for providing me, most kindly, with a copy of an extract from the dissertation of B. Busch (nn. 5 and 16), which I had been unable to consult. For any errors or perversities I am entirely to blame.

[1] So, for example, Steele Commager: "The virtues ostensibly celebrated by the Ode are blanket ones. *Constantia* and *iustitia* ... correspond to the equally vague *virtus* or *meritum* customary in formulas for this type of apotheosis." (*The Odes of Horace*, New Haven/London 1962, 212).

[2] The most serious attempt I have found to confront this is Quinn's (*Horace. The Odes*, Basingstoke/London 1980, *ad loc.*). For him, the man is the "soldier-statesman", who "must be able to face up to any foreign menace ... here the leaders on each side confront each other." But could a contemporary Roman possibly have read the phrase in that way? *Instare* ("to set one's foot upon") is not the word for a confrontation between equals, and the tyrant is proverbially frightening to subordinates. With greater sensitivity, Gordon Williams (*The Third Book of Horace's Odes*, Oxford 1969, 41–42), while accepting "the presumption that Augustus is to be seen behind the generalizing terms", sees the third line as "converting the just man into one of the ruled instead of the ruler". He offers no explanation for this "conversion".

[3] G. Pasquali (*Orazio lirico*, Florence 1920, 682) recognizes the *sapiens* in the first stanza, as does later Max Pohlenz (*Die Stoa*, Göttingen ^{5}1978, 275–276). H. P. Syndikus (*Die Lyrik des Horaz* II, Darmstadt 1973, 38) rejects the identification with Augustus and recognizes the Stoic background, but his contention that the stanzas are purely Greek in inspiration ignores the political and literary context and the ubiquity of Greek colouring in Roman thought. See, for example, the use of the word *tyrannus* in Cicero, *Off.* 1.112 quoted below, 102.

[4] Wickham (*ad loc.*). Jebb quotes Horace in his note on the passage in *OT*.

... οὐ τὸ σὸν
δείσας πρόσωπον, οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ’ ὅπου μ’ὀλεῖς

The superimposition of the figure of the philosopher upon that of Sophocles’ fearless seer would be thoroughly Horatian. In the same way, the figure of the *sapiens* of *Epistles* 1.16, who has no fear of death, is superimposed on that of the Euripidean Dionysus, who, as a god, has no need to fear it. But the tyrant’s face had entered Latin literature before Horace. At *De officiis* 1.112, Cicero illustrates the Panaetian doctrine of the desirability of acting in a manner appropriate (*decorum*, πρεπόν) to one’s individual nature. Suicide, he says, would not have been appropriate for those who surrendered to Caesar in Africa in 46 B.C., but for Cato, *cum incredibilem tribuisset natura grauitatem eamque ipse perpetua constantia roborauisset semperque in proposito susceptoque consilio permansisset, moriendum potius quam tyranni uultus aspiciendus fuit.* The verbal and conceptual similarities with *Odes* 3.3 are surely too striking to be accidental[5]. To a modern reader Cicero’s phraseology might suggest evasion, but there can be no doubt that both to him and to Horace (*Odes* 2.1.24) Cato’s suicide was the ultimate act of defiance[6].

Kiessling and Heinze[7] evoke the example of Socrates in Plato, *Apology* 32 b–c, who opposed the mass trial of the generals after Arginusae in the face of a violently hostile assembly, because “I thought it was my duty to face danger on the side of law and justice, rather than to join you in an unjust resolution through fear of prison or death.” The analogy can be extended, for Socrates goes on to describe (32 c–d) how, again at the risk of his life, he had ignored an order from the Thirty to deliver up a man for execution. The comparison is a good one, for Socrates, the archetypal philosophical martyr, here displays in his one person resistance to mass hysteria and to the arbitrary power of individuals. But, a century or more after Horace, Plutarch in his life of Cato makes his hero’s extraordinary courage and steadfastness in public confrontations a recurrent motif. Thus, at 33.1–4, he recounts how, when Caesar proposed the distribution of most of the territory of Campania, no one spoke against the proposal except Cato, whereupon Caesar had him dragged from the rostra and led off to prison, still speaking as he went. Again (43.1–6), he was dragged forcibly from the rostra when he was the sole speaker against Trebonius’ proposal for assigning consular provinces in 55 B.C. In 27–28, Cato's public resistance to Caesar and Metellus leads to his being stoned. In 44.4–5, as praetor, he is set upon by "rent-a-crowd», (ὁ μισθαρνῶν ὄχλος), but eventually quells the uproar by his courageous bearing.

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[5] The relevance of *Off.* 1.112 to *Odes* 3.3 was noted by B. Busch (*De M. Porcio Catone Uticense quid antiqui scriptores aequales et posteriores censuerint*, Diss. Münster 1911, 43–44), but seems to have escaped the notice of writers on Horace. Indeed, the only reference to Busch that I have seen is in R. J. Goar, *The Legend of Cato Uticensis from the First Century B.C. to the Fifth Century A.D.* (Brussels 1987) 24.

[6] Plutarch (*Brutus* 40.7) represents Brutus before Philippi admitting to Cassius that, when young and inexperienced, he had, in philosophical discussion, blamed Cato for “running away”. Looking back, however, he rejects that view.

[7] *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Oden und Epoden*, ed. A. Kiessling, rev. R. Heinze (Dublin/Zürich ^{12}1966) *ad loc.*

Cato's acts of political integrity were flamboyantly public and his end dramatic and untimely. That is the stuff from which legends and symbols are made, and it suited the agenda of some of Cato's surviving contemporaries to promote their formation. The biography produced by Cato's friend, Munatius Rufus, would seem to have been ambiguous in its effect, since Cato had managed gravely to offend Munatius. So, while it was later used by Thrasea Paetus and Plutarch, it also provided Caesar with some of the most effective ammunition for his *Anticato*[8]. Yet the work will have helped to ensure that the facts of Cato's life were known to the next generation. We also know of three eulogies produced in the years between Cato's death and the murder of Caesar: by Cicero's friend, M. Fabius Gallus (*Fam.* 7.24.2 and 25.1), by Horace's commander at Philippi, M. Brutus (*Att.* 13.46.2, cf. 12.21.1) and by Cicero himself. There is no need to insist on the strong philosophical interests of these eulogists[9]. The relatively obscure M. Fabius was an Epicurean, serious and well-informed enough to make a useful sparring-partner for Cicero (*Fam.* 7.26.1 and 9.25). Cicero himself wished it to be thought that he had only embarked on his *laudatio* under pressure from Brutus (*Orator* 10.35). In advance, he speaks of it as an "Archimedean problem" (*Att.* 12.4.2), since he was anxious not to offend Caesar and his supporters, yet felt that Cato's political acts and ideas had to be included. Having completed the work, however, he was delighted by Caesar's praise (Caesar knew his Cicero), and wanted his work to have the widest possible diffusion (*Att.* 12.40.1). Of how Cicero solved his "problem" there is a strong indication in his wish that the eulogy be included among his philosophical works, *quoniam philosophia vir bonus efficitur et fortis* (*Div.* 2.1.3). Cicero had made fun of Cato's Stoicism in *Pro Murena*; the *laudatio* gave him the chance to make amends. It is safe to conclude that the assimilation of Cato to the Stoic *sapiens* and his promotion as philosophical martyr predate Horace[10].

It is possible, indeed, that the initiation of the legend goes back to Cato himself. Plutarch's account of Cato's death may have acquired post-Horatian accretions, but it is too significant to be passed over. On the eve of his death, Plutarch tells us (68.1–7), Cato gave a dinner for all his friends and the local dignitaries of Utica. The conversation turned to the Stoic paradoxes, in particular that only the good man is free (τὸ μόνον εἶναι τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐλεύθερον, δούλους δὲ τοὺς φαύλους ἅπαντας). Having retired to his room, Cato read Plato's *Phaedo*, possibly even twice through (70.1), before stabbing himself. If the account is substantially true, it was none other than Cato who began the process of assimilation between his own death and that of the philosophical martyr, Socrates[11]. Plutarch's account includes enough particulars that fall short of the ideal (the bursts of temper, the bungled stabbing) to suggest authenticity. There was at least no lack of witnesses to the events of that night, above all Cato's son, later Horace's fellow-officer on the Philippi campaign. It is indeed that very Stoic paradox that provides Horace with the theme on which he composes variations in *Epistles* 1.16, to which reference has already been made (above). There, various candidates for the title of "good man" are rejected, until the idea of freedom is introduced at 63. The truly good man is ultimately free because he has no fear of death, and he demonstrates this ultimate freedom in the face of the tyrant's threats[12]. Cicero in his treatment of the paradox (*Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5) uses the same conception of slavery to greed and fear, but when he was writing Cato, *perfectus mea sententia Stoicus*, was still alive (Preface 1.2), and his essay does not reach any such powerful conclusion.

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[8] On Munatius Rufus and his relations with Cato, see Plutarch, *Cato* 36.5–37.9.

[9] For Brutus: τῶν δ' Ἑλληνικῶν φιλοσόφων οὐδενὸς μέν, ὡς ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν, ἀνήκοος ἦν οὐδ' ἀλλότριος Plutarch, *Brutus* 2.2. On Plutarch's presentation of Brutus as philosopher, see C. B. R. Pelling, "Plutarch: Roman Heroes and Greek Culture", in: M. Griffin/J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia Togata* I (Oxford 1989) 222–227.

[10] On pre-Horatian views of Cato, see H. Berthold, "Cato von Utica im Urteil seiner Zeitgenossen", in: *Acta Conventus XI. "Eirene"* (Wroclaw 1971) 129–141 and R. Fehrle, *Cato Uticensis* (Darmstadt 1983) 279–302. On the legend both before and after Horace, see P. Pecchiura, *La figura di Catone Uticense nella letteratura latina* (Turin 1965) and R. J. Goar, *op. cit.* (n. 5).

The references in Horace and Virgil are evidence of the power of the legend, in spite of the efforts of Caesar and his supporters and whether Augustus liked it or not[13]. Strange as it may seem, Horace chose to introduce Cato into another poem in praise of Augustus, *Odes* 1.12, where mention of his death ends a stanza which began with Romulus (also a significant figure in 3.3). The popular trio, Hercules, Pollux (or both Dioscuri) and Bacchus also features in both poems[14].

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[11] On the assimilation of Cato's death to that of Socrates, see M. T. Griffin, "Philosophy, Cato and Roman Suicide", *G&R* 33 (1986) 194–195. Griffin is disposed to accept Plutarch's account of the event (202, n. 20).

[12] "Here H. does glance at a Stoic paradox", R. Mayer on *Epistle* 1.16.66 (*Horace: Epistles. Book I*, Cambridge 1994, 228). Horace does much more than glance at it. Mayer's attempt to argue that for Horace it is not philosophy but poetry which provides what he calls the "supplementary standard" will not do. Without the allegorical Stoic interpretation, the Euripidean passage (73–78. Cf. *Ba.* 492, 498) could not possibly demonstrate what Horace requires.

[13] For Virgil, see *Aen.* 8.670, but not 6.641, where the Cato paired with A. Cornelius Cossus could hardly be other than the Censor. It is also interesting to compare *Aen.* 1.148–153 with Plutarch, *Cato* 44.4–5, mentioned above, 103. On Cato in Horace, see R. G. M. Nisbet/Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I* (Oxford 1970) 156–157 (on 1.12.35) and 265–266 (on 1.22.5) and the same authors (Oxford 1978) 24 (on 2.1.24) and R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Horace behind the Public Poetry* (New Haven/London 1995) 179–181. Lyne argues convincingly against the idea that the references in Horace and Virgil reflect Augustus' wish to rehabilitate the memory of Cato. He seems to me, however, to go too far in suggesting that Horace "chooses to see Cato as a fitting role-model for the *princeps*".

An ode of Horace is not to be read as a literary quiz, nor yet as an encoded act of subversion. For him, as for other profoundly literary poets, allusion is a natural mode of thought. It is not necessary to conclude that the man of *Odes* 3.3.1–4 *is* Cato, but rather that Cato is strongly present among the shifting, superimposed figures evoked by the passage. More than twenty years before Horace composed his poem, Cato had modelled his own death on that of Socrates, and his eulogists, Cicero most effectively no doubt, had made him the embodiment of the Stoic *sapiens.* Nor is it necessary to conclude that Horace is alluding precisely to *De officiis* 1.112. The allusion may rather be to a eulogistic vocabulary which the poet's contemporaries would naturally have associated with Cato[15]. With the last words of the stanza, Horace moves on to the ἀπάθεια of his hero in the face of natural disaster, and specific references fade out[16]. The second stanza can be seen as an interlude, before the vague *hac arte* introduces Augustus in divine and semi-divine company. "Rome needs Cato", Cicero is alleged to have said[17]. *Odes* 3.3, with its dominant themes of integrity and self-mastery, must be read from the perspective of the 20's. No one then could have foreseen the principate in its developed form, nor known how long Augustus would dominate the Roman political scene. In him, Rome had found its new Romulus, but might his city prove (morally, not geographically) a new Troy, a place of wantonness and duplicity?[18] If that was not to be, it would need public men of natural integrity and steadfastness, reinforced by philosophical training, the ideal embodied in the now legendary Cato. Inwardly, Augustus may not have welcomed the ghost of Cato as coadjutor in his policy of moral regeneration, but the legend had a strong hold, and he may well have thought it politic to accept with more or less good grace.

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[14] On the popularity of the trio (with Romulus), see Nisbet and Hubbard, *op. cit.* (n. 13), on *Odes* 1.12.25.

[15] Quintilian (11.1.90), writing on the need at times to soften one's language, suggests that an excessively obstinate person can be described as *tenax propositi.* H. Berthold (*op.cit.* [n. 10] 139) argues that the phrase is Cicero's and comes from his *Cato.* This is a most interesting possibility, but cannot be proved. As often enough in Quintilian, Cicero is very much present in the passage, but the phrase *tenax propositi* is not explicitly attributed to him, and may be quoted from Horace. Quintilian's high opinion of Horace is well known (10.1.96), and he quotes the *Odes* some ten times. Compare in particular the way in which a short phrase from *Odes* 2.13.26–27 is slipped in at 10.1.63 without attribution.

[16] Plutarch (*Cato* 11.2–3) tells a story of Cato risking death on the sea, but Horace's touch of ornamental geography (*Auster, dux ... Hadriae*) points away from this episode, for Cato demonstrated his intrepidity on the northern Aegean. Pasquali (*op. cit.* [n. 3] 683) and, more explicitly, Pohlenz (*op. cit.* [n. 3] 276) connect Cato with the end of the second stanza (*si fractus ... ruinae*), but that requires a metaphorical interpretation unsupported by any pre-Horatian source. Busch (*op. cit.* [n. 5]) connects *si fractus ... ruinae* with Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.1.4 (*omnia quae cadere in hominem possunt subter se habet*) and Seneca, *De providentia* 1.2.9 (*... Catonem iam partibus non semel fractis stantem nihilominus inter ruinas publicas rectum ...*). It may be that Horace and Seneca are echoing a phraseology familiar to their contemporaries from *laudationes* of Cato. But the passages as we have them are not close enough to Horace to be compelling. On the evidence available, Horace moves away from Cato in these two stanzas, not towards him.

[17] Plutarch, *Cato* 32.10.

[18] A. Y. Campbell, in his still interesting and thought-provoking book, *Horace. A new Interpretation* (London 1924) 110, while taking seriously the implausible idea that Augustus was really

thinking of founding a new capital, writes perceptively of the symbolic significance of Troy here: "It is meant to be a general warning against Oriental ways of life; against what Antony had stood for (or at least was by Caesarian propaganda made to stand for) in the Roman imagination, and what Augustus now stood increasingly against."