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TILLIUS AND HORACE*

In a satire (1.6) in which the poet both asserts pride in his humble ancestry and condemns *ambitio* even as he celebrates his intimate relationship with Maecenas, Horace twice refers to a certain Tillius as an exemplum of inordinate political ambition. At lines 24–9 he wonders why Tillius strove to regain his senatorial status, became a tribune, and so invited scrutiny:

> quo tibi, Tilli,
> sumere depositum clavum fierique tribuno?
> invidia accrevit, privato quae minor esset.
> nam ut quisque insanus nigris medium impediit crus
> pellibus et latum demisit pectore clavum,
> audit continuo: 'quis homo hic est? quo patre natus?'

What good was it to you, Tillius, to assume the stripe once doffed and become a tribune? Envy fastened on you afresh, but would be less, were you in a private station. For as soon as any man is so crazy as to bind the black thongs half way up his leg, and to drop the broad stripe down his breast, at once he hears: 'What fellow is this? What was his father?'[1]

Then later, towards the end of the poem (107–9) he depicts the ridiculous image of Tillius as praetor on the road in Italy:

> Obiciet nemo sordis mihi quas tibi, Tilli,
> cum Tiburte via praetorem quinque secuntur
> te pueri, lasanum portantes oenophorumque.

No one will charge me with stinginess as he does you, praetor Tillius, when on the Tibur road five slaves follow you, carrying a chamber-pot and wine-jug.

Since Tillius is referred to twice in the poem and is the sole personification of political ambition in a satire devoted to the topic, it is worthwhile considering both who Tillius was and why Horace gave him such a prominent, humiliating role in his jeremiad.

The name Tillius, Sabine in origin[2] and rare in Roman politics, would have been notorious by the time Horace came to write his satire. An audience of the early to mid 30s B.C. would certainly have linked the name with the infamous assassin of Caesar, L. Tillius Cimber, and so it is not likely that the poet would have chosen this name had he intended to construct a fictional, anonymous upstart for his audience. There are, then, only two known characters who could reasonably be identified with Tillius in satire 1.6: the assassin of Caesar and his brother, who was in exile at the time of the assassination. Tillius the assassin is last heard of just before the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. (App. *BCiv.* 4.105/438), but nothing certain is known of what happened to his exiled brother.[3]

* I am grateful to Scott Scullion for a helpful discussion of the issues involved with Tillius and to this journal's editor, Miriam Griffin, for advice that clarified the argument.

[1] Translations, with some slight modifications, are from the Loeb editions.

[2] Cf. G. D. Chase, 'The origin of Roman praenomina', *HSCP* 8 (1897), 103–4.

[3] Caesar mentions an otherwise unknown legate Q. Tillius who was sent to Epirus in 48 to arrange supplies for Caesar's army (*BCiv.* 3.42.3). This may have been the exiled brother of the

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The scholiasts on the poem offer contradictory information on Tillius. According to one, Tillius was removed from the senate by Caesar because of support for Pompeius, and after the death of the Dictator he was restored to the senate and became a military tribune: *Tillius hic senatu motus est a Caesare quasi Pompeianus; occiso vero Caesare recepit latum iterum clauum, hoc est senatoriam dignitatem et tribunus militum factus est* (Schol. de Cruquius). A second scholiast gives a somewhat different account. He says that Tillius was a tribune who was deposed, presumably by Caesar, because he was *ignobilis*, which is later explained as *ineptus* by the scholiast on line 107: *rapit cupiditas gloriae omnes ad honorem et nobiles et ignobiles, sicut Tillium, qui ante mortem Caesaris de tribunatu* [*senatu*?] *est pulsus eo quod esset ignobilis; post mortem vero Caesaris recepit depositum clavum, id est purpuram; in quem invehitur Horatius* (codex Parisinus Latinus 7972 and 7974). This scholiast (if the reading *de tribunatu* is not a mistake for *de senatu*) seems to have mistakenly attributed to Tillius the punishment suffered by the tribunes L. Caesetius Flavus and C. Epidius Marullus. They were deposed by Caesar for taking down diadems that appeared on his statues one day early in 44 B.C.[4] Caesar saw their action as an effort to defame him with the taint of royalty, and so would certainly have considered the perpetrators *inepti*.

Based on the evidence of the first scholiast, Münzer concluded that the Tillius referred to in lines 24–5 was the brother of the assassin, since L. Tillius initiated the attack on the Dictator by grasping his victim's toga in a feigned petition on behalf of his exiled brother.[5] Nothing else is known about this brother of the assassin except what might then be deduced from the poem itself (that he was restored to his senatorial status and he gained the tribunate) and the fact that he was a partisan of Pompeius, if the statement of the scholiast is to be trusted. The scholiast's statement that Tillius became a *tribunus militum* is most likely an error. The description of Tillius in full senatorial dress in the poem (27–9) clearly indicates that *fierique tribuno* in line 25 must refer to the office of the plebeian tribunate. Nevertheless, as will be seen later, there is some reason to think that Tillius may have been a military tribune before he became *tribunus plebis*.

Nothing tells against a scenario in which Tillius the former exile was able to regain his senatorial status and stand for the tribunate in the year or so after Caesar's assassination.[6] If it was possible for one of the assassins, Servilius Casca, to serve as

assassin (although the exiled brother was identified as a Pompeian by a scholiast on this poem) or he may have been a relative of the brothers.

[4] On this episode, cf. Cic. *Phil.* 13.31; Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 130.69–70; Livy, *Per.* 116; Vell. Pat. 2.68.4–5; Val. Max. 5.7.2; Suet. *Iul.* 79.1, 80.3; Plut. *Caes.* 61.8–10, *Ant.* 12.7; Dio 44.9.2–10, 46.49.2; App. *BCiv.* 2.108/449–53, 122/514, 138/575, 4.93/389–90; Obseq. 70; Zonar. 10.11.

[5] *RE* 6A.1 s.v. 'Tillius 1'. On Tillius' role in the assassination, cf. Cic. *Phil.* 2.27; Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 130.88; Sen. *Ira* 3.30.5, *Ep.* 83.12; Suet. *Iul.* 82.1; Plut. *Caes.* 66.5–6, *Brut.* 17.3–4; App. *BCiv.* 2.117/491.

[6] N. Rudd, *Satires of Horace* (Cambridge, 1966), 134–5 and Broughton, *MRR* 3, p. 205. Kiessling–Heinze on *Sat.* 1.6.24–5 object that these lines could not refer to the brother of the assassin because a formal legal procedure would have been required for him to regain his former status, but this is unpersuasive. Nothing is known about the cause or circumstance of Tillius' exile beyond the claim of the scholiast that he was a Pompeian (presumably he was one of those whose offence was unforgivable [ἀνήκεστος]; cf. App. *BCiv.* 2.107/448), but the quick return of the tribunes banished by Caesar shows that even with formal legal procedure a similar return for Tillius would not have been unlikely—cf. Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 130.69, 76; App *BCiv.* 2.108/449–53, 122/514, 138/575.

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tribune in 43,[7] Tillius, who was himself not an assassin, might well have stood for the tribunate in the confusion during the months after Caesar's murder and before Octavian's ascendancy to power at Rome in August of 43. But then a problem arises with the second reference in the poem to Tillius as praetor at line 108. It is universally agreed that the brother of the assassin could not have become praetor during the Triumviral era. Münzer calls this a *Phantasiegemälde* of the poet, a risible image of Tillius had he succeeded in his unrealized ambition for the praetorship.

An alternative identification that has nothing to do with Tillius the assassin and his brother has won some assent since Taylor proposed it in 1925. Due to the context of the poem, she thought that Tillius was, like the poet, the son of a freedman, and Armstrong calls him Horace's alter ego, a freedman's son who attained senatorial rank and got only *invidia* and ridicule for his new status.[8] It is, however, questionable whether there could have been an otherwise unknown Tillius in the early 30s, as Taylor supposes, who lost his senatorial status, regained it, became a tribune and then attained the praetorship.[9] The credibility of such a Tillius fades even more when Münzer's thesis is revisited.

His identification of Tillius in lines 24–5 as the exiled brother of the assassin is reasonable, even without the statement of the scholiast. (In fact, the 'evidence' of the scholiast is really little more than deduction based on what is said in the poem and the fact that he knew that Tillius' brother was in exile. The only new information the scholiast provides, if indeed it is accurate, is that the exile was a partisan of Pompeius.) But this still leaves the problem of the poet's designation of Tillius as a praetor later in the satire, and Münzer's dismissal of this as a fantasy on the part of the poet is unsatisfactory. A possible solution to the problem is at hand if we do not assume that the Tillius who has attained the tribunate at the beginning of the poem is the same person who is described as praetor in line 108. L. Tillius Cimber the assassin had been assigned the proconsulship of Bithynia and Pontus for 44 by Caesar, and it is assumed that he would have been praetor in 45 or 44.[10] Therefore the second reference to Tillius in the poem is to the assassin himself, not his formerly exiled brother. There is no need then to suppose what is an improbable fantasy on the part of Horace when he calls Tillius praetor.[11] He is simply stating a fact.

[7] Cic. *Att.* 16.15.3, *Phil.* 13.31.

[8] Lily Ross Taylor, 'Horace's equestrian career', *AJP* 46 (1925), 169 and D. Armstrong, '*Horatius Eques et Scriba*', *TAPA* 116 (1986), 271–3; cf. also T. P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate 139 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford 1971), 266.

[9] Dio indicates confusion in the magistracies under the Triumvirs: an escaped slave making it to the praetorship in the year 39 (48.34.5); sixty-seven praetors in 38 (48.43.1–2); and frequent succession in all magistracies under the Triumvirs (48.53.1–2). But the same author exaggerates the degeneration of the magistracies under Sulla and Julius Caesar; cf. R. Syme, 'Caesar, the Senate, and Italy', *PBSR* 14 (1938), 12.18 = *Roman Papers* 1, (Oxford, 1979), 99–105.

[10] Cf. Plut. *Brut.* 19.5; App. *BCiv.* 3.2/4. 'Governor, probably proconsul of Bithynia and Pontus. . .' says Broughton, *MRR* 2.307 and 330, who suggests 45 for his praetorship and arrived at this conclusion without citing the evidence in Horace; in *MRR* 3.205 he does note Horace but also G. Sumner, 'The Lex Annalis under Caesar (*continued*)', *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 361, who calls Tillius' praetorship 'a trifle uncertain'. Lack of direct evidence for his praetorship does not make it improbable in the circumstances. In fact his governorship of Bithynia combined with the statement in Horace could be said to make his praetorship very likely. On Tillius' activities in Bithynia, cf. Cic. *Fam.* 12.13.3, *ad Brut.* 1.6.3; App. *BCiv.* 3.6/18; Dio 47.31.1–2.

[11] Bellandi in *Orazio: Enciclopedia Oraziana* (Rome, 1996), 1.918, points out that Horace's use of the present indicative in lines 108–9 cannot very well allude to a future event. But a vivid historical present nicely evokes an image of the preening praetor.

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But such a resolution of the issue runs into the obvious objection that it is not likely that the poet would have used the same name without distinction at the beginning and the end of the poem to refer to different people. It is possible that the poet's contemporary audience would have been more attuned to the double reference through the single name than a modern reader. But Horace elsewhere in his satires introduces a character as an exemplum at the beginning of a poem and brings him up again at the end of the poem to return to the subject matter with which it opened.[12] It is hardly likely that Horace would have used this same format in 1.6 to refer to different individuals of the same name.

An identification that has not been investigated may be the most obvious: the Tillius in the poem is the assassin himself.

Very little is known about the career of L. Tillius Cimber before his appearance among Caesar's assassins. Münzer identifies a L. Tillius, son of Lucius and a *proxenos* at Delphi in 62 B.C., with the assassin. This identification and Seneca's comment that Tillius was a heavy drinker and brawler are all we know about him until Cicero mentions him among Caesar's *familiares* in 46.[13]

It seems that the assassin has not been identified with Horace's Tillius because the statement of the scholiast suggests that the only explanation of the phrase *depositum clavum* is that Tillius was expelled from the senate and had lost the right to wear the tunic with the *latus clavus*. The only possible candidate that fits this description is the brother of the assassin. But the phrase need not imply expulsion or loss of senatorial status at all. It may simply refer to a voluntary act by Tillius himself. The famous statement of Ovid in *Tristia* 4.10.33–36 shows that a young man could voluntarily lay aside the *latus clavus* that he had previously assumed, a sign that he no longer aspired to a senatorial career:

> cepimus et tenerae primos aetatis honores;
> eque viris quondam pars tribus una fui.
> curia restabat: clavi mensura coacta est;
> maius erat nostris viribus illud onus.

I advanced so far as to receive the first office granted to tender youth, for in those days I was one third of the board of three. The senate house awaited me, but I narrowed my purple stripe: that was a burden too great for my powers.

Although the evidence is unclear, it may be that Ovid's statement also reflects a practice that went back to the late Republic, whereby sons of senators and equites who intended to enter the senate began to wear the tunic with the *latus clavus* as soon as they donned the toga of manhood.[14] An anecdote about Octavian taking up the toga virilis in 48 B.C., if it is not anachronistic or unique, seems to suggest the practice at least for senators' sons: *sumenti virilem togam tunica lati clavi resuta ex utraque parte ad pedes decidit* (Suet. *Aug.* 94.10). The phrase *depositum clavum* in Horace could simply mean that at some point early on Tillius, like Ovid, had lost interest

[12] Albius in *Sat.* 1.4.28 and 109 and Dama in 2.5.18 and 101.

[13] *RE* 6A, 1038 and 1039; Sen. *Ep.* 83.12: *Tillius Cimber et nimius erat in vino et scordalus*; Cic. *Fam.* 6.12.2.

[14] On the political symbolism of the *latus clavus* for young men, cf. T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7 (Berlin and Zurich, 1909), 189–90 and Taylor (n. 8), 161. Many believe that Augustus only formalized an unattested but presumed practice in the late Republic of young men donning the *latus clavus* as a sign of their intention to enter the Senate; cf. Mommsen, p. 190; A. H. M. Jones, 'The elections under Augustus', *JRS* 45 (1955) 10 [= *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (Oxford, 1960), 31]; and B. Levick, 'A note on the latus clavus', *Athenaeum* 79 (1991), 240.

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in a senatorial career and so as a young man voluntarily put aside the tunic with the *latus clavus*. If, however, the practice of ambitious youths sporting the *latus clavus* was only initiated during the Augustan Principate, then *depositum clavum* might refer to Tillius laying aside the tunic with the *latus clavus* that young military tribunes of senatorial status wore (*tribuni militum laticlavii*). For some reason Tillius ceased to wear the *latus clavus*, a decision that suggested that he had no greater political aspirations after attaining the rank of military tribune. That is to say, Tillius for a time had a career similar to that of Horace as the poet describes his political status in lines 47–8.[15] But unlike the poet, *ambitio* overcame him and he resumed his public career, being elected *tribunus plebis* and eventually attaining the praetorship, probably with the direct support of Julius Caesar at all stages in his career.

The clause *depositum clavum sumere* can mean that Tillius simply reconsidered his decision and chose once again to pursue a political career. This reading of the clause is more in accord with the satire's theme of personal choice and ambition. Furthermore, it is simpler than reading it as a vague, euphemistic reference to an exile's loss of senatorial status, a status that he only regained when his brother murdered the man who exiled him. The career path Tillius then followed was quite normal. Even if there were no evidence to attest to it, it would be assumed that for Tillius to attain the praetorship, he would have held some lower magistracy such as the tribunate. Indeed, the proconsul of Gaul in the fifties could always use a loyal partisan in that office.

If this identification of Tillius in the poem is plausible, then it follows that there is no need to posit Taylor's freedman's son in the 30s with the rare name of Tillius who had essentially the same career as that of the assassin but who is otherwise unknown to the historical record. It remains to ask why Horace gave such a prominent role to him. What made L. Tillius Cimber in the 30s appropriate as the exemplum of the political ambition that the poet eschews?

Nothing more than speculation can be offered concerning what, if any, relationship Horace had with Tillius. Münzer thought that Horace had come to know him and his brother during the campaign at Philippi when the Tillii were in the camp of Brutus with the poet.[16] There he was able to assess the character of Tillius for himself and so made him the personification of excessive ambition. Münzer's supposition here is not fantasy. It recalls Caesar's description of the confident and ambitious Pompeians in their camp before Pharsalus arguing over the priesthoods that would be theirs after victory in the upcoming battle (*BCiv.* 3.83.1).

The satire must postdate the beginning of Horace's relationship with Maecenas in 37 B.C. Again, it can only be supposition, but it is possible that Tillius survived Philippi and lived on into the early 30s.[17] The recent death of the assassin may then be alluded to in the emphatic placement of *vivo* in line 111 to contrast the

[15] But with the important difference that as an equestrian Horace would not have been eligible to display the *latus clavus* reserved for military tribunes who, on the second assumption, were the sons of senators. He would have been a *tribunus angusticlavius.*

[16] *RE* 6A, 1038.

[17] Münzer, *RE* 6A, 1040, supposed that Tillius died at Philippi but there is no evidence that he was even present at the battle. All that can be said is that we hear nothing of him after 42 B.C.: cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 206, n. 1. Tillius might have lived on for some years in obscure exile as a convicted assassin whose demise did not merit note in the historical record, just as it did not if he had died at Philippi. Suetonius (*Iul.* 89) says that a few of the assassins were still alive more than three years after the assassination, and we know that Cassius Parmensis survived until 31 B.C. (Val. Max. 1.7.7; Oros. 6.19.20) and Publius Turullius until 30 B.C. (Dio 51.8.2–3; Val. Max. 1.1.19).

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evolution of the careers of the two men after Philippi: *hoc ego commodius quam tu, praeclare senator,/milibus atque aliis vivo.* The assassin's recent death would have made him appropriately topical for a poem that illustrated the destructive consequences of aspiration beyond one's station.[18]

But there is more than supposition to explain the presence of Tillius in the poem. His career is parallel to, and the antithesis of, the picture that Horace presents of himself, especially if Tillius was, like the poet, of equestrian status. Even on the assumption that Tillius was the son of a senator, he still personifies important themes of the poem. Unlike Decimus Brutus and other prominent Caesarians who took part in the assassination, Tillius probably came from an obscure background by the demanding standards of the Roman political arena. Like the poet he gave up a political career after attaining the rank of *tribunus militum* and then, like the poet, depended on a powerful patron to achieve the status he enjoyed. It is obvious that Tillius the assassin, *immemor beneficiorum*, owed his high office to Caesar.[19] But the similarity with the poet stops there. Tillius ended up murdering his patron, the most heinous crime in Roman political culture short of revolution against the *res publica* itself. Tillius' motives in joining the conspiracy against Caesar are unknown. No doubt the exile of his brother was a significant factor, but there is no reason to attribute to him the idealistic republican motives of a Marcus Brutus as they are represented in the biographical tradition on Caesar constructed over a century after his death. A near contemporary presented a more sordid explanation for why the friends of Caesar joined the conspiracy against him: they were jealous of the fact that former enemies enjoyed the benefits of Caesar's *clementia* and held office and rank equal to their own (Nicolaus of Damascus, *FGrH* 90 F 130.62–3). An explanation inherently probable, and illustrative of the worst sort of ambition. Philippi was the crucial turning point in the career of both the poet and the assassin. After the battle Horace gave up the path of political ambition even though he proclaims to have made a respectable start as a military tribune: *at olim/quod mihi pareret legio Romana tribuno* (47–8).[20] The poet established a relationship with one of the most powerful men in Rome through nothing more than the worth of his own character, as he assures us at lines 50–2. For Tillius, Philippi was the ugly result of a decision just the opposite to that of the poet. The assassin chose to take up again the *latus clavus* and the path of *ambitio*, gained high office, but found

[18] The supposition of Tillius' death in the mid 30s is not crucial to the argument, however. Horace does resurrect dead men to illustrate the themes of his satires (cf. N Rudd, 'The names in Horace's *Satires*', *CQ* 10 n.s. [1960], 164–6), and long-dead assassins might have been a favourite cast of characters for Horace in his first book of satires. The citation of Labeo for his *insania* in 1.3.82 is probably a reference to the assassin Pacuvius Antistius Labeo, one of the leaders of the conspiracy against Caesar (Plut. *Brut.* 12.4–6) who died at Philippi (App. *BCiv.* 4.135/572); cf. Kiessling–Heinze. If Trebonius is not a fictional character in 1.4.114, then the assassin C. Trebonius, dead in 43 B.C., is about the only plausible candidate for the identification there.

[19] Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 2.27; also *Fam.* 6.12.2 and App. *BCiv.* 2.113/474. Armstrong (n. 8), 272 refers to Tillius as an aristocratic Republican equal in birth to such other assassins as Quintus Ligarius or Servilius. In fact, we know nothing of Tillius' background, and it is just as likely that it was his devoted service to Caesar rather than his rank by birth that promoted him to the praetorship. The comparison with Ligarius, a pardoned Pompeian and of somewhat obscure family himself (Münzer, *RE* 13 s.v. 'Ligarius (4)', 507), does not seem to the point. In a contemporary comment on the assassination, Cicero noted the aristocratic origins of the Bruti and Cassius, but of L. Tillius Cimber in the same passage he only says that, in joining the attack on his patron, Tillius ignored the benefits he had received from him (*Phil.* 2.26–7).

[20] E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 13.

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only defeat and infamy as the reward for his *cupiditas gloriae.* Thus Tillius became an exemplum of the worst excesses of *misera ambitio.*

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