

THE QUAESTORSHIPS OF Q. CURIUS AND
C. CORNELIUS CETHEGUS

eo convenere senatorii ordinis P. Lentulus Sura, P. Autronius, L. Cassius Longinus, C. Cethegus, P. et Ser. Sullae Ser. filii, L. Vargunteius, Q. Annius, M. Porcius Laeca, L. Bestia, Q. Curius. [Sall. *Cat.* 17.3]

This passage of Sallust, part of a description of the initial meeting of the Catilinarian conspirators, has long been familiar to prosopographers. It has always been assumed to be a list of senators in the year 63. I shall argue against that assumption, and briefly state the resultant prosopographical revisions.

Linderski has already denied senatorial membership to two of the eleven men in the list, P. Autronius Paetus (cos. *desig.* 65) and L. Vargunteius.¹ He demonstrated that the latter, like the former, had been convicted under the lex Calpurnia *de ambitu*, and probably in the same year, 66 B.C.² Since the Calpurnian law penalized offenders with exclusion from the senate and permanent loss of the right to hold office (Schol. Bob. 78–79 St., cf. Dio 36.38.1), neither Autronius nor Vargunteius could have been senators at the time of the conspiracy. A third man can be denied senatorial membership with little argument: P. Cornelius Lentulus Sura (cos. 71), who had been expelled from the senate by the censors of 70 (Plut. *Cic.* 17.1, Dio 37.30.4).³ Lentulus was not a senator at the time of the meeting described by Sallust, and dated by him to June 64 B.C.⁴ In all, then, three of the eleven men named definitely did not belong to the senate. Against these three we can set just two who were senators in 64, one certainly, and one probably: L. Cassius Longinus (pr. 66) and L. Calpurnius Bestia (tr. pl. 62).⁵ The status of the six remaining men is much less certain.

It is important to note that Sallust specifically terms Vargunteius *senator* in a later passage (28.1), while Cicero referred to him as an *eques* without mentioning him by name (*Cat.* 1.9). We could judge Sallust abysmally ignorant, but there is more to be said for Linderski's conclusion that "Cicero . . . may have alluded to the actual status of Vargunteius, whilst Sallust to his previous position."⁶ The text quoted at the beginning of this note is immediately followed by another list, which begins with the words *praeterea ex equestri ordine* (17.4). It is apparent that Sallust chose to distinguish between "senatorial" and "equestrian" conspirators; the criteria he used for including men in the former group are not so apparent. It seems to me that, though we might allow Sallust to be ignorant of the status of a bit

1. "Cicero and Sallust on Vargunteius," *Historia* 12 (1963): 511–12.

2. This date for the condemnation of Vargunteius was also suggested by R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and Cambridge, 1964), p. 88 and n. 23.

3. T. C. Brennan, "C. Aurelius Cotta, Praetor Iterum (*CIL* I² 610)," *Athenaeum* 77 (1989): 480–81, thought that Lentulus Sura would not wait several years to qualify for membership in the senate, but both Plutarch and Dio unambiguously state that the desire to recover his senatorial status was what motivated him to hold a second praetorship in 63.

4. *Cat.* 17.1 "circiter Kalendas Iulias L. Caesare et C. Figulo consulibus primo singulos appellare. . . ." The meeting is thus usually dated wrongly in modern accounts, but there are exceptions: H. Gundel, "Porcius 18," *RE* 22 (1953): 213, identifies M. Porcius Laeca as a senator in 64 (but elsewhere Gundel identifies C. Cornelius Cethegus as "Senator 63": "Cethegus 2," *Der Kleine Pauly*, vol. 1 [Stuttgart, 1964]: 1119); Linderski, "Vargunteius," p. 512, n. 10. Lentulus might have been able to exercise the rights of a senator later in 64, after his election to the praetorship, if magistrates-designate who were not senators were so treated. He was not a senator in 63, since magistrates were excluded from membership in the senate; cf. F. Hofmann, *Der römische Senat zur Zeit der Republik* (Berlin, 1847), pp. 85–93, 99–103.

5. Bestia might have been a quaestor rather than a senator in 64, but was necessarily a senator in 63.

6. Linderski, "Vargunteius," p. 512.

player like Vargunteius, it passes belief that he was ignorant of the status of Autronius and Lentulus Sura. Accordingly, it has been a mistake to treat the list as a catalogue of senators, because Sallust himself did not consider it such; he described these men as members of the *senatorius ordo* not for stylistic reasons, but because he knew that they were not all *senatores*.⁷

We cannot know precisely what Sallust meant by *senatorius ordo*.⁸ The phrase could describe at the same time both ex-senators (Lentulus, Autronius, Vargunteius) and current senators (L. Cassius Longinus, L. Bestia). Since Sallust used *senatorius ordo* in contradistinction to *equester ordo*, the former phrase might seem to be quite broad, perhaps even covering men who had served in the vigintisexvirate. But inasmuch as the certain non-senators among the eleven names are all former senators, it is doubtful that the phrase was so inclusive. Our six remaining men need not have been either ex-senators⁹ or current senators in 64, but their association with the senate must have been very close: it was not enough to be a young man of a senatorial family, since M. Fulvius Nobilior, *senatoris filius* (39.5), heads the list of those *ex equestri ordine* (17.4). It seems possible that some of our six might have been non-senators who were not also ex-senators: some might have held the quaestorship in 64, as L. Bestia perhaps did; some might have been seeking office (i.e., the quaestorship) in 64, as Lentulus Sura was.¹⁰

In the absence of further evidence,¹¹ nothing further can be said about four of the six remaining men: P. Cornelius Ser. f. Sulla, Ser. Cornelius Ser. f. Sulla, Q. Annius Chilo, and M. Porcius Laeca. Each of these is to be found in T. R. S. Broughton's "Supplementary List of Senators" (Appendix III) and "Index of Careers" with the identification "Senator in 63."¹² This I propose we query and redate: "Senator? 64."¹³ A little more can be said about the two remaining men: there is a piece of

7. I still think it possible that Sallust knew the true status of Vargunteius, but at 28.1 (*C. Cornelius eques Romanus . . . L. Vargunteius senator*) called him *senator* to maintain the distinction he had created at 17.3–4. There was no convenient Latin term for "ex-senator." Q. Curius he did describe more fully, and therefore more accurately: *quem censores senatu . . . moverant* (23.1). Sallust perhaps did not think that Vargunteius merited this fuller treatment.

8. No comment is made on *senatorius ordo* by P. McGushin, *C. Sallustius Crispus, "Bellum Catilinae"* (Leiden, 1977), p. 117; stylistic analysis alone is offered by K. Vretska, *C. Sallustius Crispus, "de Catilinae coniuratione,"* vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1976), p. 282. My understanding of the phrase owes much to the anonymous referee of the journal, who corrected my mistaken belief that it might denote young men of senatorial families. My referee also observed trenchantly that the Sallust who refused to distinguish between current and former senators had been, for a time, a former senator himself.

9. Though our six could easily be fit among the 64 senators expelled in 70.

10. We cannot use the list to determine the rank of each. Vretska, *Sallustius*, 1:282, deemed Sura "als Ranghöchster zuerst genannt." So it might seem at the beginning of the list, where a consul of 71 precedes a consul-designate for 65, who in turn precedes a praetor of 66. But it is very doubtful that L. Bestia (tr. pl. 62) held a quaestorship by 71, when Q. Curius did. Clearly Sallust did not use membership in the senate in organizing his list: L. Vargunteius falls between L. Cassius and L. Bestia.

11. Two texts might be cited that would seem at first to support the conventional view. [Q. Cic.] *Comm. Pet.* 10 "qui [sc. Catilina] ex curia Curios et Annios . . . sibi amicissimos comparavit." Flor. 2.12.3 "ipse [sc. Catilina] patricius; sed hoc minus est: Curii, Porcii, Sullae, Cethegi, Autronii, Varguntei atque Longini, quae familiae! quae senatus insignia!" Both lists contain non-senators (I shall argue presently that Curius was one of these).

12. I cite *MRR* for the sake of convenience; it is no particular reproach to Broughton that he has confidently identified these men as senators in 63. To take C. Cornelius Cethegus as an example, he was identified as a senator in 63 by F. Münzer, ("Cornelius 89," *RE* 4 [1900]: 1278) in the year of Broughton's birth, and still earlier by P. Willems, *Le Sénat de la République romaine* (Louvain, 1878–85), 1:511, 3:67.

13. Further doubts about the senatorial membership of these men are raised by Cicero's account of the senate meeting of 8 November 63: as soon as Catiline took his seat, the seats around him emptied (*Cat.* 1.16); not a single senator spoke to him or greeted him (*Cat.* 2.12). It does not seem possible that Cicero

intriguing ancient evidence on Cethegus, and a modern argument to answer concerning Curius.

1. C. Cornelius Cethegus. Appian (*BCiv.* 2.2) describes Lentulus Sura and Cethegus with the words of οἱ τότε τῆς πόλεως ἐστρατήγουν. Cethegus was certainly not praetor; if he had been, the senate would have voted that he resign his office, as it did in the case of Lentulus Sura (*Cic. Cat.* 3.14).¹⁴ Until now it has been difficult to correct Appian's statement. C. F. Konrad wondered if Cethegus had already been praetor, and was not disturbed by the reference Sallust (52.33) has Cato make to the *adulescentia* of Cethegus.¹⁵ The statement has generally been taken as proof of his youth,¹⁶ but Konrad pointed out that the term can be applied to men in their forties, and observed: "as a senator, he must have been in his thirties none the less." Even if quaestor in 65, Cato would have been several years younger than the most newly minted *praetorius*, and we may doubt that he would speak of the *adulescentia* of a man older than himself. If he held the quaestorship *suo anno*, Cato would have been 32 or 33 years old on the Nones of December, and it seems reasonable to take *adulescentia* as proof (of Sallust's belief) that Cethegus was younger, or at least no older, than Cato. If so, he was of quaestorian age in 63.¹⁷

Appian might not have been so completely wrong as is now thought. Perhaps Cethegus was a magistrate in the city in 63, but a quaestor rather than a praetor. There would seem to be two principle objections to a quaestorship for Cethegus in 63. A scholion to the words *duo nefarios* (*Cic. Vat.* 25) makes him a defendant in a suit *de vi* in 63: "hic igitur Paulus accusare instituerat de vi L. Catilinam et, ut quidam memoriae tradiderunt, C. Cethegum" (Schol. Bob. 149 St.). Now it is as certain as such things can be that a quaestor was exempt from prosecution in the *quaestiones perpetuae*. But the scholiast himself shows some doubt that Cethegus was prosecuted, and beyond that, we are free to suppose that the more famous Cethegus stands in this text in place of his fellow conspirator, the *eques* C. Cornelius. Cethegus does replace Cornelius in two other texts (Plut. *Cic.* 16.1, App. *BCiv.* 2.3),¹⁸ and in this case we have every reason to be suspicious: the *eques* C. Cornelius was prosecuted *de vi* in 62 (*Cic. Sull.* 6).

The second objection is more serious: we are not told that Cethegus was forced to resign his quaestorship.¹⁹ But it is important to realize that the resignation of

lied about what transpired at a senate meeting, and therefore, in front of many witnesses—not when the senate meeting concerned was so recent. But, as my referee points out, it is possible that these men, being conspirators, would not want to be seen with Catiline.

14. Cf. W. Drumann-P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms*², vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1902), p. 479.

15. "A Note on the Stemma of the Gabinii Capitones," *Klio* 66 (1984): 153 and n. 15.

16. Münzer, "Cornelius 89," col. 1278; Drumann-Groebe, *Geschichte*, 2:479; Vretska, *Sallustius*, 1:283.

17. My referee believes that Cethegus might have been a year or two older than Cato, but no more, and points out that the clarification of his age allows us to resolve his status in the army of Q. Metellus Pius during the Sertorian War. Konrad, "Gabinii Capitones," p. 153, n. 15, argued that Cethegus was present in Spain in 76, and held out the possibility that he was quaestor then. It now seems certain that Cethegus served in Farther Spain as a *contubernalis* (or as a very junior military tribune). If Cethegus was a year or two older than Cato (assuming the latter was born in 95), he could have been quaestor in 66 or 65; if an *aequalis* of Cato, in 64.

18. Cf. Linderski, "Vargunteius," p. 511, n. 3; Broughton, *MRR* 3:215.

19. We need not be too disturbed by the lack of a reference on the part of Cicero to the quaestorship of Cethegus. In his one reference (*Cat.* 1.21) in 63 to P. Sestius, a quaestor of the year, Cicero did not identify him as an incumbent quaestor.

Lentulus Sura was not necessary: in senate proceedings presided over by a consul, the only magistrates who enjoyed immunity were the other consul (through *par potestas*) and the tribunes (through *sacrosanctitas*).²⁰ Parallel cases make it clear that Roman senators preferred not to proceed against praetors who remained in office.²¹ We do not know that the trial of incumbent quaestors was seen by senators in the same light. Two years later the senate was positively eager to see the incumbent quaestor P. Clodius stand trial in a special court; the house divided with approximately 400 in favor and 15 against (Cic. *Att.* 1.14.5).

Though Cicero did not find it too disturbing that Marius killed the praetor Glaukia (*Cat.* 3.15), and was perhaps willing to try an incumbent quaestor in the senate, we may doubt that he was willing to have an incumbent quaestor strangled. But as it turned out, the trial took place on the Nones, as did the execution of Cethegus and the others. The lack of a statement that Cethegus was forced to resign is therefore explained: if quaestor in 63, he left office on 4 December. If it does not seem too much a coincidence that his first day as a *privatus* should be his last day on earth, we may choose to believe that a quaestorship in 63 lurks behind the ἐστρατήγουν of Appian.

2. Q. Curius. He finds a place in Broughton's "Index of Careers" as "Q.? by 71."²² Now we know that the Catilinarian conspirator had been expelled from the senate (*probris gratia*, Sall. *Cat.* 23.1, reported under the year 64 B.C.; δι' ὀνειδῆ πολλά, App. *BCiv.* 2.3). Since the censors of 65 and 64 did not complete the *lectio*, the expulsion must have occurred in the censorship of 70, when 64 members were expelled (Livy *Per.* 98). Why, then, the query in Broughton? Presumably not because of a suspicion that he had been adducted to the senate in the dictatorship of Sulla a decade earlier; even if we knew this to be the case, it would not be unreasonable to assume that he held the quaestorship at some point in the next decade. In Broughton's "Index" the Catilinarian is followed by two *RE* numbers,²³ and this must be the source of Broughton's doubt. Though Münzer distinguished the "Curius" who was a candidate for the consulship of 64 (Cic. *Att.* 1.1.2) from the Catilinarian, the two men had been identified by Hözl.²⁴ D. R. Shackleton Bailey has now followed Boot and Constans in preferring the variant reading *Turium* for *Curium* (*Att.* 1.1.2); he points out that a certain L. Turius narrowly lost a race for the consulship (Cic. *Brut.* 237, where Turius is mentioned between C. Censorinus, d. 82, and C. Macer, d. 66).²⁵ We may therefore regard the consular candidate of 65 as L. Turius,²⁶ and cease to suppose that the Catilinarian might have held an aedileship or a praetorship before his expulsion from the

20. Cf. E. J. Weinrib, "The Prosecution of Roman Magistrates," *Phoenix* 22 (1968): 46. Cicero (*Cat.* 3.15) himself publicly admitted that the resignation was not necessary.

21. Examples are discussed by Weinrib, "Prosecution," pp. 46–48.

22. *MRR* 2:558.

23. The Catilinarian—"Q.? by 71"—is given the correct *RE* number (7) at *MRR* 2:122, but the incorrect number ("1, cf. 7") at *MRR* 2:558. In the "Index" (*MRR* 2:558) the consular candidate in 65 is given the Catilinarian's *RE* number ("7, cf. 1"); it is an error to identify the consular candidate as "Q. Curius," since the praenomen of *RE* no. 1 is not attested.

24. "Curius 1, 7," *RE* 4 (1901): 1839–40; M. Hözl, *Fasti Praetorii ab A. U. DCLXXXVII usque ad A. U. DCCX* (Leipzig, 1876), pp. 32–33.

25. *Cicero's Letters to Atticus*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 292–93.

26. As Broughton now does, *MRR* 3:209–10; id., *Candidates Defeated in Roman Elections: Some Ancient Roman "Also-Rans"* (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 19.

senate in 70 (a consular candidate in 65 must have been praetor by 67). We may therefore remove the query from Broughton's identification, "Q.? by 71."²⁷

The work to be done by us concerns the putative second quaestorship of Curius. B. A. Marshall has complicated matters: though he believed that the candidate for the consulship of 64 was L. Turius, and therefore considered Curius a quaestor by 71, he argued that Curius held a second quaestorship by 65.²⁸ Marshall supported this second quaestorship with two arguments. Firstly, he noted that Curius is termed a *quaestorius* in a speech delivered in 64: *Q. ve Curium hominem quaestorium* (Ascon. 93 C). Of course, he could be called a *quaestorius* in 64 on the basis of the quaestorship he held by 71, and Marshall himself adduced the same fragment of Cicero to prove that "Curius had gained entry to the senate as a quaestor," and that "the latest date for his quaestorship would have been 71."²⁹ Under the year 63 Lentulus Sura is termed *consularis* (Vell. 2.34.4), but no one would take this as proof of a second consulship. The fragment of Cicero in Asconius tells us only that Curius was an ex-quaestor in 64. If Curius was quaestor a second time, this description does not prove it, but hides it. It would be much more economical to assume that Curius did not hold office after his expulsion from the senate. Marshall's second argument is of no greater cogency: Curius "is described by Sallust as belonging to the senatorial order at the time the conspiracy was formed."³⁰ As we have seen, inclusion in Sallust's list is no indication of membership in the senate.

There is absolutely no evidence that Curius held a second quaestorship; there is on the other hand some evidence that suggests he was not a member of the senate in 63. The senate established rewards for delation: freedom and 100,000 sesterces for a *servus*, immunity and 200,000 sesterces for a *liber* (Sall. *Cat.* 30.6–7). The phraseology of Sallust (*servus-liber*) suggests that no senator was eligible for the reward. This suspicion seems confirmed by a passage of Suetonius (*Iul.* 17). We are told that Curius was rewarded for the information he gave the senate, which included an accusation against Caesar; we then learn that Caesar defended himself by pointing out that he had reported to Cicero what he knew about the plot. According to Suetonius, Caesar prevented Curius from receiving the award that the senate had voted him; Curius must have been deprived of his reward on the ground that his information was false. For us the significant point is the absence of any mention of a reward for Caesar, a man whom we know to have been both a senator and an informer in 63. We know the names of two other senators who acted as informers, Q. Fabius Sanga (Sall. *Cat.* 41.4–5) and L. Saenius (30.1), and we know that many other senators did the same thing (30.2), but we do not hear about rewards. Accordingly, there is some reason to believe that senators were not eligible for the reward for delation, and the voting of such a reward to Curius is therefore a strong indication that he was not a senator in 63. We can in fact be certain that Curius was not a senator at the time of the conspiracy, if we turn to the passage (23.1) in which Sallust records the expulsion of Curius from the senate: his expulsion is

27. The new entry for Q. Curius (*MRR* 3:78) does not identify his rank. We have simply restored Curius to the status he won from Sobeck, who judged him quaestor "vor 70"; cf. F. Sobeck, *Die Quästoren der Römischen Republik* (Trebnitz, 1909), p. 45.

28. "Q. Curius, Homo Quaestorius," *AC* 47 (1978): 207–9.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

recorded as an event of the past in the year 64, and the clear and natural implication of this statement is that Curius was still an ex-senator in 64.

If my arguments are accepted, what has been regarded as a list of senators in 63 contains five non-senators of 64: Autronius, Vargunteius, Lentulus Sura, Cethegus, and Curius. The tally: five non-senators, two senators, four doubtful cases. A proper understanding of Sallust's list unfortunately means losses in the number of known senators, but these losses have been compensated: we have learned enough to deny a second quaestorship to Curius, and we have learned enough to suggest a date at which Cethegus might have been quaestor. If a quaestorship for Cethegus in 63 is not accepted, we must move him from the non-senators to the doubtful cases: our answer to this question determines whether he is the fifth non-senator or the fifth doubtful case in the list.

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GEORGICS 1.181: *INLUDUNT* AND THE SCOPE OF VERGILIAN PESSIMISM

Matters of textual criticism inevitably entail interpretative consequences. If this were not the case, there would be little at stake in choosing one reading over another and so little reason to value our textual critics as highly as we do. *Georgics* 1.181, however, presents a curious variation on this theme. Editors had seemed to reach a consensus, that *inludant* was the correct reading, until David O. Ross, Jr., intent upon calling our attention to Vergil's abiding pessimism and the inescapable failures recounted within the *Georgics*, argued that the reading was accepted only because the alternative was unacceptably bleak.¹ His sense of Vergil's pessimism allowed him to see what others had resisted and what should not be overlooked in this line. However, that same sense of pessimism has led him, I believe, to misunderstand the wider implications of what Vergil has created here, as elsewhere, in this remarkable poem.² In this short article I will argue that there are good linguistic reasons to agree with Ross' reading and strong literary reasons to modify his interpretation. The literary issues, of course, extend beyond the narrow scope of a strictly textual exercise. But I hope it will be clear that even in a seemingly small textual matter, we cannot avoid larger literary issues: what is the nature of Vergil's poetic composition, how are we to keep in our discussions the poem's many facets, and what is the meaning and value of this poem's extraordinary range.

Just before the end of the first third of *Georgics* 1, Vergil relates some of the *multa veterum praecepta* that apply to the farm. The *area* must be made level and solid, he says, and the standard text continues:

1. D. O. Ross, Jr., *Vergil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the "Georgics"* (Princeton, 1987), p. 76.

2. I tried to make a similar case for the poetic significance of the details that compose the surface of this poem in W. Batstone, "On the Surface of the *Georgics*," *Arethusa* 21 (1988): 227-45.