

REPUBLICAN AND AUGUSTAN WRITERS ENROLLED IN THE EQUESTRIAN CENTURIES

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This paper deals with the careers of well-known post-Gracchan and Augustan men of letters who either inherited or acquired equestrian rank and remained in that rank for life. The discussion is based on acceptance of the view that the members of the *equester ordo*, also known collectively and individually as *equites Romani*, who provided the panel of jurors for the Gracchan extortion court and a third of the panel for the public courts under the Lex Aurelia of 70 B.C., were not, as is generally believed, selected from all citizens with the equestrian census; they belonged, rather, to a special group enrolled by the censors, the eighteen centuries of *equites equo publico*, men whose enrollment was re-examined at every census. I shall refer to them in this paper as knights, for they deserve a term of honor like *knight*, *Ritter*, *chevalier*, *cavaliere*. Derived from the cavalry of the kingship, they continued to have special units in the centuriate assembly, and to appear in various public ceremonies, including, until it was temporarily abandoned, their own great parade known as the *transvectio equitum*. In the year 67 B.C. they regained a great privilege, perhaps given to them in the Gracchan period and lost in the Sullan, reserved seats at theatrical games in the first fourteen rows, just above the seats of the senators in the orchestra.

This view of the *equites* accords with that presented in a recent volume by Claude Nicolet,¹ who fails to realize that it is in essence the view

¹ *L'Ordre Équestre à l'Époque républicaine*, I; *Définitions juridiques et structures sociales* (Paris 1966). It is to be hoped that the second volume, to be devoted mainly to prosopography, will be provided with a good analytical index, the lack of which makes the use of the 753 pages of the first volume very difficult. There are many mistakes in references.

of Theodor Mommsen, stated in 1887 in the third volume of the *Römisches Staatsrecht* (476–569) and repeated in his *Römisches Strafrecht* (209) in 1899. In his publication in 1863 of the Gracchan extortion law, Mommsen had restored with a census figure a clause defining the jurors, a restoration still widely adopted today, but later he favored a restoration describing the jurors as holders of the public horse.²

Before 129 B.C. the 1800 men with public horse were composed of senators and knights and their sons of military age and of other men with the equestrian census (400,000 sesterces in 67 B.C.) who were placed in the centuries by the censors. But shortly after 129 a law requiring senators to give up their public horse was passed (cf. Cic. *Rep.* 4.2). After that time the centuries of *equites* continued to have in them the sons of senators, along with the young knights and those over thirty (or thirty-five) from whom jurors were drawn. And the

² Mommsen's change of point of view is shown in the restoration of lines 13 and 16 of the Gracchan *lex repetundarum* (FIRA 1, pp. 88–89) from the first ed. of CIL 1 (1863) 198 to the second (1918) 583. The later restoration, *qui in hac civitate equum publicum habebit habuerit . . .* accords with the views expressed in the *Staatsrecht* (see 3.531, note 1) and in the texts prepared by Mommsen for the sixth and seventh editions of Bruns' *Fontes Iuris* and for his own *Gesamm. Schr.* 1.28–29. Nicolet (above, note 1) 513–14, is aware of the change of restoration but does not realize that it means that Mommsen—quoted on p. 25 and *passim* as agreeing with Marquardt and Belot on the use of the terms *equites Romani* and *equester ordo* for all men with the equestrian census—had altered his view. There are cases, Mommsen says in the *Staatsrecht* (3.480–85, cited by J. Martin in the review of Nicolet, *Gnomon* 39 [1967] 798), when *equites* refers to all men with the equestrian census, but the examples cited (cf. also 193, note 2) belong not to individuals but to groups (like the 2600 *equites* said to have been slain by Sulla; or the *tribuni aerarii*, referred to as *equites* or members of the *equester ordo* in comments on the juries under the Lex Aurelia). The real issue in Mommsen's discussion concerns the identification of the Gracchan jurors and one third of the jurors under the Lex Aurelia with the *equites equo publico*, an identification accepted by Strachan-Davidson, *Problems of the Roman Criminal Law* 2 (Oxford 1912) 75–111, and, tentatively, by Kübler, s.v. "Equites Romani," *RE* 6.290 (1909). See also P. A. Brunt's first note in the article cited below, note 7. (The identification of the *eq. eq. p.* with the *equites Romani* of the Lex Aurelia has been more widely accepted. See for instance Last, *CAH* 9.339–40.) Nicolet in his leisurely discussion has little to say of the juries until p. 467, after which he devotes more than 150 pages to them, with full consideration of republican jury laws after the Gracchi. An important contribution (doubted by R. K. Sherk in his review of Nicolet, *AJP* 89 [1968] 253) is Nicolet's recognition (165 note 3 bis, and 511–12) of line 28 of the *lex repet.* as a reference to jurors and an indication that they were holders of the public horse. As a restoration I suggest [*neive censor tribu mo]veto neive equom adimito*. See also the statement of M. I. Henderson, *JRS* 41 (1951) 74 note 24, that line 28 contains "the famous exemption of non-senators" referred to in Cic. *Cluent.* 153 and *Rab. Post.* 12.

numbers in the centuries seem to have increased rather than decreased, for commanders with *imperium*, who had always been privileged under special conditions to secure the confirmation of the censors for the military tribunes and prefects they named, were forced, because of the expanding empire, to make a greater number of such appointments. These appointments carried with them, for men who did not yet have the rank, the symbols of knighthood, the gold ring and the purple stripe on the tunic. The awards became valid without the census, which was suspended by Sulla and was completed only once from his dictatorship to Caesar's. Besides the awards for officers, some of which, as we shall see, made few demands for military service, there were honorary awards made by commanders,³ and among these were the gifts of gold rings to men of letters. The earliest attested example for an award in the liberal arts is Sulla's bestowal in his dictatorship of a gold ring on the great comic actor Roscius, who, since acting was deemed a profession unworthy of a knight, refused henceforth to accept pay for his acting. There may have been an earlier instance of this type, that of the antiquarian and philologist, L. Aelius Stilo, known as Praeconinus because he was the son of a herald, another forbidden calling. Stilo had many friends among the nobles from whom he could have secured a gold ring; they included Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, whom Stilo accompanied into exile. Stilo's son-in-law, the Plautine scholar Servius Clodius, was also an *eques Romanus* and may have acquired the rank by special award. The one fairly certain example of a Roman knight among earlier men of letters (there were doubtless others), the satirist C. Lucilius, brother of a senator, probably inherited his knighthood (and his wealth) from his father, a Roman citizen from the Latin colony Suessa Aurunca.⁴

³ These honorary awards, along with the increase in numbers of officers of equestrian rank, resulted, I now believe, in larger enrollment in the centuries of knights. In my *Roman Voting Assemblies* (Ann Arbor 1966) 86, I followed Mommsen's view that these centuries always consisted of one hundred men each, an opinion based on Cic. *Rep.* 2.36, which is not necessarily valid evidence for a period later than Scipio Aemilianus.

⁴ On the status of republican writers evidence not cited here will be found in Schanz-Hosius, *Röm. Literaturgesch.* 1 (Munich 1927). For Lucilius as a Roman citizen, not, as Marx held, a Latin, see C. Cichorius, *Untersuchungen zu Lucilius* (Berlin 1908) 14-22, with corrections in the light of new evidence cited from A. B. West and others in my *Voting Districts of the Roman Republic* (Rome 1960) 227. For Lucilius' status as

In the next generation we have much fuller information. I shall not attempt to make a complete list of writers among the knights, for that difficult task has already been attempted by Nicolet.⁵ Instead I shall concentrate on significant figures: Cicero's friend Atticus, the jurist C. Trebatius Testa, the mime writer Laberius, and, in the Augustan Age, the poets Horace, Tibullus, and Ovid. I shall also consider the possibility of including in the list the poets Catullus, Lucretius, and Vergil, and the historian Livy.

Like Cicero, Titus Pomponius Atticus was descended from knights and might easily have obtained election to the quaestorship, which, after Sulla's dictatorship, admitted men automatically to the senate. The path to the lower offices in the *cursus* was an easy one for the new man with powerful friends, and Atticus had them. If the conditions described by Horace in *Satires* 1.6 were already in force, the candidate for office simply replaced the narrow band on his tunic with a wide one (*latus clavus*), laced his feet into the high red senatorial shoes, and went down to the Forum or the Campus to seek votes. But Atticus and Cicero made different choices, pointed out by Cicero in a letter of 61 B.C. (*Att.* 1.17.5): "neque ego inter me atque te quicquam interesse umquam duxi praeter voluntatem institutae vitae, quod me ambitio quaedam ad honorum studium, te autem alia minime reprehendenda ratio ad honestum otium duxit." The choice was between *otium* and the unending struggles created by *ambitio*. In two of Cicero's speeches there is a similar contrast between senators and knights, the latter having chosen "vitam illam tranquillam et quietam, remotam a procellis invidiarum."⁶ The emphasis on *otium* is curious if, as is

a knight, the best evidence is the fact that his brother was a senator, therefore a former knight. The statement of Velleius (2.9.4) that the satirist served as *eques* under the younger Scipio in the Numantine War is less conclusive, since many men served on horseback in the armies without being enrolled in the *equites equo publico*.

⁵ Nicolet (above, note 1) 441-56, with tables on pp. 450-56. The documentation is reserved for the second volume. Nicolet's list of 51 men includes a number from equestrian families who entered the senate. I shall not consider names of that type. One name omitted by Nicolet, though included in the list of landholders on p. 314, is that of L. Julius Calidus, a knight who, like the Epicurean writer L. Saufeius, was saved by Atticus from proscription. He is known as a poet only from Nepos' description of him (*Att.* 12.4) as *post Lucretii Catullique mortem multo elegantissimum poetam*.

⁶ Cic. *Cluent.* 153; see 148-54 (66 B.C.). *Rab. Post.* 15-17 (54 B.C.); see 17, where the knights are represented as saying *hanc vitam quietam atque otiosam secuti sumus*. The question under discussion in both passages is the liability of equestrian jurors to charges

generally held, the life of the knight was the life of the capitalist financier. But the interpretation of the knights as "business men," as Brunt and Nicolet have recently demonstrated,⁷ often puts the wrong emphasis on men who, at least from the second century B.C., came largely from the landed gentry of Italy, frequently invested in Italian real estate their gains from service as publicans and bankers, and sometimes devoted to the liberal arts the leisure they acquired. Atticus was a leading figure among the *equites*, standing, Cicero says (*Att.* 2.1.7), as *princeps* and *signifer* at the head of those knights who, as a guard for the senators, stood on the Clivus Capitolinus during the debates on the Catilinarians in the temple of Concord. Engaged all his life in banking and money-lending, Atticus found time on his estates in Italy and Epirus and in his mansions in and near Rome for important research and publication, as well as for social life with a wide group of friends in whose financial, political, and literary activities he was deeply interested. For himself he was spared the labor and the obligations associated with office-seeking, and he could remain on good terms with men who were enemies of each other. He probably justified his detachment by his Epicureanism, the philosophy of which his friend, the knight L. Saufeius, wrote—a man who, like Atticus, spent much of his time in Greece. But there were Epicureans who, in violation of the tenets of Epicurus, took an active part in politics, for instance Caesar's father-in-law L. Calpurnius Piso and his assassin C. Cassius Longinus. Cicero associates Atticus' *otium*, not with Epicureanism, but with freedom from the burdens of *ambitio*.

An interesting group of knights who refrained from politics is to be found among the jurists of the first century B.C. As W. Kunkel points out, most of the jurists of the second century had been leading

of bribery in their verdicts, and the argument, which had proved effective in the senate, was that men who had chosen to forego the advantages of senatorial membership should not be subjected to the senator's danger of prosecution.

⁷ See P. A. Brunt, "The Equites in the Late Republic," *Acta, Deuxième conférence internationale d'histoire économique*, held at Aix-en-Provence 1962 (published 1965) 117-49, with comment from T. R. S. Broughton, 150-62. Brunt's paper, which anticipates some of Nicolet's results, particularly on the *equites* as landholders in Italy (285-315), was not available to Nicolet. For emphasis on knights as landholders, see also M. Gelzer's review of H. Hill, *The Roman Middle Class* (Oxford 1952), reprinted from *Gnomon* 1953 in Gelzer's *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Wiesbaden 1952) 222-27.

statesmen, prominent for their consulships, censorships, and priest-hoods.⁸ But in the first century major jurists either refrained from entering upon a senatorial career in order to have leisure for their studies or stopped short before reaching the highest offices, perhaps thinking, like Sallust (*Jug.* 4.4), that the state would receive greater benefit from their *otium* than from other men's *negotia*. The greatest jurist of the age of Caesar, Servius Sulpicius Rufus, eventually reached the consulship, but many of his pupils avoided public office. One of them, Aulus Ofilius, though an intimate of Caesar, *in equestri ordine perseveravit* (*Dig.* 1.2.2.44). A jurist of the early empire, Masurius Sabinus (*Dig.* 1.2.2.50), a poor man, did not even have the rank of knight until Tiberius gave it to him when he was nearly fifty. I believe that the friend of Cicero and Horace, C. Trebatius Testa, described as an *eques Romanus* in Porphyrio's commentary on the first satire of Horace's second book, acquired his knighthood from Caesar.

Trebatius was apparently a native of Velia in Lucania, a community enfranchised in the Social War, and thus it is unlikely that he was the son of a Roman knight.⁹ In introducing Trebatius to Caesar in Gaul, Cicero (*Fam.* 7.5) does not, as is usual in his recommendations of knights, speak of him as an *eques Romanus*. Instead he describes him as the leader of the *familia*—a puzzling expression—in civil law. Cicero had just received a letter from Caesar referring to a man recommended by Cicero, and stating, "I'll either make him king of Gaul or else . . . *tu ad me alium mitte quem ornem.*" A good way to adorn a man was to give him a gold ring and a stripe on his tunic.¹⁰ Cicero

⁸ The evidence for the status of the jurists is to be found mainly in an interpolated passage, purporting to come from Pomponius (2nd cent. A.D.), in *Dig.* 1.2.2.35–53. See Kunkel's *Herkunft und soziale Stellung der römischen Juristen* (Weimar 1952) 1–61 for the republican period.

⁹ There is no evidence for Kunkel's belief ([above, note 8] 28) that Trebatius came from an equestrian family. As Kunkel notes, a Trebatius named as a Samnite general in the Social War (Appian, *BC* 1.52.228) is the only earlier bearer of the name known. He was probably a relative, but there is no evidence to justify Nicolet (455) and others in listing him as an ancestor of Cicero's friend.

¹⁰ In the letters of recommendation in *Fam.* 13, five men (see 14, 31, 38, 51, 62) are introduced as *equites Romani* and three of them are said to be *ornati*. Others introduced as officers of the *publicani* (9, 65) may be assumed to be *equites Romani*. One letter to a proconsul (40) makes the request that two men whom Cicero calls *meos pernecessarios* should be treated *honorifice liberaliterque*. The words suggest an elevation to knighthood such as I believe Cicero was recommending for Trebatius in *Fam.* 7.5

tells Caesar that if he had himself gone out as legate of Pompey, then commissioner of the grain supply, he had expected to take Trebatius with him and bring him back *quam ornatissimum*, but adds that, since his mission had been delayed or abandoned, he now wished Trebatius to hope from Caesar for the benefits he might have expected from Cicero. Cicero goes on to say that he does not request for Trebatius a military tribunate or a prefecture or any other specific gift; what he does ask for is Caesar's *benevolentia* and *liberalitas*, but he puts no obstacle in the way if Caesar wishes to adorn Trebatius also with these insignia that will give him a measure of glory (*etiam hisce eum ornes gloriolae insignibus*). The letters to Trebatius in Gaul (Cic. *Fam.* 7.6-18) indicate that Cicero continued to commend Trebatius to Caesar. A statement in one of them (*Fam.* 7.8) that Trebatius scorned a military tribunate, even without military duties, has been taken to mean that he was offered a tribunate and declined, but Cicero's letter, quoting Caesar, makes it clear that so far Caesar had had no time to get acquainted with Trebatius. The military tribunate *dempto . . . labore militiae* was perhaps a suggestion made in a lost letter by Cicero, who was well aware of Trebatius' lack of taste for military service. The mention of a tribunate of this type indicates that such appointments were made at times. Trebatius did become an intimate of Caesar, who favored him with financial aid, used him as an intermediary in the civil war, and furthered his career as one of the great teachers among the knights distinguished in jurisprudence in the age of Caesar and Augustus. If I am right that Trebatius got his knighthood from Caesar,¹¹ his case may indicate that the best way to secure equestrian rank was to go out to a province where one found officers with *imperium* able to make the award, and that all the bestowals made in the provinces were not military in character. An instance of that sort was the award of a gold ring to his scribe, made by Gaius Verres; according to Cicero,

and apparently had already recommended for another man with a hopelessly corrupted name, the man whom Caesar says he might make king of Gaul.

¹¹ Sonnet, s.v. "Trebatius" (7) *RE* 2254, holds that Trebatius' knighthood may have been conferred by Caesar or Augustus, citing with approval Teuffel, *Gesch. röm. Literatur* 1⁶.495, where the preference is for Octavian. But the evidence of Caesar's liberality contained in Cicero's letters to Trebatius and Trebatius' close association with Caesar in 49 make it more likely that the award came from Caesar.

the scribe's service had been assistance to Verres in his thefts (Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.185-87). The *contubernales* or *comites* of provincial governors and of legates like Pompey's, who had *imperium*, offered opportunities for advancement to young men who could secure the proper introductions.

Perhaps the most revealing evidence for the knights in the annals of republican men of letters concerns the mime-writer Decimus Laberius, a knight who in his old age, acceding to the request of Caesar, acted in his own mime in a contest with the Syrian freedman Publilius Syrus. The contest was a feature of the scenic games following Caesar's dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix in 46 B.C. I quote from the prologue of Laberius' mime preserved by Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.7.3:

quem nulla ambitio, nulla umquam largitio,
nullus timor, vis nulla, nulla auctoritas
movere potuit in iuventa de statu,
ecce in senecta ut facile labefecit loco
viri excellentis mente clemente edita
summissa placide blandiloquens oratio?
et enim ipsi di negare cui nihil potuerunt,
hominem me denegare quis posset pati?
ego bis tricenis annis actis sine nota
eques Romanus e Lare egressus meo
domum revertar mimus. nimirum hoc die
uno plus vixi mihi quam vivendum fuit.

Laberius was evidently in the upper seventies since he had been an *eques Romanus* for sixty years; in all that time he had never had a *nota*, an adverse mark from the censor, but now because of his appearance as an actor he was destined to lose his status and return home not an *eques Romanus* but a *mimus*. Caesar, displeased at the charges made against him in the mime, gave the palm in the contest to Publilius Syrus, but at the same time restored Laberius to his rank as an *eques Romanus* by giving him, with five hundred thousand sesterces, the gold ring that was the symbol of the equestrian status lost by the acting. Caesar also had Laberius conducted to a seat in the first fourteen rows of the theater, which were reserved for the knights. But they tried

to crowd him out of a place on their benches.¹² A strong confirmation of the details of this story is provided by an incident at Gades in Spain reported in June 43 in a letter of Asinius Pollio to Cicero (*Fam.* 10.32). The younger Lucius Cornelius Balbus, belonging to a family from Gades, gave games there in which he frankly imitated Caesar. He presented an actor with a gold ring and accompanied him to the first fourteen rows which he had instituted at Gades on the model of the Roman theater.

The story of Laberius provides support for the basic assumption of this paper, that *eques Romanus* was a title of honor, dependent not only on financial status but on the examination of censors who could, for unseemly conduct, remove the knight's public horse. And acting was a profession forbidden to knights. In 46 B.C. no censors had for more than twenty years been able to complete the enrollment of citizens, but, according to public opinion which Laberius' verse showed that he shared with the knights who were unwilling to receive him, he had lost his status. Caesar gave it back to him by the bestowal of the gold ring and of a sum of money which was more than the knight's census of four hundred thousand sesterces. Moreover Laberius regained the great privilege of the knights who were in the city, a place at scenic games in the first fourteen rows of the theater, a place where they could see the show well and be seen by all the audience. These seats were restored to the knights by a law of the tribune L. Roscius Otho in 67 B.C.¹³ There has been a tendency to accept the statement of the scholiast on Juvenal (3.155) that these seats were open to anyone with an equestrian census, but the case of Laberius suggests that the seats belonged to a group which had, besides adequate funds, a position of honor, originally in the eighteen centuries.

Horace's status as an *eques* is clearly indicated by the military tribunate to which he was appointed by Marcus Junius Brutus, who may first have met Horace when he was a student in Athens. The tribunate, which was always accompanied by equestrian rank, could easily have

¹² See also Macrob. *Sat.* 2.3.10; Sen. *Dial.* 4.11.3; Gell. 8.15. Particularly significant is the attitude of the knights reported in an earlier source, Seneca rhet. *Contr.* 7.3.9: "Laberium divus Iulius ludis suis mimum produxit, deinde equestri illum ordini reddidit; iussit ire sessum in equestria; omnes ita se coartaverunt ut venientem non recipere."

¹³ See Cic. *Mur.* 40; Vell. 2.32.3.

been conferred by Brutus, who had *imperium* and needed officers. The rank was obviously recognized at Rome, for Horace sat with his patron Maecenas (*Sat.* 2.6.48), *decus equitum*, at the games, evidently in one of the two front rows assigned to military tribunes from the fourteen rows reserved for knights. The status is also attested by Horace's *Satires* 2.7.53-55:

tu cum proiectis insignibus, anulo equestri
Romanoque habitu, prodis ex iudice Dama
turpis.

Here Horace's slave Davus represents his master laying aside his equestrian ring and knight's costume (including the tunic with the narrow stripe) and going out like a low slave to gratify his passions. As far as I know, Horace's knighthood has never been questioned by any constitutional historian, but it has been repeatedly doubted by commentators, beginning with Lambinus. The reason for the doubt has presumably been Horace's status as a freedman's son, but, as I pointed out in a paper written more than forty years ago, there is, in this period of revolution, abundant evidence, some of it from Horace's poetry, for freedmen's sons and even for freedmen in the knights. To judge from the questions I have been asked in both written and oral comments on my discussion, the idea that Davus introduced an imaginary knight into his conversation with his master dies hard.¹⁴ One detail of the passage that I did not emphasize sufficiently was that Horace was included in the album of jurors, a group selected from the knights to serve in the public courts, probably identical with the *iudices selecti* that Horace's father had held up to his son as models (*Sat.* 1.4.123).¹⁵ It

¹⁴ *AJP* 46 (1925) 161-70. A more comprehensive examination of editions of Horace than I made at that time shows that, though most commentators have accepted the view of Lambinus that the Roman knight here is imaginary, there have been divergent interpretations. See for instance the Delphin edition of 1825 and Dillenburger's in 1881. Baier in his edition of 1852 cites with disapproval an article of W. E. Weber entitled "Über die römischen Scribae," *Jahrb. für Philologie und Paedagogik*, Suppl. 9 (1843) 78-93, where the author cites *Sat.* 2.7 as evidence for Horace's status as a knight but believes (incorrectly, as is now clear from abundant evidence) that the status was inconsistent with Horace's post as *scriba quaestorius*.

¹⁵ See E. S. Stavelly, "Iudices selecti," *RhM* 96 (1953) 201-13. The satires date before Augustus' reorganization of the juries, and the term *iudices selecti* of Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.121-23 (Stavelly 207, note 20) is perhaps used to denote enrollment in the *album iudicum*. Horace was evidently on that list. The Gracchan jurors had been at least thirty years

is to be noted that even if the minimum age of jurors was thirty-five years, Horace may have been old enough at the time when this satire was written. The assignment of Horace to the knights is important for the interpretation of his disclaimers of *ambitio*, described as *mala, prava, misera, gravis, inanis*, and for the objections to a political career set forth in the sixth *Satire* of the first book. Horace at this time (37–35 B.C.) was close to the age for the quaestorship which admitted to the senate, and he is obviously thinking of himself when he tells what would happen to the madman who widened the stripe on his tunic and laced on the high senatorial shoes. The recurring phrases, *patre natus, libertino patre natum*, are, I believe, tags of dactylic lines that he had heard chanted about candidates of origin like his, and he is delighted to stay in his own skin and devote his *otium* to comments in verse on the life of his day.

All four of the Roman elegiac poets were knights, although for Propertius the proof of registration in the *equites equo publico* rests mainly on the fact that his *bulla*, the amulet worn by every Roman child, was of gold, not leather, a good indication of an inherited right to a gold ring when he reached manhood.¹⁶ The first of the elegiac poets, Cornelius Gallus, a man from Forum Iulii in Narbonese Gaul, rose *ex humili fortuna* (Suet. *Aug.* 66) to knighthood, perhaps in the period of the triumvirate. He proclaims his status as *eques Romanus* in the boastful trilingual inscription of Philae in Egypt, of which he was the first prefect.¹⁷

As for Tibullus, he records his military service under M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, to whose Aquitanian campaign the peace-loving

old; perhaps those of the Lex Aurelia were at least thirty-five, and Augustus, we do not know when, reduced the age again to thirty (Suet. *Aug.* 32; see Mommsen, *Röm. Strafrecht* 212, note 4). Horace would have been thirty-five in 30 B.C. See for a recent discussion of the *indices* and the *equester ordo* the valuable paper of the late Mrs. M. I. Henderson, *JRS* 53 (1963) 61–72.

¹⁶ For Propertius' ample inheritance, diminished by land confiscations, obviously during the triumvirate, after which he was dependent on the more limited resources of his mother's family, see 4.1.120–30 with lines 131–32 on the *bulla*. On the origin of the golden *bulla* see Pliny, *NH* 33.10, "ut eorum qui equo meruissent filii insigne id haberent, ceteri lorium." See Mommsen, *StR* 3.515, note 3, on association of the *anulus aureus* and the *bulla aurea*. But *equo merere* does not necessarily mean enrollment in the equestrian centuries.

¹⁷ *ILS* 3.2.8995. This is the earliest example of *eques Romanus* preserved in an inscription as the title of an individual.

poet claims to have made a contribution (1.7.9). The first sentence of the biography found in various manuscripts of Tibullus is

Albius Tibullus, eques regalis, insignis forma cultuque corporis observabilis, ante alios Corvinum Messalam oratorem dilexit cuius etiam contubernalis Aquitanico bello militaribus donis donatus est.

The biography is generally believed to be based on Suetonius, who usually gives the status of his subjects, and *regalis* is surely a mistaken expansion of *R.*, a frequent abbreviation of *Romanus* in the manuscripts of Suetonius. The knights wore their insignia in the *transvectio equitum*, a great parade through the Forum from the Porta Capena to the Capitol, held on July 15, a ceremony revived *post longam intercapedinem* by Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 38). A description of the parade, with the knights clad in the striped cloak known as the *trabea* and wearing their decorations, is provided by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant.* 6.13.4), who watched it under Augustus, and may have seen both Tibullus and Ovid among the knights. Like Ovid, Tibullus was probably the descendant of knights, for his ancestors were richer landholders than he was, with an estate close to Praeneste in the territory of Pedum, which had had citizenship for three hundred years.¹⁸ There is no sign in Tibullus' poetry of interest in personal political advancement, and no reason to think that his ancestors were in the senatorial class.

In Ovid's poetry, from the *Amores*, the elegies of his youth, to the laments he penned in his days of exile at Tomi on the Black Sea, there is frequent reference to his position as a knight and to his appearance with knights in the theater and in the ceremony of the *transvectio*. He was a descendant of generations of knights from the Paelignian city Sulmo in the center of Italy.¹⁹ He actually chose in his youth to

¹⁸ For Tibullus' landed property and the evaluation of the evidence of Horace, *Epist.* 1.4, see Kirby Flower Smith's delightful treatment, *Tibullus, the Elegies* (New York 1913) 32-33. My interest in the contribution of writers to the history of the *equites*, which goes back to the paper on Horace written many years ago, was revived by a letter from Professor Michael Putnam who was seeking an explanation for *eques regalis*.

¹⁹ *Am.* 1.3.7-8; 3.8.9-10; 3.15.5-6. These last two lines are repeated with slight change in *Trist.* 4.10.7-8. For knighthood coming down to Ovid *per innumeros avos*, see *Pont.* 4.8.17-18.

pursue a political career which would have made him a lifelong senator, and, before giving up his plan, he held two minor offices. In the *Fasti* (4.377-84) Ovid reports a conversation at the Megalesian Games with an elderly military tribune, who, pointing out that the day was the anniversary of the Battle of Thapsus, boasts of his service under Caesar:

Tertia lux—memini—ludis erat, ac mihi quidam
spectanti senior continuosque loco
“haec” ait “illa dies, Libycis qua Caesar in oris
perfida magnanimi contudit arma Iubae.
Dux mihi Caesar erat, sub quo meruisse tribunus
glorior: officio praefuit ille meo.
Hanc ego militia sedem, tu pace parasti
inter bis quinos usus honore viros.”

From this passage, it appears that the military tribunes who did not enter on a senatorial career, which would have given them seats in the orchestra, shared the best seats in the fourteen rows at the theater with holders of minor offices who had not advanced to the senate.²⁰ Distaste for military service, later essential for all *equites equo publico*, may have been one of the reasons why Ovid abandoned a senatorial career to devote himself to *otium* and the Muses. The story is told in his interesting autobiography written from his grim exile on the Black Sea (*Trist.* 4.10.27-30, 33-40):

Interea tacito passu labentibus annis
liberior fratri sumpta mihique toga est,
induiturque umeris cum lato purpura clavo,
et studium nobis, quod fuit ante, manet.
.
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.
Nec patiens corpus, nec mens fuit apta labori,
sollicitaeque fugax ambitionis eram,
et petere Aoniae suadebant tuta sorores
otia, iudicio semper amata meo.

²⁰ Ovid was either *IIIvir capitalis* or *IIIvir monetalis* (*Trist.* 4.10.34) and was also *Xvir slitibus iudicandis* (*Fasti* 4.384). See Mommsen, *StR* 1³.475, note 3.

Ovid recalls in the *Fasti* (2.127–28) that as an *eques* he had shared with senate and people the bestowal of the title *pater patriae* on Augustus. In *Tomi* he imagines that he is, as a knight, rejoicing with senate and people over a German victory (*Trist.* 4.2.16–17) or marching with the knights in front of his friend Pomponius Graecinus, who is entering upon his consulship.²¹ In the *Tristia* Ovid points out that repeatedly, after the publication of the poem which was one of the causes of his exile, he had passed in front of the emperor on his public horse and had had his life and his morals approved. The reference is obviously to the *transvectio equitum* which, as revived by Augustus, had taken on features of the census of *equites*.²²

This list of knights would be longer if it had included all the writers mentioned as knights, but we know little of most of them. There are, however, three great poets who should be considered, Catullus, Lucretius, and Vergil. The first two are in Nicolet's list of republican knights in the liberal arts, though there is a query after Lucretius' name. I should place one also after the name of Catullus, for I question what seems to be Nicolet's chief reason for putting him in the group, his presence in the *cohors amicorum* whom Memmius took to Bithynia in 57 B.C.²³ I believe that some young men went out as *comites* of a

²¹ *Pont.* 4.9; for the march to the Capitol on the opening day of the consulship see lines 17–18. The senators marched on either side of the consul and the *equites* were in front of him.

²² *Trist.* 2.89–90: "At memini vitamque meam moresque probabas / illo quem dederas praetereuntis equo." *Trist.* 2.541–42: "carminaque edideram, cum te delicta notantem / praeterii totiens inrequietus eques." For *inrequietus*, retained in the last line by A. L. Wheeler, Loeb text, other editors read *inreprehensus* (Guelferb.) or *inrevocatus* (Bentley). Plutarch, *Pomp.* 22.4–6, in his story of Pompey's relinquishment of his public horse in the censorship of 70, seems to have confused *transvectio equitum* and census, which should have taken place in the Campus Martius, not in the Forum.

²³ On *cohors amicorum* see *TLL* s.v. "cohors," 1553, lines 18–70. See Mommsen's discussion, *Gesamm. Schr.* 4.2–5. Porphyrio on Horace, *Sat.* 1.7.23, says of the reference to Brutus' *cohors*, "cohortem comites dicit Bruti, qui in consilio eius erant." One might compare the 59 members of Pompeius Strabo's *consilium*, *CIL* 1.2².709 add. See Cichorius, *Röm. Studien* (Berlin 1922) 130–85. It is likely that some of the men classified by Cichorius as sons of senators and knights, notably some of the twelve in the Velina tribe (who were probably from Picenum where Strabo had vast estates), were men who did not inherit equestrian rank but hoped to secure it through military service. The rank is apparently descending in Cic. *Rab. Post.* 13, "ut tribuni, ut praefecti, ut scribae, ut comites omnes magistratuum." *Tribuni (militum)* and *praefecti* are regularly *equites Romani*; and *comites*, like *scribae* (see Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.185–87), could presumably be awarded gold rings.

governor, as I think Trebatius did, in the hope of obtaining a gold ring. Catullus' well-to-do father, who belonged to the magisterial class of Verona, a city with Latin rights, must have been a citizen, and it is possible that he had equestrian rank, though his citizenship was so recent that there can be no certainty on the subject. I would consider the possibility that Catullus' dislike of Memmius after the Bithynian expedition was based on a failure to receive both the financial gains for which he had hoped and the gold ring. Sulla and Caesar could hand out gold rings in Rome to Roscius and Laberius, but in the interval between the two dictatorships the best way to get one was to go out in the train of a provincial governor, either on the staff with the many tribunes and prefects needed in the expanding empire or in the *cohors amicorum*.

Lucretius, who was familiar with luxurious life, may also have been an hereditary knight and may have watched from the first fourteen rows the theatrical games, particularly the dance, of which he was inordinately fond.²⁴ It is possible that Lucretius had in mind not only the teachings of Epicureanism but also a choice he had made himself, when he stood on the heights and watched miserable men struggle night and day to reach the top and then saw their disillusionment as they realized that their toil was no more rewarding than Sisyphus' as he pushed the stone up the hill.

As for Vergil, there can be no doubt that in his later years, when (according to the Suetonius-Donatus biography) he had received gifts amounting to 25 times the knight's census, he had been given a gold ring and a seat of honor in the theater. Augustus, who gave a gold ring in 23 B.C. to his physician, Antonius Musa, a freedman, would surely not have overlooked his greatest poet. But it is likely that Vergil acquired knighthood years before, although perhaps not from his father, who is represented as a man of slender means in Mantua, another community with Latin rights.²⁵ At an early period Vergil won close friends among men with *imperium*, for instance Asinius Pollio, consul 40. And can one imagine that when the *Eclogues* were

²⁴ See my paper, "Lucretius on the Roman Theatre," *Studies in Honour of Gilbert Norwood* (Toronto 1952) 147-55.

²⁵ See T. Frank, *Vergil, a Biography* (New York 1922) 8-10, for cogent argument that the modest origin of Vergil's father has been exaggerated.

recited in the theater Vergil did not have a seat of honor? If Suetonius' biography of Vergil had come down to us in unaltered form, we should have the details of Vergil's status. The rejection at the end of the second *Georgic* of a life of *ambitio* and the praise of *secura quies et nescia fallere vita* and of *latis otia fundis* accord both with the Epicureanism in which Vergil was interested at the time and with the life of an *eques* free from the labors and the perils of senatorial rank. His satisfaction with his own life is reflected at the end of the fourth *Georgic* (563-64):

illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis otii.

Vergil's pursuits will not in the Roman political sense ennoble him. *Otium* might be *honestum*, but it was *ignobile*.

It is even possible (the more so if one accepts, as I do, evidence from the Appendix Vergiliana for a biography of Vergil) to imagine that Vergil himself, who was 26 years old when Caesar was slain, received his gold ring from Caesar. The subject has bearing on the increase in the *equites equo publico* under Caesar and on the possibility of extensive awards to the Transpadani, in whom Caesar was greatly interested. The reason for assuming that Caesar, while adding to the membership of the senate, also increased the enrollment in the centuries of knights is that he abolished the jury panel from the *tribuni aerarii*, probably substituting for them additional holders of the public horse (Mommson, *StR* 3.534-35). The number of men in the centuries, which had probably been growing in the late republic, must now have increased greatly, and there were surely further additions under the triumvirs and Augustus. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant.* 6.13.4), who was in Rome from 30 to 8 B.C., there were sometimes five thousand men in the *transvectio equitum*, not the full enrollment, for many would have been absent from Rome. This figure, if it is correct, is a striking departure from the eighteen hundred men to which the centuries appear to have been limited in the year 129 B.C. (*Cic. Rep.* 2.36).

As for Livy, he came from an apparently well-to-do family in Patavium, the most prosperous town in the Transpadane region. In an Augustan census, perhaps the last one, held in 14 A.D., Patavium

is reported to have had in its population five hundred men with the equestrian census, a larger number than was to be found in any Italian city except Rome (Strabo 5.1.7; cf. 3.5.3.) The richer and more prominent men there with that census probably acquired equestrian status from Julius Caesar, and the father of Livy (who was only fifteen years old when Caesar was killed) may have been in the number. If the son did not obtain knighthood by inheritance, he would surely have received it from Augustus, with whom Livy was certainly in contact before 25 B.C. Since one of Augustus' two chief counselors, the great patron of literature, Maecenas, remained a knight by choice, one can imagine that there would have been many awards of gold rings to promising men of letters.

Among the men of letters that I have considered in this paper, the most significant for their contribution to our knowledge of the knights are Laberius, Trebatius, Horace, Atticus, and Ovid. Laberius in the quotation from his mime, supplemented by other evidence for the contest at Caesar's games, shows what the title *eques Romanus* meant—not simply a census rating but a rank dependent on acceptance in repeated examinations by the censors, or, when there were no censors, dependent on public opinion. Unseemly conduct like acting, a profession forbidden to the knight, was punished by removal from the rank. Other sources show how Caesar restored the rank by giving Laberius a gold ring and more money than was needed for the equestrian census, and also by leading him to a place in the seats reserved for the knights in the theater. Trebatius and Horace, under the assumption that Trebatius got his knighthood from Caesar, acquired their rank under a military command, which, at least for Trebatius, made no demands on the recipient for military service. These awards throw light on the *cohors* of friends who went out with provincial governors, and are suggestive for Catullus, who may have gone to Bithynia in the hope of the gift of a gold ring, and may have been disappointed. In the group of knights considered, only one, Atticus, the most important knight of the late republic, can be listed as a "business man." In his active life, with close relations after Cicero's death with Antony and also with Octavian (his only child married Augustus' chief general and counselor M. Agrippa and their daughter was betrothed as a baby to Augustus' stepson Tiberius), he did much to

set the stage for the honor accorded to the knights by Augustus, who even considered marrying his daughter Julia to a member of the equestrian order. However active Atticus was in his own financial affairs and those of his friends, he was spared the grueling toil and the dangers of *ambitio*, and he employed much of the *otium* he secured in writing and in encouraging others to write.

The idea of *otium* as freedom from the burdens of *ambitio*²⁶ is reflected in the poetry of Atticus' personal philosophy, Epicureanism, and much more extensively in the poetry of Horace, who may suggest not only his own point of view but also that of Maecenas. The emphasis in Horace on the beauty of *otium*, free from the evils of *ambitio*, accords with the evidence for a continuation under the triumvirate and under Augustus of the struggle at least for the lower offices in the *cursus*.²⁷ There was still some struggle when Ovid explained his abandonment of candidacy for a senatorial office as a flight from *ambitio* described as *solicita*. He may have had his relinquishment of senatorial rank in mind when in the *Tristia* he referred to his light poetry as his *otia* (2.224; cf. 1.7.25). But later, with the gradual disappearance of free elections and the development for the knights of an arduous career in jury duty, military service, and administrative procuratorships,²⁸ the idea of *otium* as something that the knights enjoyed because they were free from *ambitio* died out. Of interest here is the counsel that Seneca gives to his friend, the knight Lucilius, who held a procuratorship in Sicily and found time to write. Seneca tells him (*Epist. ad Lucil.* 68.1-3) to hide himself in *otium* and keep the *otium* hidden: *gloriari otio iners ambitio est*.

²⁶ See Ch. Wirsubski, *JRS* 44 (1954) 1-13, on Cicero's *cum dignitate otium*, a description of the life that as a *consularis* and a statesman he wished to lead under the first triumvirate. On *otium* for the knights of the republic see Nicolet's concluding chapter, "'Otium' équestre et participation politique," 699-722. Jean-Marie André, *L'Otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine des origines à l'époque augustéenne* (Paris 1966), does not, except in discussions of Epicureanism, deal with *otium* as freedom from *ambitio*, i.e. the obligation to make the rounds to secure votes.

²⁷ On elections under Augustus see A. H. M. Jones, *JRS* 45 (1955) 9-21, with P. A. Brunt's comments, *JRS* 51 (1961) 71-83. The available evidence in the Augustan age is primarily for the consulship.

²⁸ For the *equites* in the empire the standard treatment is A. Stein, *Der römische Ritterstand* (Munich 1927). For recent discussion see Broughton's paper (above, note 7).