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EPODUS XVI AND THE ROMAN SIBYLLINA

Epodus XVI occupies a special place in Horatian philology also for several reasons. In the centre of the interpretations dealing with it we find its relationship to eclogue IV and, in connection with this, also the question of priority not clarified up to the present day.¹ However, a similarly exciting and unsolved problem is also, whether the poet took earnestly the idea of the exodus of the *melior pars*,² the existence of the Island of the Blessed,³ or is this poem — in connection with which the majority of the researchers are inclined to believe that it is one of the earliest, if not the very first, Horatian poem preserved to us⁴ — the bitterly ironic precipitation of his despondent state of mind not finding a way out and not cherishing illusions as to the future. Thus, the interest of the majority of the interpreters was engaged first of all by the second great structural unity of the poem. They approached the whole of the epodus starting out from this, tried to solve its meaning and to mark out its place in the oeuvre of Horace and also in the political general thought of the period.⁵ Much less has been said so far about the introductory part of the epodus (vv. 1–18) and about its accurate interpretation, although — and this must be noted already now — perhaps just this can be the key of the solution of the series of questions connected with the whole of the epodus.

There is a complete agreement in as much as the direct motive of the writing of the epodus must be sought in the critical atmosphere especially overcoming Rome after the Perusian war.⁶ The desperate scream of the young poet was evoked by the fact of the civil war flaring up again hardly one year after the tragedy of Philippi, *viz.*:

*Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas,
suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit:* (vv. 1–2)

that is; already the second generation is perishing in the battlefields of the fratricidal war, and that Rome that had survived amidst so many afflictions of history, destroys herself, that Rome that:

... *neque finitimi valuerunt perdere Marsi,
minacis aut Etrusca Porsenae manus,
aemula nec virtus Capuae, nec Spartacus acer,
novisque rebus infidelis Allobrox,
nec fera caerulea domuit Germania pube
parentibusque abominatus Hannibal...* (vv. 3–8)

Before the poet-vates future appears as an apocalyptic vision:

*ferisque rursus occupabitur solum,
barbarus heu cineres insistet victor et urbem
eques sonante verberabit ungula,
quaeque carent ventis et solibus ossa Quirini
(nefas videre) dissipabit insolens.* (vv. 9–14)

That is: the city will again be the den of wild beasts, as it had been in olden times, and the barbarian horseman will arrogantly tread on the ashes of Rome and disperse the ashes of the ἦρωος κτίστῆς, of Romulus. For the remaining *melior pars* that opposes to civil war, no other possibility will be left for rescue than to follow the example of the Phocaeans (Herodotus I, 165), to leave Italy by ship to some place, somewhere to the Island of the Blessed, because — and this is the final conclusion — the destruction of Rome is already definitely inevitable. (v. 15 ff.)

The tone of the introductory lines of the epodus, in accordance with the contents, is distracted, and the elaborately confused character of the historical picture, the purposely unsystematical enumeration of the enemies of Rome are also intended to demonstrate the agitated state of mind of the poet. This introduction, however, contains a contradiction of a kind that at the first reading remains practically hidden behind the drifting stream of the lines. Horace starts the poem, in fact, with the stressing of the fatal irresponsibility or, as he puts it, responsibility of the Romans, — *suus* at the very beginning of the line is from the view-point of the word order in a stressed position! —, and he closes his historical survey also with the same idea, *viz.: impia perdemus devoti sanguinis aetas* (v. 9). However, following this, without any transition, with a bold changing over he starts the description of the city destroying activity of the *barbarus... victor... eques* (vv. 11–12), from which it becomes clear that the direct reason of the destruction of Rome will not be the civil wars, but some external attack made by the barbarians.⁷

But what is the reason for this extreme pessimism of Horace as regards the annihilating barbarian attack that is almost imminent according to his description? We could ask this, and not without any reason. Because the fact is that although the civil wars caused a lot of grievances to Italy herself and also to others, but first of all to the population living there, Rome during the decades of the civil wars — in a paradoxical way — not only did not suffer any serious foreign political loss, but exactly it was constantly expanding. If we take only the one and a half decades preceding the coming into existence of the poem, we find the following position: Gaul and Germania were brought by Caesar under Roman supremacy;

in Egypt people wanted to favour him with the head of Pompey; — the Egyptian revolt and its defeat have become a serious action more or less only in Caesar's dramatizing description —; a few years later Brutus and Cassius could plunder Greece and the western coast of Asia Minor almost without any resistance.⁸ The Hellenistic monarchies and kingdoms coming into a forced neighbourhood with the Roman Empire, or even under its domination have already long since learned to respect the strength of the Roman legions. There was hardly any among them who would have thought to take up fight against the expansion of Rome with an earnest chance, far from destroying the city itself. Thus, the concretization of the "*barbarus eques*" formulated by Horace in a general sense is far from being simple. On the basis of *A. Kissling's* commentary that has become classical — since at the time of the coming into existence of the poem hardly any other external enemy could come into question —, it has become usual to identify the victorious barbarian with the Parthians, "auf die auch *eques* hinzuweisen scheint: sie hatten 40/41 Syrien, Phönizien, Palästina und Cilicien erobert und drohten ganz Kleinasien Überzufluten: *dass sie ihre Angriffe noch weiter tragen würden, lag durchaus im Bereich der Möglichkeit.*"⁹ But was the Parthian war taking place in 40/41 really so dangerous for Rome that such an atmosphere of panic could arise in the centre of the empire, or have we rather to do with the hesitation of the commentator, who on account of the reason mentioned above could not resort to any other solution?

Parthia, separating from the monstrous empire of the Seleucids, in its institutions and mentality following the Achaimenids, and regarding itself as the legal successor of the former Persian Empire, but built up in many respects after the pattern of the Hellenistic monarchies, under the reign of Mithridates I (171 — 138 B. C.) had really developed into the most significant power of the East.¹⁰ About Mithridates I, who for the first time after the Achaimenid rulers took up again the title of "King of Kings", *Th. Mommsen* wrote in this connection with justification that: "Die Welt wieder hatte zwei Herren."¹¹ And although this empire was as multi-coloured and multinational as that of the Achaimenids had been earlier, and up to the end of the 2nd century was constantly forced to defensive fights partly against the Seleucids and partly against the barbarians attacking from the north, its existence was a fact with which Rome had to reckon, and, of course, the Parthians also had to reckon with the great power politics of Rome. Diplomatic relations between the two "great powers" were established in 92 that at the same time also means the beginning of the official Roman-Parthian relations. At this time Sulla, governor in Syria, was visited by Orobazus, envoy of Mithridates II, who offered him "alliance and friendship". The offer was accepted by Sulla and the Parthian king became the *σύμμαχος και φίλος* that is *socius et amicus* of the Roman people. By this the independent state life of Parthia was recognized by the Romans, and at the same time they also agreed that the two parties concerned shall regard the Euphrates as the border between them.¹²

This first meeting can even be regarded as symbolic from two points of view, *viz.* on the one hand because the Parthian king was the initiator, he offered the alliance, and on the other hand, because the factor appears already here which was in the strict sense of the word the "water-parting" of the Roman-Parthian relations, *viz.* the observation of the Euphrates as the border. The agreement brought about with Sulla, and renewed later on several times (in 69 and in 66), remained valid for several decades, and the two parties concerned mutually abstained from interfering in each other's internal affairs.¹³ The Parthian rulers — in contradiction to the picture drawn of them later on by Roman propaganda, branding them as traitors — stuck to the original convention as long as they could.¹⁴ In 88 they preserved strict neutrality in the war that broke out between the Romans and Mithridates Eupator VI, in spite of the fact that Mithridates II maintained friendly relations with the Pontian ruler.¹⁵ In 74, at the time of the third war against Mithridates, Lucullus could count on the neutrality of the Parthians, who in 73 turned down the request of Mithridates VI for help.¹⁶ In 70 Phraates III did not accept the offer of the Armenian king Tigranes and Mithridates VI towards the bringing about of an anti-Roman alliance. Instead of this he rather confirmed the earlier *amicitia* with Lucullus, who in return in 69 recognized again the Euphrates as the border.¹⁷ In 66 they acted towards Pompey as friendly as towards his earlier predecessor, Lucullus, moreover Phraates III, upon the encouragement of Pompey, rendered military help to Tigranes the Younger against his father, and provisionally a military alliance came about between Pompey and the Parthian ruler. It came again to the confirmation of the Roman-Parthian good relations, at this time to the renewal of the agreement of 69, although Phraates III, out of caution, even now did not press the further development of the "*amicitia*" into a "*foedus*".¹⁸ The relations, however, continued to remain friendly, and things did not come to a crisis between the two parties concerned even when Pompey by commanding his legions over the Euphrates on his part broke the agreement concluded by him not much earlier.¹⁹ After the departure of Pompey, the Parthians continued to see in Rome "*socius et amicus*". This is why Mithridates III pressed by Orodes in 57 could turn to Gabinius, propraetor of Syrian, for help.²⁰

The till then peaceful and at times even allied relations were upset by the ill-considered adventure of Crassus in 54. The war of Crassus also according to Cicero's judgement took place "*nulla belli causa*", and according to the Roman legal concepts it was also a *bellum iniustum et impium*.²¹ It is characteristic that the great king, Orodes, in fact, did not understand why the war broke out, and he sent delegates not only to Crassus referring to the earlier agreements, but also to Rome to the senate in order to clarify, whether they have to do with a private action of Crassus or with a military expedition approved by the senate.²² But — and this is again characteristic of the attitude of the Parthians — the Romans even after the battle of Charrai would have been granted free withdrawal under the condition that they would be willing to adhere to the earlier agreements.

The assumption cannot be proved at all that Crassus really was a victim of machination.²³ It is, however, true that the state of war between Rome and Parthia began with this, although this state of war was rather ambivalent. We should not attribute too great significance to the Parthian punitive expedition of 51. In fact, Bibulus, governor of Syria at that time, who maintained relations with the Parthian royal court, carried through the withdrawal of the attacking troops rather easily, with simple diplomatic manoeuvres.²⁴

The noncommittal attitude of the Parthians towards Rome becomes clear also from the events of the struggle of Caesar and Pompey, as well as of the war of the triumviri and the republicans. Pompey was prevented only by his death in 48 from asking the help of the Parthians against Caesar.²⁵ Caesar's not quite clear plans²⁶ in connection with the Parthians served rather for the cooling down of the internal tension, but — and from our standpoint this is most important — in 42 Cassius, whose most secure refuge was Syria, turned exactly to the Parthians, he saw in them his only, suitably strong potential allies. He sent Labienus the Younger to the court of Orodes to carry through for him the armed support of the Parthian king. Orodes, however, was afraid to comply with his request. Thus before the battle of Philippi the expected rendering of help did not come, and the hopes of Cassius were frustrated. Labienus — exploiting the internal contrasts of the court — could carry through only one year later that under the commandship of Pakoros, heir apparent of the throne, a Parthian army should cross the Euphrates and attack the eastern provinces of Rome.²⁷ However, this attack cannot be valued as a simple Parthian invasion. In reality its originator was the republican Labienus, and in the course of time the military force of anti-Roman attitude drawing the already mentioned provinces under its control was divided into two parts. Only one part consisted of Parthians, while the other part, under the commandship of Labienus, was recruited from the soldiers of the former legions of Cassius stationed in Syria, who had come over from Antonius. The two armies were coordinated with each other, but fundamentally they carried out independent operational activities.²⁸ That is the attack recorded as the "Parthian invasion" is much more to be regarded as one of the attempts of the republicans to regain power, instead of seeing in it one of the decisive manifestations of the Parthian ambitions for hegemony.

In the relation of epodus XVI all this has a double consequence. Horace, the republican "soldier" of 42, who at the time of the writing of the epodus belonged exactly to the camp of the disfavoured, of the tolerated, could hardly hold the attempt of Labienus for the weakening of the power of the triumviri so fatal from the view-point of Rome. But even if we presumed a sudden conversion about him, the half a century long history of the Roman-Parthian relations could not furnish any basis to him to gather from an eventual invasion affecting the frontier provinces of the empire Parthian world power intentions that would render questionable the existence of Rome itself. After all, towards Rome the Parthians are throughout characterized much more by a defensive than by an

aggressive attitude. Consequently, the assumption according to which at the writing down of the "*victor barbarus eques*" Horace could presumably think about the Parthian conquerors, can certainly be placed among the frequently persistently living scientific superstitions.²⁹

Thus, if Horace could not arrive at the formulation of the theorem to be found in the introductory part of the poem either under the influence of the political situation or by the generalization of the Roman historical events, then the origin of the basic idea of the epodus must be sought in another sphere.

The according to its serial number first but chronologically second letter of Sallust written to Caesar dates from the period directly following the battle of Tapsus (46), perhaps still from April of the same year.³⁰ The letter is made one of the most precious literary monuments of the forties not in the first place by its source value regarding the historical events, but by the fact that — just like Cicero's letters — beyond the history of the events it furnishes an insight into the atmosphere and disposition of the months following the battle of Tapsus. In the first chapters of the letter Sallust — in a somewhat scholastic style — gives advices to the ageing dictator as to what methods he should apply in the civil war against the opponents. He stresses the importance of the *clementia*, and then he changes over to the discussion of the manner of peace. He starts his argumentation on behalf of the necessity of the creation of peace with the following idea: "*De pace firmanda, quoniam tute et omnes tui agitatis, primum id, quaeso, considera, quale sit, de quo consultas. . . Ego sic existimo: quoniam orta omnia intereunt, qua tempestate urbi Romanae fatum excidii adventarit, civis cum civibus manus conserturos, ita defessos et exsanguis regi aut nationi praedae futuros, aliter non orbis terrarum neque cunctae gentes conglobatae movere aut contundere queunt hoc imperium.*" (Epist. 1.5, 1–3)

"In connection with the consolidation of peace, for which yourself and all your followers are working, first of all you should consider, please, of how great significance it is, what you have taken in your care. . . My opinion is: since everything that has come about will perish, at the time, when for the city of Rome the destruction ordered by destination has come, citizen will clash with citizen, and thus weakened and exhausted they will become a prey of some king or people. Otherwise the whole world and all the peoples gathering together will not be able to shake or crush this empire."

Thus, the first argument of Sallust can be summed up as follows: Caesar must create peace, because the restoration of internal quiet, the rendering the peace lasting are the fundamental condition of the preservation of Rome. The style and the composition are quite typical of Sallust,³¹ among other things also because he starts his argumentation with a statement of general validity, and starting out from this he expounds his say regarding the given situation. In this case, however, the gnomic starting and the continuation are not quite successful. In fact, the introductory argument: "*quoniam orta omnia intereunt*" and the concluding

sentence of the idea: "*aliter non orbis terrarum neque cunctae gentes conglobatae movere aut contundere queunt hoc imperium*" contain judgements excluding one another; because the destruction of Rome will come about either with the inexorableness of the natural law equally valid for all things that have come into being, and if this is so then nothing can be done against it; or it will come about under certain circumstances and under certain other circumstances it will not come about. But then the first argument is false. The part raising alternative possibilities contrasting to the introductory gnome, fits organically into the train of thoughts of the whole of the letter, and at the same time this shows an affinity also with the basic idea of epodus XVI. According to Sallust's letter, if the civil war will continue, Rome will perish, and in fact it will fall a prey to foreign conquerors. According to Horace already the second generation is perishing because of the civil war — that is referred to the Perusian war, internal strife flared up again —, thus the fate of Rome has been sealed, and its conqueror and destroyer, the barbarian horseman, will also appear soon. What is mentioned by Sallust as a possibility, that is registered by Horace — anticipating events — as an inevitable fact. Thus epodus XVI is nothing else than the desperate stating of the taking place of one — the worse — of the two possibilities formulated in Sallust's letter.

It has been attempted already by several researchers to solve the contradiction of the quoted Sallust passage, to define the genesis of the idea, however, without pointing to its organic relation to epodus XVI. Certain people hold it fundamentally optimistic, and even gather from it confidence in the future of Rome,³² while others regard it as deeply pessimistic, and see in it one of the most pregnant formulations of the general mood of decadence characteristic of the late republican period,³³ but — similarly to eclogue IV — they also tried to interpret it with the influence of the eastern, Jewish — Greek sibyllina,³⁴ and finally — what is its most accepted interpretation — they tried to derive it from antecedents of Greek philosophy of history, more precisely from the expositions of Polybius on philosophy of history.³⁵

It is true that the Roman writers of the late republican age, almost without exception, were filled with anxiety about the future of Rome. They held their own age the age of decadence, characterized by moral depravation and in general by the complete dissolution of the traditional Roman scale of values. Lucretius holds himself a child of the *fracta aetas*, in which even nature shows the sign of complete exhaustion, and this tendency is equally characteristic of the living beings and of the inanimate world (2, 1150 ff.). As a social person, as a man he feels that he lives as a *patriai tempore iniquo* (1,41), when his fellow-citizens, driven by craving for power and wealth, hire themselves out as "companions and helpers of sin" (*socios scelerum atque ministros*) (3, 61).³⁶ The judgement of Catullus on his age is also devastating, expressing hopelessness.³⁷ For Cicero the ideal, the golden age of the republic dreamt about by him is not meant by the present, but by the 2nd century, and also within that by

the period of the Scipios, and he is working for the resurrection and revival of the spirit of this century, at least in principle, in his dialogues relating to political science and ethics.³⁸ Sallust's analysis on the *inclinata res publica*, which *ex pulcherrima atque optima pessuma ac flagitiosissima facta sit*, is also generally known (Cat. 5.9). At the same time he is the first such Roman historian, who recognizes the decline of Roman society as a fact, and instead of extenuating the situation, he rather endeavours to discover the reason of the decline and to define the time of its beginning.³⁹ Thus, V. Pöschl is partly right when he says: "fast alle Römer, die sich mit dem Schicksal Roms befasst haben, unter dem Eindruck stehen, dass der Untergang Roms zumindest als Möglichkeit nahegerückt ist."⁴⁰ But this „Möglichkeit“ in the late republican age was formulated expressis verbis only in the two passages quoted by us and in a Cicero oration to be mentioned later, thus the demonstration with these leads to tautology. On the other hand, the decline is not yet identical with the complete destruction taking place with a rapid speed.

The work of Polybius in political science — perhaps just because under the conditions of the civil war it was felt by the Romans appropriate from many points of view — really did not remain without influence on Roman public mentality of the first half of the first century. This applies first of all not to his anacyclosis theory but rather to the exposition appearing as an appendix of it, referring back to it, and discussing what can be the reason of the destruction of a certain state.⁴¹ The philosopher of the Scipio circle, who was an eyewitness and a passive participant of the fall of his own country as an active politician, and who at the same time was also able to survey the crushing of the Hellenistic states from the intellectual height of a Greek cosmopolite, sums up his experiences with the somewhat resigned objectivity of the loosing party, who has definitively resigned to his being a looser, as follows: ὅτι μὲν οὖν πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσαν ὑπόκειται φθορὰ καὶ μεταβολή, σχεδὸν οὐ προσδεῖ λόγων. ἰκανὴ γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἀνάγκη παραστῆσαι τὴν τοιαύτην πίστιν. Διοῦν δὲ τρόπων ὄντων καθ' οὗς φθείρεσθαι πέφυκε πᾶν γένος πολιτείας, τοῦ μὲν ἐξόθεν, τοῦ δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς φρομένον. τὸ μὲν ἐκτὸς ἄστατον ἔχειν συμβαίνει τὴν θεωρίαν, τὰ δ' ἐξ αὐτῶν, τεταγμένην. τί μὲν δὴ πρότερον φύεται γένος πολιτείας καὶ τί δεύτερον, καὶ πῶς εἰς ἄλληλα μεταπίπτωσιν, εἰρηται πρόσθεν ἡμῖν. ὥστε τοὺς δυναμένους τὰς ἀρχὰς τῷ τέλει συνάπτειν τῆς ἐνεστώσης ὑποθέσεως, κἂν αὐτοὺς ἤδη προεπιπεῖν ὑπὲρ τοῦ μέλλοντος (6.57, 1–4). In the history of every state — he continues — three periods can be distinguished, viz.: the period of development, the period of flourishing and the period of decline. However, the ἀκμή according to the interpretation of Polybius is only a seeming golden age, because at the same time this also means the first phase of the regularly starting decline. In fact, after a state has acquired great power, the internal destructive forces immediately come into action, viz.: life becomes more and more luxurious, the citizens want greater and greater power. As this double process is advancing, the symptoms of crisis become more and more conspicuous. The evident decline starts with the excessive increase of craving for power (ἄρξει μὲν τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον μεταβολῆς ἢ

φιλαρχία), then this is followed by the becoming of the way of living more and more ostentatious and more and more luxurious (πρὸς δὲ τοῦτοις ἢ περὶ τοὺς βίους ἀλαζονεία καὶ πολυτελεία). Under the influence of this the masses become to feel deceived and they believe that they were deceived by those, who earlier had flattered them in order to acquire more and more power and wealth. The masses want a change at all costs, but at this time they do not only demand equal rights with those holding the power, but everything. And if this has taken place: τῶν μὲν ὀνομάτων τὸ κάλλιστον ἢ πολιτεία μεταλήφεται, τὴν ἑλευθερίαν καὶ δημοκρατίαν, τῶν δὲ πραγμάτων τὸ χείριστον, τὴν ὀχλοκρατίαν (6, 57, 4–10).

It is not difficult to discover the echo of the moralizing philosophy of history of Polybius in the almost indispensable topoi of the contemporary literature chastising the society of the first century Rome because of the *luxuria*, the *avaritia*, the *superbia*, the *ambitio mala*, the *honoris (caeca) cupido* (πολυτελεία, πλεονεξία, ἀλαζονεία, φιλαρχία).⁴² Moreover, with Sallust also the chronological order of the appearance of the symptoms of decline agrees with that of Polybius, viz.: *Sed primo magis ambitio quam avaritia animos hominum exercebat...* (Cat. 11, 1). However, the train of thoughts of the quoted passage of the Sallust letter and epodus XVI at least in two points differs basically from the lucubrations of the Greek philosopher. Polybius definitely separates the unforeseen, incalculable breakdown taking place on account of outer reasons and the decline starting as a result of internal reasons. The former cannot be foretold, because it is accidental, while the latter, because it is governed by definite rules, can be foretold. Sallust and Horace, however, establish a causality between the two.

Polybius does not speak about civil war, but only about the "rule of the mob", as democracy is called by him. At the same time Sallust and Horace speak distinctly about civil war.

Parallely with the expansion of Rome, but especially as from the seventies of the first century, those oracles, especially in the East, became more frequent that foretold the fall of Rome.⁴³ The oracle literature of the East having a great past and rich traditions became this way one of the significant means of the ideological fight against Rome. The monuments of this "intellectual resistance" accessible up to the present time have been preserved by the parts of the collection *Oracula Sibyllina* originating from a period before our era.⁴⁴ The oracles originating especially from Hellenistic Jews console their contemporaries seeing no real way out from subjugation with the future sinking of the proud Rome into servitude as a result of divine will. Time will come, they say, when:

ὄπποσα δασμοφόρον Ἄσις ἐποδέξατο Ῥώμῃ,
 χρήματά κεν τρεῖς δεδέξεται ἔμπαλιν Ἄσις
 ἐκ Ῥώμης, ὅλοῃν ἀποτίσεται ἔβρον ἐς αὐτήν.
 ὅσσοι δ' ἐξ Ἄσις Ἰταλῶν δόμον ἀμπεπόλευσαν,
 εἰκοσάκις τοσσοῦτοι ἐν Ἀσίδι θητεύουσιν
 Ἰταλοὶ ἐν πενήῃ, ἀνὰ μυρία δ' ὀφλήσουσιν. (3, 349–354.)

In one the passages of the collection even the idea akin to that of Horace appears, viz.: Rome will again be overcome by wild beasts, and the city will disappear from the surface of the world as it had never existed:

ἤξει σοί ποτ' ἄνωθεν ἴση, ὑπάρχενε Ῥώμη,
 οὐράνιος πληγή . . . (8, 37 – 38.)
 . . . καὶ πλοῦτος ὀλεῖται,
 καὶ τὰ θεμέλια λόκοι καὶ ἀλώπεκες οἰκήσουσιν,
 καὶ τότε ἔση πανέρημος ὄλως, ὡς μὴ γεγονυῖα. (8, 40 – 43.)

The knowledge of the oracle literature conceived in this mentality can be demonstrated in the imperial age and even by the end of the imperial age. It was known to Lactantius that according to certain oracles in due the power of Rome dominating the world will again pass to the East, and the West will be the slave of the East: *imperium in Asiam revertetur et rursus oriens dominabitur* (Div. inst. 7,13, 11). Tacitus indicates much more concretely than this, what we must understand by *oriens*. When Vespasian besieged Hierosolyma, according to the tradition the siege was accompanied by prodigies, and one of these was that the gods left the temple. However, this was not interpreted by the Jews as an evil, because their majority were convinced that according to the ancient priestly writings exactly at this time *fore, ut valesceret oriens et profecti Iudeae rerum potirentur* (Hist. 5,13; Suet. Vesp. 4). Thus, quite exactly Judea will be the establisher and lord of the new empire extending over the world. Iosephus Flavius also traced back the fanatic resistance of the Jews to the circumstance that there was an oracle according to which they are the reversioners of the domination of the world (Bell. Iud. 6, 5, 3).⁴⁵

Thus, the basic idea of the Sallust letter and epodus XVI cannot be derived from the Jewish-Greek Sibylla oracle either. These oracles, on the one hand, foretell with full surety the coming fall of Rome, and do not leave any alternative for her, and on the other hand, they explain her destruction – in accordance with the spirit of the Old Testament – with the divine will. In this case even the already mentioned agreement of the motives cannot be decisive. In fact, the complete depopulation of the city as a menace is a commonplace of oracle literature. Besides the Sibylla oracle (8,41 – 42), Bakis oracle (Aristoph. Av. 967 foll.) and the Jeremiah parallel (50,59)⁴⁶ let us mention here the similar passage of the so called Potter's oracle originating from the Hellenistic Egypt, viz.: ἢ τε παραθαλάσσιος πόλις ψυγμός ἀλιέων ἔσται διὰ | τὸ τὸν Ἀγαθὸν δαίμονα καὶ Κνήφιν εἰς Μέμφιν πεπορεύσθαι, ὥστε τινὰς διερχομένους . . . λέγειν . . . Otherwise, the Potter's oracle originates from the circles of the Egyptian priesthood anti-Greek at heart, it has nothing to do with the Jewish-Greek sibyllina.⁴⁷

Thus, none of the attempts made so far towards the interpretation of the passage of the Sallust letter has led to a convincing result. In spite of this – in our opinion – still those got nearest to the truth, who have

brought the idea found here as well as the basic idea of epodus XVI into connection with the contemporary oracle literature.⁴⁸ It is true that the introductory gnome of the passage of the letter — *orta omnia intereunt* — is such a commonplace of Greek philosophy of history that explicitly or implicitly can be found in the fragments of the pre-Socratic philosophers just as well⁴⁹ as, formulated as a natural law, in the writings on political science of Plato, Aristotle, or even Polybius,⁵⁰ however, apart from this one sentence, the Sallust quotation has an oracle character from the viewpoint of both the style and the content. This is indicated first of all by the formulation in future tense, *viz.: adventarit* (fut. perf.), *civis... manus conserturos, praedae futuros*; the obscurity as regards the indication of the external enemy (*regi aut nationi*); and it is also likely that the oracle epitomized by Sallust originally was written in Greek, in a metric form. In fact the adjectival indication of place *urbi Romanae* instead of the Latinistic *urbi Romae* is undoubtedly a Graecism (*πτόλι Ρωμική*) its use is alien to the Latin language, and in the oeuvre of Sallust, otherwise inclined to mannerisms, it occurs only here.⁵¹ And if we translate into Greek the phrase *fatum excidii* sounding slightly strange in Latin, or the phrase *qua tempestate adventarit* characteristic from another point of view, we get such expressions (*αἴσα ὀλέθρον, (- U U | - -)* and *ἀλλ' ὅπῳταν δὲ ἔκη ... (- U U | - U U | -)*) that can easily be fitted into the hexameter, and at the same time they belong among the recurrent locutions of the sibyllina.

The inference resulting from the stylistic marks seems to be confirmed also by the content. The eschatologic oracle literature of eastern origin holds the degeneration of the family relations one of the main criteria of the last times. This motive can be found in the Mahābhārata (3, 13 009 foll.), in the Bahman Yašt (2, 30), in Hesiod's Erga (182–185), later in the Prophecies of similar character of the gospels (thus for example Mark 13,12), in the sibyllina, and in the apocryphal writings, as a topos hardly showing any variations.⁵² This is used by Catullus — first in Rome — to characterize his own age arriving at the nadir of moral depravation:

*perfundere manus fraterno sanguine fratres,
desitit extinctos gnatus lugere parentes,
optavit genitor primaevi funera nati... (64, 399–401.)*

In the Roman conception, which held the "patricide", the "murder of a relative" and the "murder of a fellow-citizen" equally *parricidium*, the ethical norms characteristic of the family and the categories of social morals were closely intertwined already from the very beginning. Thus, the civil war is not a simple war, but according to the Roman view it is such a fight in which brothers are killing one another. (See the parable of Romulus and Remus in epodus VII!) Thus, the oracle occurring with Sallust in itself as regards its content is nothing else than one of the variants of the eschatologic prophecies, which applies one of the generally known topoi of this genre just fitting to the Roman society of the age to charac-

terize the conditions of the period marked as eschatos *from the view-point of Rome*.

Now the only question is to which layer of the first century oracle literature does the oracle appearing as the argument of Sallust belong? Besides the official Sibylla books being under the supervision of the corporation named *quindecimviri*, in Rome of the late imperial age the non-official *libri fatidici* sprang up like mushrooms. These borrowed partly from the Etruscan saeculum-theory, and partly were of eastern inspiration, and out of their oracles not only Marius, Catilina and Caesar, but also the triumviri, thus also M. Antonius, endeavoured to make political capital.⁵³ After the consolidation of the principate, these oracles were caused to be gathered by Augustus. He had them examined and burnt because of their being harmful to the *state reason*. Tradition has it that in 23 about two thousand such books became the prey of flames (Suet. Aug. 94.3).⁵⁴ It is not likely, however that the oracle to be read in Sallust would have been in any of the books doomed to destruction. In fact, this could offer almost automatically the possibility of an advantageous actualization for Augustus, for that Augustus, who in the enumeration of his deeds mentions with emphasis that he has stopped the civil wars (*postquam bella civilia extinxeram*, Mon. Anc. 34, c.), that is, who has realized what two decades earlier Sallust had set as an object before his dictator predecessor, by this deed — according to the oracle — he became the rescuer of the empire and the guarantor of its integrity. As a matter of fact, the Sallust oracle, just on account of its double-faced and alternative character, is not unambiguously pessimistic as to the future of Rome, but the eternal existence of the city can just as well gathered from it as its fatally rapid destruction. And this is the feature that renders possible the closer definition of its origin and its connections.

We know only one piece of the official Roman Sibylla collection through the good offices of Zosimus. Zosimus, analysing the reasons of the decline of the Roman Empire, quotes at a place (2, 6) the prescription regarding the arrangement of the centennial festivals, and he also expounds that according to tradition to what the origin of the ceremonies and games of the festivals can be traced back. According to this in the 502nd year after the foundation of the city (252.) Rome was afflicted by war and epidemic. The senate did not find a better solution than to try to find a remedy for the troubles with the help of the Sibylla books, and entrusted the corporation, at that time still consisting of ten members, to revise the oracles. According to the oracles they could only hope the cessation of the troubles, if in every hundred and tenth year they offer a sacrifice to Hades and Persephone under adequate circumstances. After they fulfilled the prescriptions in the year of the fourth consulship of Marcus Popilius, the troubles really came to an end. Later this festival was buried in oblivion, while at last it was revived by Augustus in 17 and it was again arranged by him under luxurious circumstances under the title "*Iudi saeculares*".⁵⁵ The sibyllinum referring to this quoted by Zosimus is closed by the following lines:

*Ταῦτά τοι ἐν φρεσὶ σῆσιν ἀεὶ μεμνημένος εἶναι,
καὶ σοὶ πᾶσα χθὼν Ἰταλὴ καὶ πᾶσα Λατίνων
αἰὲν ὑπὸ σκήπτροισιν ἐπαυχένιον ζυγὸν ἔξει. (35 – 37.)*

Then Zosimus continues his commentary as follows: "Thus, as the oracle says, and as it is also in reality, as long as all this was carried out in accordance with the prescriptions, the Roman Empire was intact, and practically the whole world known today was kept under its rule. But after Diocletian abdicated the imperial throne, and the festivals were neglected, slowly also the empire declined, and mostly almost unobserved became barbarous. . . . The hundred and ten years period elapsed under the time of the third consulship of Constantius and Licinius, when in accordance with the traditions the festival ought to have been arranged. However, since they did not adhere to the prescriptions, it was regular that things had to come into the deplorable state pressing us at present" (Zosimus, 2, 4–7.).⁵⁶

It is immaterial for us at present, whether the oracle – whose details otherwise can also be found in the fragments of Phlegon of Tralles (Macrob. 6) – was caused by Augustus to be faked into the Roman Sibylla collection.⁵⁷ If so, even then the faker had to prepare his fabrication on the basis of the original collection, in a spirit corresponding to it, and as it is betrayed by the mentioning of the Italicus question no longer timely in the period of Augustus, he utilized also earlier details to the composition. It is essential, however, that also this oracle, just like that of the Sallust letter, formulates facultatively, in alternatives, *viz.*: If the festivity will be arranged in every hundred and tenth year, the hegemony of Rome will remain uninjured, if, however, it will be neglected, Rome will decline and – quoting Zosimus – will become barbarous. Thus, in regard to the composition and also from the view-point that here we have also to do with the great power position of Rome, there is definitely an affinity between the two oracles.

The civil war as a problem of existence, of course, could not be a constituting element of that "original" sibyllum collection that presumably was brought to Rome still in the period of Tarquin Superbus, since at that time this motive and the view of empire still would not have any actuality. On the other hand, it is all the more imaginable that in the official collection of the forties already both motives played an important role, and this modification and change can comparatively easily be explained with the history of the Sibylla books. In the concluding phase of the civil war of Marius and Sulla, at the time of the fire in the Capitol in the year 83 presumably also the Sibylla books were annihilated. At this time the senate set up a separate committee and entrusted them with the tracing and collecting again of the original texts of the sibyllina. The members of the committee carried out their collecting work mainly in Erythrai, and brought along with them from there those oracle that thereafter were placed and preserved in the rebuilt Palatine Apollo temple.⁵⁸ The pieces of the new collection and the details of their compilation are not known, but a few self-evident things must be presumed about them, *viz.*:

- they could not be anti-Roman,
- in their style they had to adjust themselves to the original sibyllina,
- as regards their contents they could not be identical with the original (even if eventually there were overlappings among them), but they were refreshed in many respects, and were adjusted to the changed historical circumstances.

Very likely that oracle was also included among the official sibyllina, whose summary has been preserved in Sallust's letter, and with whose formulation its unknown author or authors fulfilled three expectations, *viz.*:

- making the civil war a question of vital importance of Rome, they touched the greatest problem of the Romans that occupied the intellectual élite of the age more and more intensively;
- exposing the problem in the style of eschatology, they succeeded to preserve the appearance of authenticity;
- with their alternative formulation, on the one hand, they remained true to the original Roman sibyllina, and on the other hand – positively from the view-point of Rome – they re-interpreted the oracles of the age foretelling the fall of Rome in a sense that for the case of the termination of the civil wars they promised eternal life to it.

At any rate, the idea that *the eternity of Rome is the function of internal order and quiet*, appears first in Roman literature only one decade after the coming of the new Sibylla books to Rome (73.), in Cícero's Rabirius oration (63. B. C.), *viz.*: "*si hanc civitatem aeternam esse vultis, si aeternum nobis imperium, . . . nobis . . . a turbulentis hominibus et rerum novarum cupidis, ab intestinis malis, a domesticis consiliis est cavendum*" (Pro Rab. 33.).⁵⁹ Thus, this official Roman sibyllium preserved in the Sallust letter could also be the source of the basic idea of epodus XVI.

Accepting this, on the one hand, the pessimism of the epodus seemingly appearing obscure becomes clearer and more intelligible, and on the other hand, its relationship with eclogue IV also becomes clearer and more intelligible. At the time of the outbreak of the Perusian war Horace projected the presumably definite final disaster of Rome referring to the official Sibylla books. After the conclusion of the peace of Brundisium, Vergil – similarly referring to oracles, however, not to Roman ones, but to eastern Jewish prophesies conceived in the spirit of messianistic expectations – foretold the arrival of the golden age peace of cosmic dimensions, the realization of everything that Horace believed to be attainable only in the utopistic Island of the Blessed. This way epodus XVI and eclogue IV are the first *aemulatio* between the two future leading personalities of the golden age literature, whose friendly competition according to these had started still before they got into personal contact with one another.

¹ K. Wütte: PhW 41 (1921) 1095--1103; *idem*: PhW 43 (1923) 1075--1082; J. Kroll: Hermes 57 (1922) 600--612; A. Kurfess: PhW 45 (1925) 604--606; *idem*: PhW 55 (1935) 331--336; *idem*: PhW 56 (1936) 411--422; 509--511; *idem*: PhW 59 (1939) 701--702; *idem*: Philologus 91 (1936) 412--422; G. Camelli: Athen 8 (1930) 77--87; G. Funaioli: Mélanges à J. Marouzeau. Paris 1948. 183--188; B. Snell: Hermes 73 (1938) 237--242; W. Wimmel: Hermes 81 (1953) 317--344; B. Axelson: FS Enk. Leiden 1955. 45--52; C. Becker: Hermes 83 (1955) 341--349; *idem*: Gnomon 31 (1959) 596. (Ed. Fraenkel: Horace. Oxford 1957. His remarks on this monograph); W. Schmidt: Philologus 107 (1958) 93--102; the bibliography of the special literature on epodus XVI not quoted here from E. Burck, see A. Kiessling -- R. Heinze: Q. Horatius Flaccus Oden und Epoden. Dublin -- Zürich 1966¹². 646--647; see also H. C. Gotoff: Philologus 111 (1967) 66--79.

² T. Zielinski: Horace et la société romaine du temps d'Auguste. Paris 1938. 26, for example presumed that Horace thought about the exodus earnestly.

³ Perhaps under the influence of the Neopythagoreism in the 1st century there were such people who held the existence of the Island of the Blessed a reality, viz.: Sallustius: Hist. I. fr. 100, f--g, and also Plutarchos: Sertorius 8. On the attempts of Sertorius. (Plutarchos used Sallust as a source.) Although just this attempt could prove the irrationality of the assumptions of this kind. The data in detail see: A. Schulten: Sertorius. Leipzig 1926. 168.; K. Kerényi: Horatius noster. Budapest 1943³. 11. To the survival of the conception under medieval, very likely Celtic, influence: G. Schreiber: FS. Dornseiff 1953. 274--290.

⁴ I. Borzsák: Horatius: Ódák és epódosok (Horace: Odes and Epodi). Budapest 1975. 566.

⁵ H. Hierche: Les épodes d'Horace. Collection Latomus 136. 1974. 19--55; D. Ableitinger-Grünberger: Studien zur 16. Epode des Horaz, Diss. Graz; and *idem*: Der junge Horaz und die Politik. Heidelberg 1971. The latter two works have not been accessible for me.

⁶ An exception: F. Skutsch: Neue Jahrb. 11 (1909) 25--35.

⁷ G. Perl: Die Krise der römischen Republic im Urteil des Sallust. Acta Conventus XI Eirene. Warsaw 1971. 95--115.

⁸ H. Botermann: Die Soldaten und die römische Politik in der Zeit von Caesars Tod bis zur Begründung des zweiten Triumvirats. Zetemata 46 (1968) esp. 84--107.

⁹ A. Kiessling -- R. Heinze: *op. cit.* 549; for its symbolic interpretation see I. Borzsák: *op. cit.* 568.

¹⁰ For the development and becoming a great power of the Parthian Empire see W. W. Tarn -- G. T. Griffith: Hellenistic Civilization. London--New York 1952³. 125 ff.; to the early chronology see J. Wolski: The Decay of the Iranian Empire of the Seleucids and the Chronology of the Parthian Beginnings. Berytus 12 (1956--1957) 35--52; *idem*: Historia 8 (1959) 222--238.

¹¹ Th. Mommsen: Römische Geschichte. II. Berlin 1854. 62.

¹² Plutarchos: Sulla 5,4: πάροθος συμμαχίας και φιλίας δεομένων; Livius: Epitom. 70: Parthorum legati. . . venerunt ad Sullam, ut amicitiam populi Romani peterent. . .; Festus: 12, 5: Arsaces, rex Parthorum missa legatione amicitias populi Romani rogavit ac meruit.

¹³ J. Dobias: Archiv Orientalní 3 (1931) 215--256 (the same in Latin: De antiquissimo Romanorum cum Parthis commercio et de Syriae occupatione. Acta II. congressus phil. class. slav. Praha 1931. 76--89); K. H. Ziegler: Die Beziehung zwischen Rom und dem Parthreich. Wiesbaden 1964. esp. 20--44.

¹⁴ The Arsakids were followers of mazdaism, and the Iranian religion since Zarathustra was strongly imbued with the idea of right and truth. O. G. Wesendonk: Das Weltbild der Iranier. München 1933. 68, 93 foll., 125; on the meaning of the word „mithra” with Zarathustra (Mithridates) see O. G. von Wesendonk: *op. cit.* 224 and F. Cumont: Die orientalischen Religionen im römischen Heidentum. Leipzig -- Berlin 1931³. 142.

¹⁵ Appianus, from whom the only coherent elaboration of this war has been preserved to us, calls the Parthian king the φίλος of Mithridates VI (Mithr. 16).

¹⁶ Memnon = F. Jacoby: FGHR Nr. 434. Fragm. 29,6.

¹⁷ Appianus: Mithr. 87; Dio Cassius: 36, 3, 1; Memnon = F. Jacoby: FGHR Nr. 434, Fragm. 38,8; for the liability of Memnon see H. Last: CAH 9 (1932) 890.

¹⁸ M. Gelzer: Pompeius. Wiesbaden 1959². 80 ff.

¹⁹ Dio Cassius: 37, 5,5; in detail see N. C. Debevoise: A Political History of Parthia. Chicago 1938. 74 foll.

²⁰ M. Gelzer: Crassus. PWRE XIII/1 Stuttgart 1926. 320. c.

²¹ De finibus 4, 22; *G. Wissowa*: Religion und Kultus der Römer. München 1912². 550, note 4.

²² Dio Cassius: 40, 16, 1: ὁ Ὁρόδης ἐπεμψε . . . πρέσβεις τῆς δὲ ἐσβολῆς αἰτιώμενος καὶ τὰς αἰτίας τοῦ πολέμου πυνθανόμενος. Plutarchos: Crassus, 18, 1.

²³ *N. C. Debevoise*: *op. cit.* 90 foll. For the influence on Roman internal politics see *D. Timpe*: MH 19 (1962) 104–129.

²⁴ *W. Schur*: Parterreich. PWRE XVIII/4 Stuttgart 1949. 1993. c.

²⁵ Dio Casius: 41, 55, 3 foll.

²⁶ *Ed. Meyer*: Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompejus. Stuttgart 1922³. 474 foll. and *M. Gelzer*: Caesar. Wiesbaden 1960⁶. 298 foll.

²⁷ *W. Schur*: PWRE XVIII/4. Stuttgart 1949. 1994. c.

²⁸ *H. Buchheim*: Die Orientpolitik des Triumvirn M. Antonius. AHAW 3 (1960) 75 foll.

²⁹ For the subsequent exaggeration of the Parthian danger see *H. D. Meyer*: Die Außenpolitik des Augustus und die augusteische Dichtung. Kölner Hist. Abh. 5 (1964).

³⁰ *K. Vretska*: Sallust. Invektive und Episteln I. Heidelberg 1961. 77–80. Earlier literature to the discussion on the authenticity of the letters there; *A. L. Penna*: Sallustio e la rivoluzione romana. Milano 1968. 111: he again denies the authenticity of the letters, but his argumentation is not convincing.

³¹ *K. Vretska*: Sallust. Invektive und Episteln II. Heidelberg 1961. 216 foll. On the style of the letters see also *K. Thraede*: Mnem. 31 (1978) 179–195.

³² *A. Ferrabino*: Nuova storia di Roma. Roma 1949³. 358.

³³ *V. Pöschl*: Grundwerte der römischen Staatsgesinnung in den Geschichtswerken des Sallust. Berlin 1940. 22.

³⁴ *H. Fuchs*: Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der spätrepublikanischen Zeit. Berlin 1938. 8 foll., 31, 35, 37.

³⁵ *S. Mazzarino*: La fine du monde antique. (?) 22–23.

³⁶ *F. Klünger*: Philosophie und Dichtkunst an Ende des 2. Buches des Lucrez. in: Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur. Zürich 1964. 125–156.

³⁷ *F. Klünger*: Catulls Peleus-Epos, *op. cit.* 157–225.

³⁸ *H. A. K. Hunt*: The Humanism of Cicero. Melbourne 1954. *L. Perelli*: Il pensiero politico die Cicerone. Turin 1964.

³⁹ The beginning of the decline is dated by the later Roman historians to a much earlier time; Velleius Paterculus – Following Poseidonius – dated it to 146, Calpurnius Piso to 154, and Livy to 188. *S. Mazzarino*: *op. cit.* 22.

⁴⁰ *V. Pöschl*: *op. cit.* 40.

⁴¹ To the relation of the two theories see *F. W. Walbank*: A Historical Commentary on Polybius I. (Comm. on Books I–VI). Oxford 1957. 645 foll.

⁴² *H. Oltramare*: Les origines de la diatribe romaine. Lausanne 1926.

⁴³ *W. Weber*: Der Prophet und sein Gott. Leipzig 1925. 59; *A. Kurfess*: Philologus 95 (1943) 316 foll.

⁴⁴ For the separation of the parts originating from a time B. C. see *J. Geffken*: Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibylliana. Leipzig 1902; *A. Peretti*: La Sibilla Babilonese nella propaganda ellenistica. Firenze 1943; *A. Kurfess*: Sibyllinische Weissagungen. Berlin 1951. 5–23.

⁴⁵ *H. Fuchs*: *op. cit.* 35 foll., 63 foll.; *A. Kurfess*: Sibyllinische Weissagungen. 294.

⁴⁶ *A. Kiessling*–*R. Heinze*: *op. cit.* 549; *I. Borzsák*: *op. cit.* 568. To the Bakis oracle see *I. Trencsényi Waldapfel*: Die Weissagungen des Bakis. in: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte. Budapest 1966. 232–250.

⁴⁷ *R. Reitzenstein*–*H. H. Schaefer*: Studien zum antiken Synkretismus. Berlin 1926. 40; *L. Koenen*: ZPF 2 (1968) 178 ff. *Idem*: ZPF 13 (1974) 313 ff.

⁴⁸ *H. Fuchs*: *op. cit.* 9 and 37.

⁴⁹ *W. Nestle*: Vom Mythos zum Logos. Stuttgart 1940. 96.

⁵⁰ A detailed enumeration of the authors see *K. Vretska*: *op. cit.* II. 218–220.

⁵¹ *K. Vretska*: His Livy parallel (Scipio's speech), quoted from the dissertation of *G. Dietz* in manuscript, is not authentic from the view-point of Sallust, not to mention that to Scipio's speech very likely Polybius served as a pattern. See *H. Tränkle*: Livius und Polybius. Basel 1976. 254.

⁵² *B. Gatz*: Weltalter, goldene Zeit und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen, Spudamata, 16. Hildesheim 1967. 21–23.

⁵³ *A. Kurfess*: PhW 55 (1935) 331–336, and esp. 334. *M. J. Wolf*: Arch. f. Kultur-
24 (1934) 316.

⁵⁴ Suetonius (Aug. 31) dates the event to 12; *E. Norden*: Die Geburt des Kindes.
Darmstadt 1958³. 154 also gives the same date; *G. Radke*: Gymn. 66 (1959) 2188 dates it to
an earlier time.

⁵⁵ For the chronological problems connected with the festival see *I. Hahn*: *Róma
istenei* (The Gods of Rome). Budapest 1975. 129–137 and 231–232.

⁵⁶ *I. Hahn*: *op. cit.* 137.

⁶⁷ *F. Paschoud*: Zosime Histoire nouvelle I. (1–2). Paris 1971. 78 and 188–191.

⁵⁸ *A. Kurfess*: PhW 55 (1935) 3331–336; *G. Radke*: *op. cit.* 216 foll.

⁵⁹ *W. Kroll*: Die Kultur der ciceronischen Zeit. Darmstadt 1963. 7.