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INTRODUCTION
to our jubilee volumes 50 (2018) and 51 (2019)

Sometime in 1968, a group of Dutch scholars (among them *inter alios* J.G.P. Best, M.F. Jongkees-Vos, and H.W. Pleket) felt the need to found a society with as its aims to study ancient cultures situated around the Mediterranean as well as Roman provincial societies through bringing about a synthesis of archaeological and historical evidence. The society these scholars founded was the Nederlands Archeologisch-Historisch Genootschap ("Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society"). One of the means to further their goal (apart from a series of monographs published under the denominator '*Publications of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society*') was to establish a journal, *TAΛANTA-Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society*, seeking to publish papers related to the main purposes of the Society, preferably written from a multidisciplinary approach of the subject. Papers did not (nor do) necessarily need to follow the beaten track, but do have to provide ample evidence making clear how the author(s) justify his/her/their conclusions. Working in this fashion, a discussion can be started – which in its turn might lead to new insights.

The very first volume of *TAΛANTA*, introduced by H.T. Wallinga, the Society's first president, saw the light of day in 1969 and counted 61 pages. In its early days, *TAΛANTA* was printed at and distributed by commercial publishers like first Wolters and later, e.g., Gieben and Brill's, but from 1986 onwards the then board of the Society decided to publish *TAΛANTA* on its own account (the first of that series being volumes XVI-XVII (1984-1985), a practice followed to this day. The goal of the journal was somewhat widened as well and now it is stated on the Society's website that "the journal focuses on the study of the Ancient world in its widest sense, including Classical and Near Eastern philology, art history and the archaeology and ancient history of the Mediterranean world and the Near East". Moreover, as integral parts of some volumes of *TAΛANTA*, "The *Supplementum ponticum* and the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Mediterraneum* offer a range of studies in the archaeology and history of the Black Sea region and the various languages of the Ancient Mediterranean". Nowadays, the Monograph series *Publications of the Henri Frankfort Foundation*, initiated by Jan Best, is also the editorial responsibility of our Society of which the recent volumes are published on line on the Talanta website.

Today, we celebrate the publication of *TAΛANTA* volumes L and LI, together counting well over 450 pages. As always, the editors hope they have assembled an interesting mixture of papers for these volumes.

As announced before (e.g. online), volume L is linked, one way or another, with one of the most controversial modern scholars in the field of Ancient Near Eastern studies, sc. James Mellaart, once celebrated as the excavator of Çatal Höyük in Central Turkey. The first paper, by Eberhard Zangger and Fred Woudhuizen, in which Mellaart features prominently, was already published on line (December 9, 2017), there combined with a direct invitation to react (simultaneously, several colleagues were invited to do so via direct contact or through electronic mail). A number of colleagues took the opportunity to do so, like Michael Bányai, Diether Schürr and Vladimir Stissi, who present their views in this volume. Further research by Eberhard Zangger, makes clear to which extraordinary lengths James Mellaart went to convey his views to the public. Nevertheless, as it appears, Beyköy 2 (the Luwian-hieroglyphic text that Zangger and Woudhuizen first published) in itself has escaped the fate of so much of the other material published (or perhaps even fabricated) by Mellaart, even though much of the 'noise' surrounding Beyköy 2 might rouse (serious) scepticism. In a further paper, Zangger and Woudhuizen make clear why *they* (differing from, e.g., Stissi) believe Mellaart did not fabricate, alter, or tamper with this specific text. As things stand, the editors believe the new information provided in the latter paper may as yet convince colleagues to react in a forthcoming volume.

In volume LI the focus is – once again – on the date of the Trojan War in a paper by Giannakos, on the Battle of Marathon in a lengthy contribution in the second and concluding part of Stronk's 'From Sardis to Marathon', on the figure of the Emperor Augustus in the work of Macrobius, an article by Pieper, and – last but not least – on Palmyra on the Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean by Burgersdijk.

The current editors hope that – like in previous volumes of *TAΛANTA* – one, several, or even all papers brought together in these volumes will somehow find its/their way to an interested audience. As regards the semi centenarian *TAΛANTA* itself: for now, we only can express our hopes: *vivat, crescat, floreat*.

Jan P. Stronk
Maarten D. de Weerd

CONTENTS

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ORDERLY WIT: SPECIMENS OF AUGUSTAN DISCOURSE IN MACROBIUS' *SATURNALIA*, BOOKS 1 AND 2

Christoph Pieper

In the Saturnalia, Macrobius twice refers to Augustus in a discussion of order. In the first two books, controlling time, i.e., the organization of temporal structures into an overarching ordo*, is an important theme. Augustus is noteworthy in having successfully managed temporal transition, and by means of his jokes, he serves as an example of a member of the upper classes searching for order through wit and learnedness in dramatically changing times*[1].

1. Introduction

Macrobius' *Saturnalia* is known today mostly because it celebrates the major exponent of Augustan literature, Virgil[2]. Famously, Macrobius labels the *Aeneid* a *sacrum poema* (Macr. *Sat*. 1.24.13)[3] and attributes to its poet a religious aura, a kind of priesthood of learnedness (*noster pontifex maximus*, 1.24.16). But whereas the major agent of Augustan literature is omnipresent in the work, Augustus as a person does not seem to play a major role in the dialogue – with

[1] The article had its initial nucleus in a paper I gave at the conference *XIV A.D. SAECVLVM AVGVSTVM* in Lisbon in September 2014. Afterwards, it has been presented at a meeting of the group 'Hellenistic and Imperial Literature' of *OIKOS*, the Dutch National Research School in Classics, in June 2015 in Leiden. I thank both audiences for their helpful responses. Special words of thanks are due to Bert van den Berg for his help with the Neo-Platonic and Stoic philosophy of time and order, to Jürgen Zangenberg for indicating the Orosius-passage to me, to Yasmina Benferhat for having sent me her then-unpublished paper on *patientia* in Latin literature, to Diederik Burgersdijk for sharing his unpublished article on the image of Augustus in the fourth century with me, and to Andrea Balbo, Katarina Petrovićová and Gregor Vogt-Spira for having sent me offprints of their articles. Finally, I am grateful to Laura Napran for correcting my English, and for the anonymous peer reviewers' thoughtful and stimulating criticism and suggestions. Research for this article has partly been made possible by a VIDI grant of the *Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research* (NWO), funding no. 276-30-013.

[2] Good and recent overviews on Macrobius are the introduction in the recent Loeb edition by Kaster 2011, vol. 1, xi-liii; Cameron 2011, 231-272; Brugisser 2010.

[3] Cf. Sinclair 1982. On Virgil in late antiquity, see also the excellent overview in the volume by Rees 2004. Cf. Vogt-Spira 2012 for a fascinating interpretation of Virgil in the *Saturnalia* as a "Paradigma eines dichtungstheoretischen Entwurfs auf neuplatonischer Grundlage" (174).

one exception, which is the second book[4]. Here, after a decent dinner the interlocutors fill the remaining hours of the evening with what they call *litterata laetitia*, 'learned delight' (2.1.9): alternately, they tell jokes and other *dicta* of famous persons of the past, thus exhibiting both their taste and their memory (2.1.15; 2.8.1). In the following, I will read this part of the dialogue as being closely connected to the first book, which (after a *praefatio* and a description of the setting of the scene) mainly contains a discussion on theology and cult. I will propose that an important topic of both books, namely the order of the cosmos and the corresponding order of civilized human behaviour, unites the two and connects them to Rome's first emperor[5].

In my title, I have rendered the term *litterata laetitia* freely as 'orderly wit', a translation deserving further clarification[6]. In Stoic thought, *laetitia* (ἡδονή in Greek) as one of the four *perturbationes animi* was obviously connected *ex negativo* to the theme of order, in that a *perturbatio* (πάθη) causes disorder in a human's mind. Cicero, in the fourth book of the *Tusculan disputations*, defines it with reference to Zeno as *aversa a recta ratione contra naturam animi commotio* ('an agitation that is alienated from good reason and against the nature of the soul', *Tusc*. 4.11)[7]. As one of the four disorders, *laetitia* is closely connected to *libido* and is defined as 'excessive happiness about something which one has longed for' (*ibid*., 4.12). While this seems to connect *laetitia* with purely negative associations, Cicero also makes an important distinction – because human nature is inclined to seek what it considers good, such a longing cannot be fully opposed to the *natura animi*. Therefore it is not bad *per se*, but acceptable as long as this longing manifests itself 'in an equable and wise way' (*constanter prudenterque*). When it comes to *laetitia*, Cicero makes a distinction between an acceptable, self-constrained *laetitia* which he labels as *gaudium*, and a reproachable *laetitia gestiens vel nimia* ('exuberant and excessive delight', *ibid*., 4.13). Cicero's treatment of the *perturbationes* exercised a considerable influence on late antique thought, as has been shown with respect to Augustine and Jerome[8], so it is fairly certain that Macrobius must also have been familiar with it. But, while the Ciceronian concept was mostly kept intact, Cicero's terminology was variably used

[4] I refer to the books as we find them in modern editions, a convention that arose in the Renaissance, cf. Dorfbauer 2010 who presumes (in my opinion, convincingly) an original form in six books – as the conversation lasts three days, he reconstructs a structure of two books per day: the books with odd numbers were dedicated to serious talks, the books with even numbers to lighter conversation in the evening.

[5] Kaster 1980 is an important study on the significance of social *ordo* in the *Saturnalia* which he connects both to an idealization of moral and aesthetic integrity ("knowledge follows taste", 258) and to a culture of unconditioned obedience (262).

[6] I am grateful to an anonymous peer reviewer for having reminded me of this aspect and for having drawn my attention to Trettel's very recent monograph.

[7] All translations throughout the article are my own, but partly inspired by the terminology available in the Loeb-translations.

[8] Cf. Canellis 2000 (on Jerome) and Trettel 2018, 52-53 (on Augustine).

by these later sources[9]. Accordingly, as I will argue below, the *laetitia litterata*, which is explicitly introduced by Symmachus as a substitute of a too frivolous *voluptas*[10], corresponds to the philosophically acceptable *gaudium* of Cicero's *Tusculan disputations*, adding to it the concept of learned wit as a further guarantee of preserving the social order.

As a second preliminary reflection, it may be useful to recall the importance of temporal and narrative order in the work as a whole. The *Saturnalia* is a dialogue in a Platonic and (even more so) Ciceronian tradition[11]. The most obvious link between Macrobius and his Ciceronian models such as *De oratore* or *De re publica* is the fact that the dramatic date predates the moment of composition by several decades[12]. Macrobius composed his text in the 430s[13], but the conversation itself takes place during the Saturnalia feast of A.D. 384 (according to Cameron in 1966) or 382 (Cameron's new dating in his *The Last Pagans of Rome*)[14] in the house of the reputable Roman senator Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. This setting stresses that the work is meant to sensitize the reader to the gap between the past and present. Another aspect of temporal order is the *Saturnalia*'s clear division into three days during which the interlocutors engage in their discussions. Macrobius highlights the temporal structure by defining two different sorts of topics that are treated: during the day, the interlocutors engage in serious business and deal with philosophical and philological questions, whereas the dinner talks are dedicated to lighter themes[15]. The philosophical treatment of time in book 1 is part of daylight conversation; the jokes of book 2 belong instead to the relaxation of the evening.

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[9] Trettel 2018, 53 quotes August. *C.D* 14.6 where Augustine uses the terms *cupiditas* and *laetitia* instead of *libido* and *laetitia* and asks (conceptually very Ciceronian): 'what else are *cupiditas* and *laetitia*, if not a wish (*voluntas*) in harmony of those things we want?' (*quid est cupiditas et laetitia nisi voluntas in eorum consensione quae volumus?*) – on *voluntas*, cf. Cic. *Tusc*. 4.12 (*voluntas est, quae quid cum ratione desiderat*, 'it is *voluntas* when one desires something with rationality').

[10] Praetextatus is unhappy with the behaviour of his guests at the dinner table as 'his house is not used too such playful *voluptates*' (*ludicras voluptates nec suis Penatibus adsuetas*, Macr. *Sat*. 2.1.7); Symmachus therefore comes up with the *alacritas lascivia carens*, 'a joy free from licentiousness' (2.1.8).

[11] Cf. Flamant 1968, Cameron 2011, 252-254. Labarrière 2011, 503 notes that Macrobius in his commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* wanted to turn Cicero into a Greek philosopher "*quasi égal de Platon* relu à la lumière des leçons de Porphyre" (my emphasis).

[12] De Paolis 1987 interprets this fact as idealization of a bygone era.

[13] Cf. Cameron 1966, 37; Schmidt 2008; *contra* Doepp 1978, who proposes the year 402 for the completion of the *Saturnalia*.

[14] Cameron 1966, 29 vs. Cameron 2011, 243.

[15] Cf. Macr. *Sat*. 1.1.2: *nam per omne spatium feriarum meliorem diei partem seriis disputationibus occupantes cenae tempore sermones conviviales agitant, ita ut nullum diei tempus docte aliquid vel lepide proferendi vacuum relinquatur.* ('For during the entire period of the festival they filled the better part of the day with serious discussions and engaged in convivial talks when it was time for dinner, so that no moment of the day was left void of learned or graceful utterings').

The literary setting of the *Saturnalia* reflects the ordering hand of a narrator as well, who is seemingly invisible (the secondary narrator Postumianus is the speaker from Macr. *Sat*. 1.2.9 onwards), but in reality acts as a master of narrative *ordo*[16]. The main text of the *Saturnalia* is a narration within multiple and rather complex frames which consist, as Elaine Fantham has observed, of the 'admixture of written notes and oral memory'[17]. In fact, Postumianus' narrative is an embedded narration of the second degree. After the author Macrobius' introduction of the scene (Macr. *Sat*. 1.1), the first embedded narrative is that of Macr. *Sat*. 1.2.1-8 in which the primary narrator Macrobius relates how Decius and Postumianus meet and talk with each other (the passage consists only of dialogue in *oratio recta*; the primary narrator utters not a single word even though his presence is felt). This prepares the gliding transition from the primary narrator to the secondary narrator Postumianus.

Order is perhaps one of the most characteristic features of Macrobius' text[18]. Instead of organizing the richness of his material according to no recognizable principle as Gellius had done before him[19], Macrobius underlines in his preface that he has ordered the diversity of themes, authors, and epochs into one coherent textual body in order to facilitate their commemoration (Macr. *Sat. pr*. 3). The same interest in *ordo* returns at the beginning of the narration that precedes the actual dialogue, where Decius praises Postumianus' perfect memory and his ability to retell everything that he experienced in a well-ordered way (1.2.2.): *aliis vero nuper interfui admirantibus memoriae tuae vires universa quae tunc dicta sunt per ordinem saepe referentis*. ('Recently, I was with other people who admired the power of your memory which often repeated everything that was said on this occasion in the right order')[20].

Within the first two books of the *Saturnalia* the topic of controlling time, i.e., the organization of temporal structures into an overarching *ordo*, is important. It might even be defined as one of the macro-themes which Jason König has identified as typical for Macobius' text[21]. As I will show, the theme of controlling time can be observed on multiple levels: Praetextatus as the master of ceremonies

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[16] Cf. Goldlust 2010, 78.

[17] Cf. Fantham 2013, 284; Goldlust 2008, 160.

[18] The reason explicitly given in the preface is that order helps mnemonics, cf. *inter alios* Petrovićová 2007.

[19] In Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* the seemingly unordered sequence of unconnected themes is the most obvious structural principle (Goldlust 2013, 379 calls Gellius' poetics "latente mais bien réelle"). For intertextual links between the prefaces of Gellius and Macrobius, see Gunderson 2009, 259-264 (and 257 on the aptness of the term 'intertextuality').

[20] See also Macr. *Sat*. 1.2.2 (Decius praises Postumianus' memory which can report everything which has been said *per ordinem*).

[21] König 2012, 203-207 has shown that within Macrobius' work, frames that hint at greater themes are important.

controls the time of the discussion, Macrobius the invisible narrator (and author) controls the chronological order of the narrative and thus of the material he wants to treat, and order also appears as a topic discussed in the text itself. In the following I will focus on two passages in which Macrobius connects the theme to Augustus, the founder of Rome's Empire, who through his patronage also rendered possible the *Aeneid*, Virgil's *sacrum poema*, which will occupy such a prominent place in the later books. Augustus, as the narrator Macrobius, could be defined as an indispensable, yet largely invisible element of the *Saturnalia*.

2. Augustus and temporal order in book 1

In book 1, Praetextatus explains the origins of the *Saturnalia* and the worship of Saturnus and several other deities. The topic is a fitting context for a reference to *ordo*, as Fritz Graf has explained: "An den Saturnalia wird in verschiedenen Formen die Auflösung und Rückkehr zur Ordnung ausgespielt"[22]. Toward the end of his illustration, Praetextatus explicitly and implicitly links the festival, which the interlocutors are just about to celebrate, with Augustan achievements in returning order to a tumultuous Roman society. Implicitly, he does so by narrating how harmoniously Saturnus and Janus ruled together in Italy and thus were able to enlarge their territory[23]. The two deities evoked by Praetextatus can very easily be connected to Augustan discourse in which the closing of the temple of Janus was celebrated as a symbol of general peace in the Empire, whereas the reign of Saturnus represented the *aurea aetas*, and the theme of concord and order instead of civil tumult was also frequently evoked[24].

The explicit reference to Augustus comes slightly later. Macrobius reminds the readers of the fact that Augustus' interference in the calendar changed the date of the *Saturnalia* as well (1.10.23):

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[22] Graf 1992, 17. Obviously, Macrobius was more interested in the ordering part of the festival and left the aspect of dissolving order more or less aside, cf. Frateantonio 2007, 368: there is no laughing, dancing, abundant eating, or slaves that behave as masters, as one could expect to have happened at a regular *Saturnalia* party.

[23] Cf. Macr. *Sat*. 1.7.23: *hos una concordesque regnasse vicinaque oppida communi opera condidisse* ('they ruled together and founded the neighbouring towns with shared labor'). Note the very effective triple alliteration of the prefix *con-* in the sentence, which enforces the idea of concord. Shortly afterwards, the reader is reminded that wars have to pause during the *Saturnalia* (*bellum Saturnalibus sumere nefas habitum*, 'it is considered a transgression of the law to begin war during the Saturnalia', 1.10.1).

[24] Horace's last ode 4.15, for example, praises Augustus' *aetas* for closing the temple of Janus, bringing back order, and resurrecting the *artes* (which – in the figure of Virgil – will occupy the second and third day of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*): *[tua, Caesar, aetas] …et vacuum duellis // Ianum Quirini clausit et ordinem / rectum evaganti frena licentiae / iniecit emovitque culpas / et veteres revocavit artes …* ('[Your epoch, Caesar Augustus], has closed the temple of Ianus Quirini, which is now void of war, has restrained licentiousness, which no longer respected the right order, has removed crime and recalled the old arts…', Hor. *Carm*. 4.15.4, 8-12).

Abunde iam probasse nos aestimo Saturnalia uno tantum die, id est quarto decimo Kalendas, solita celebrari, sed post in triduum propagata, primum ex adiectis a Caesare huic mensi diebus, deinde ex edicto Augusti quo trium dierum ferias Saturnalibus addixit, a sexto decimo igitur coepta in quartum decimum desinunt.

'I have proven clearly enough, I think, that one used to celebrate the *Saturnalia* on just a single day, that is the 19th of December; but later, the festival was prolonged and spanned three days. This happened first when Caesar added extra days to this month, and then through an edict of Augustus by which he prescribed three holidays for the Saturnalia; they now begin on the 17th and end on the 19th of December'.

Augustus, so we read, has prolonged the duration of the festival to three days[25], and Macrobius' *Saturnalia* takes place on all three days of the festival. In other words, the whole Macrobian text would be impossible without Caesar's and especially Augustus' re-organization of the religious calendar which was meant to demonstrate taking control of public temporal order in Rome[26].

However, Augustus is not the only one who controls time – Macrobius' text also does. Praetextatus as the host is responsible for the thematic and chronological schedule of the conversation. With this, he represents, on the level of the narration, the main narrator Macrobius whose *dispositio* of the argument into six books (if we follow Lukas Dorfbauer, see above note 4) respects with all probability the chronological sequence of the (more serious) afternoon and (less serious) evening sessions during which the interlocutors treat their topics respectively. As Dorfbauer also observes, the transitions between afternoon and dinner time are visibly marked[27]. The following quote closes the discussion of the first afternoon and at the same time also concludes book 1 (1.24.24):

tum Praetextatus: 'reservandus igitur est Vergilius noster ad meliorem partem diei, ut mane novum inspiciendo per ordinem carmini destinemus.'

'Praetextatus said: "We will have to postpone our Virgil to a better moment of the day, so that we will dedicate a new morning to looking systematically at the poem".'

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[25] Perhaps it is legitimate to interpret this as a symbolic action by the *princeps* whose legitimation leaned heavily on his merits of ending the horrors of civil war (see above Graf's definition of the Saturnalia festival representing the newly created *ordo*).

[26] Cf. Feeney 2007, 184-189.

[27] Dorfbauer 2010, 56-59.

The vital term here is *per ordinem*, a key concept of the beginning of the text, as we have seen above. The reader is likely to recognize the recurrence of the theme in Praetextatus' explanation of the *Saturnalia* festival as well. He first equals Kronos, the Greek equivalent of Saturn, to Chronos (Time), and in a second step defines Kronos/Chronos as the opposite of chaos (1.8.6-7):

> *Est porro idem Κρόνος et Χρόνος. Saturnum enim in quantum mythici fictionibus distrahunt, in tantum physici ad quandam veri similitudinem revocant. hunc aiunt abscidisse Caeli patris pudenda, quibus in mare deiectis Venerem procreatam, quae a spuma unde coaluit Ἀφροδίτη nomen accepit. ex quo intellegi volunt, cum chaos esset, tempora non fuisse, si quidem tempus est certa dimensio quae ex caeli conversione colligitur.*
>
> 'Kronos and Chaos are the same. For as far as the mythographers with their figments stretch Saturnus in different directions, the *physici* restore him according to a certain likeness of the truth. They say that he cut off the genitals of his father Heaven and that Venus was born out of them, when they had fallen in the sea. Venus received the name Aphrodite from the foam which made her. Thus, they want us to understand that, when chaos was there, time was not, because time is a certain dimension which is perceived through the rotation of the heavens'.

Praetextatus' explanation of time, Kronos vs. chaos, seems in line with Stoic concepts as expressed in Cicero's *De natura deorum* or in Cornutus' compendium of Greek theology[28]. In both texts, the equation of Chronos and Kronos is explained by a reference to Saturnus swallowing his own children, but afterwards being forced to spew them out again. This is linked to the changes of the seasons and thus symbolizes the progress of time[29]. But the explanation does not merely copy such Stoic ideas – Praetextatus adapts it through a Neo-Platonic interpretation by asserting that the falling penis was the beginning of the process of emanation which would ultimately lead to a *perfectus mundus*, and that with emanation, time also came into being. In short, Saturnus is connected to the beginning of time. More pointedly, he symboliz-

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[28] Cf. also Kaster 2011, vol. 1, 89 n. 124 with reference to Pherecydes of Syros, Fr. 9.5–6 D.-K. as first attestation.

[29] Cf. Cic. *ND* 2.64, Corn. *ND* 6. Furthermore, Macrobius' explanation of the castration of Uranos through Kronos and the latter's penis falling into the sea is reminiscent of Cornutus' version, though not equal to it (Cornutus does not link the moment to the birth of love, but merely to the beginning of time). According to the latter, the falling of the penis onto the *earth* symbolizes that 'the arrangement of everything that was generated – which, as I said, was called Kronos from the Greek verb κραίνειν, "accomplish" – sent the abundant flowing of the all-encompassing environment on the earth' (ἡ τῆς τῶν ὅλων γενέσεως τάξις, ἣν ἔφαμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κραίνειν Κρόνον εἰρῆσθαι, τὴν γινομένην τέως πολλὴν ῥύσιν τοῦ περιέχοντος ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἔστειλε). Thus, it enabled the nature of the cosmos (identified with Zeus by Cornutus) to become stable and long-lasting (Corn. *ND* 7.2-3).

es the first and most dramatic transition from one age to another: that from not-yet-time to time. The primordial state, before Uranos' castration, is labelled as chaos. With the unexpected addition of chaos to the traditional Kronos-myth (Neo-Platonic thinkers normally recurred to Hesiod's *Theogony* and explained chaos as the first emanation of the One)[30], Macrobius emphasizes the importance of order again: the creation of time is the moment that changes an unordered world into order.

Even if Macrobius partly diverges from Neo-Platonic thought, he could make use of Platonic theory for the concept that the creation of time has been a process of ordering, as Plato expressed it in the *Timaeus*. Macrobius alludes to this dialogue in the passage quoted above when he affirms that one can recognize the elapsing of time by observing the rotation of heaven (*caeli conversio*)[31]. Thus, the readers are invited to think of Plato's theory as a foil of what Macrobius' Praetextatus explains. Most importantly for my argument, Plato presents the *demiourgos*' creation of the world as a process of ordering a previously unordered state: *ataxia* becomes *taxis* (εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας, Pl. *Ti*. 30a) and finally *kosmos*.

To sum up this first part of my reasoning: Macrobius adds the aspect of order to the Stoic concept of Saturnus as the god of time. This leads to a pointed interpretation of the meaning of the Roman *Saturnalia*: not only time, but the controlling and ordering of time are connected to Saturnus and consequently also to the festival. This interpretation automatically affects Macrobius' text which bears the same name, *Saturnalia*[32]. As we have seen, the concept of *ordo*, as well as the ordering of time, pervades all narrative frames. So far, the link with

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[30] I thank Bert van den Berg for this observation. The link with Hesiod is also stressed by Syska 1993, 57 n. 28.

[31] The *Timaeus* as pretext is mentioned, but not elaborated in Syska 1993, 58 n. 31. I briefly summarize Plato's reasoning in the *Timaeus*: time is a movable image of eternity (κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος) in analogy to the heaven which is god's ordering of the chaos (διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανόν, 37d), which means that time and heaven were created simultaneously (χρόνος δ' οὖν μετ' οὐρανοῦ γέγονεν, 38b); the seven planets were created in order to measure time (εἰς διορισμὸν καὶ φυλακὴν ἀριθμῶν χρόνου γέγονεν, 38c); day, night, month, and year are constituted through the moving of sun and moon (39c); the movements of the other planets have not yet been understood by men, 'so that they are not aware that their wanderings constitute time' (οὐκ ἴσασιν χρόνον ὄντα τὰς τούτων πλάνας) (39d). On Plato's passage see Dixsaut 2003, Osborne 1996, 195, an observation about a correlation of form and content that could also be applied to the *Saturnalia*: "Timaeus' discourse about the world also has a temporal structure, and deals with one thing after another". Cf. the overview of the ancient reception of Plato's philosophy of time in Poliquin 2015, 131-137. See also Macr. *In Somn.* 2.10.9.

[32] In addition to the interpretation presented so far, the Platonic intertext allows for one further association. Time in Plato is an image of eternity, cf. Pl. *Ti.* 29a: εἰ μὲν δὴ καλός ἐστιν ὅδε ὁ κόσμος ὅ τε δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, δῆλον ὡς πρὸς τὸ ἀΐδιον ἔβλεπεν ('if this *kosmos* is beautiful and the *demiourgos* good, it follows necessarily that he has turned his gaze towards the eternal'). One might speculate that Macrobius therefore links the controlling of time to the controlling of eternity – which would fit well with a central aim of encyclopedic works such as the *Saturnalia*, which was the desire to preserve the past for the future, ideally forever.

Augustus, whose reign was perceived as one of the most marked transitions from one age to another and the beginning of a newly stabilized world order, has only been made briefly when Macrobius alludes to the *pax Augusta*, the *aurea saecula*, and Augustus' reform of the Roman calendar[33]. Additionally, Kronos'/ Saturnus' achievements, the ordering of a chaotic world, might strike the reader as a central theme of Augustan discourse in which the *Saturnia regna* take pride of place. However, Augustus will return more prominently in the dinner talk of book 2.

3. Orderly jokes

The second explicit reference to Augustus within the *Saturnalia* occurs in the fragmentary book 2. Again, order and temporal control are an underlying theme. At its beginning, however, order is threatened. After dinner, the juvenile Avienus, in Robert Kaster's words 'an impulsive, even obstreperous adolescent'[34], asks for girls, music, and dance, for which he meets the disapproval of the host: *ludicrae voluptates* are not appropriate in his distinguished house (2.1.7). Symmachus saves the good atmosphere by inviting everyone to enjoy happiness without obscenity (*alacritas lascivia carens*, 2.1.8), a *litterata laetitia* (2.1.9). Everyone should tell a joke by an authority of the past, and can thus show the excellence of his memory, an important topic in a book that partly aims at determining the cultural memory of the Roman elite[35]. But there is more to it: happiness that is constrained by wit and by the respect for orderly behaviour can be read as Symmachus' response to the Stoic concept of acceptable *laetitia* being controlled by rationality and equability, as Cicero had explained (see above, part 1)[36].

To begin with, every guest takes his turn and relates one *bene dictum* successively. Again, everything happens *per ordinem*: as has been observed by Kaster, the sequence of contributions mirrors "a combination of social status and the dignity of one's learning"[37]. On the other hand, the topics of the jokes and the ancient authors who are quoted are rather disconnected – thematically speaking, the passage has more in common with Gellius' *varietas* than with Macrobian *ordo*. Therefore, Symmachus adds further structure to the thus far casual conversation. He proposes to focus on the main authority in the field of humour and eloquence, Cicero[38]. Consequently, he tells twelve witty *dicta* by Cicero. Apart from the

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[33] Burgersdijk (forthcoming) shows that Augustus' exemplarity remained powerful in late antiquity.

[34] Kaster 2011, vol. 1, xxx.

[35] Cf. Goldlust 2010, 328. References to memory frame the passage: cf. 2.1.15 (*vicissim memoriam nostram excitando referamus*, 'let us in turn refresh our memory through exercise') and 2.8.1 (*cum in Avieno memoria florida et amoenitas laudaretur ingenii*, 'when Avienus' blooming memory and the delightfulness of his intellect were praised').

[36] Goldlust 2008, 163 recalls that for *litterata laetitia* three components are essential: *otium*, *liberalitas* which allow for a learned *colloquium*.

[37] Kaster 1980, 228; Schmidt 2008: 65.

[38] Cf. Macr. *Sat*. 2.3.1: *sed miror omnes vos ioca tacuisse Ciceronis, in quibus facundis-*

fact that the unity of authorship makes this section much more uniform than the previous one, Symmachus adds an additional structuring element. The jokes are arranged in a climactic order with respect to the object of derision, starting with one joke on a socially inferior person, an auctioneer. Next are four jokes against social equals, members of Cicero's own family (his son-in-law Lentulus and his brother Quintus) and two Roman consuls towards whom Cicero felt enmity (Vatinius and Caninius Rebilus). With the following two jokes against Pompey, the protection of whom Cicero had tried to win in his younger years, we approach the climax of the series: the last jests are directed against Caesar (or are related to Caesar's dictatorship), whose superiority towards himself even Cicero had to admit in his Caesarian orations[39]. The twelfth joke is an ideal closure for the section: it is a quote from Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* 12.4.1 addressed to Cassius, one of Caesar's murderers, and is also *about* Caesar's murder.

The death of Caesar serves as a natural transition to the jokes by and about Caesar's heir, Augustus – especially if one takes into account that most of Cicero's jokes have a political background[40]. Indeed, the structure of the whole section 2.1-8 hints at Augustus as the one around whom the rest of the jokes are arranged, as the following scheme might show. It starts and ends with references to the eating that finishes as the conversation begins, and the meal is again taken up at the end of the section (2.1.1 and 2.8.1); and it also begins with the labelling of the passage as *laetitia* (2.1.9 and 2.8.1) and ends as a mnemonic exercise (2.1.15 and 2.8.1)[41]. In between are jokes by more than one author (2.2 and 2.6-7), and jokes stemming from one source which in both cases have a relation with Augustus: Cicero (see below for the link between them) and Augustus' daughter Julia (2.3 and 2.5):

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simus ut in omnibus fuit ('I am astonished that all of you have not told a joke by Cicero, a genre in which he was the most eloquent as in all others'). Cf. also 2.1.12 for a similar appraisal where Symmachus quotes a saying by Vatinius who labelled Cicero as *consularis scurra* ('consular buffoon').

[39] On the *ordo* of the Ciceronan *dicta* see Benjamin 1955, 28 (four groups: family/friends, enemies, Pompey, Caesar). Cf. Balbo 1996, 281-282 for a critical assessment of Benjamin's observations.

[40] Cf. Benjamin 1955, 29: "the jokes have a political sting, and … the jests are (except those about Pompey) anti-Caesarian, directly or indirectly"; *contra* Balbo 1996, 282 ("Macrobio non si cura assolutamente del contesto politico delineato"). My further arguments will show why I cannot agree with this last observation, although Balbo's discussion is excellent in general.

[41] In particular, the closure is very strong in that all three elements which I mentioned are not only repeated from the beginning of book two, but are cramped into a single sentence (2.8.1): *His dictis et excitata laetitia cum in Avieno memoria florida et amoenitas laudaretur ingenii, mensas secundas minister admovit*. ('When, as a consequence to these sayings and to the happiness that they had excited, Avienus' blooming memory and the delightfulness of his intellect were praised, a servant brought the dessert').

finishing the meal (2.1.1)

litterata <u>*laetitia*</u> (2.1.9)*/*<u>*memoriam*</u> *exercere* (2.1.15)

jokes by several ancient authors (2.2)

Cicero (2.3)

Augustus (2.4)

Julia (2.5)

jokes by several authors (*iuris consulti/mimi*, 2.6-7)

<u>*laetitia*</u> *excitata/*<u>*memoria*</u> *laudatur* (2.8.1)

resuming the meal (*mensae secundae*, 2.8.1).

As I have indicated, the transition of the dead Caesar to Augustus is logical in terms of *ordo*. However, Macrobius disturbs the smoothness slightly, but notably, by inserting a little scene which merits quotation at length. Symmachus speaks at the beginning of the quote (2.3.14-16):

> *'idem Cicero de Pisone genero et de M. Lepido lepidissime cavillatus est –' dicente adhuc Symmacho et, ut videbatur, plura dicturo intercedens Avienus, ut fieri in sermonibus convivalibus solet, 'nec Augustus', inquit, 'Caesar in huius modi dicacitate quoquam minor et fortasse nec Tullio, et, si volentibus vobis erit, aliqua eius quae memoria suggesserit relaturus sum.' et Horus: 'permitte, Aviene, Symmachus explicet de his quos iam nominaverat dicta Ciceronis, et opportunius quae de Augusto vis referre succedent.' reticente Avieno Symmachus: 'Cicero, inquam, cum Piso gener eius ... sed perge, Aviene, ne ultra te dicturientem retardem.' Et ille: 'Augustus, inquam, Caesar…'*
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> 'The same Cicero also joked very pleasantly about his son-in-law Piso and about M. Lepidus – ' While Symmachus was still speaking and obviously wanted to say more, Avienus interrupted him, as usually happens in table talk, and said: 'Augustus Caesar did not have less talent than anyone else in this kind of quick-wittedness, perhaps not even less than Cicero. So if you want to, I will tell some of his sayings as they come to my mind.' Horus replied: 'Avienus, let Symmachus first finish the sayings of Cicero with which he started. After that, what you want to say about Augustus will follow up more adequately.' Avienus fell silent, and Symmachus continued: 'As I was saying, Cicero, when his son-in-law Piso … *[there follows the joke which is hardly understandable due to a lacuna in the manuscripts]*. But please continue, Avienus; I do not want to keep you longer from speaking.' Avienus rose to speak: 'As I was saying, Augustus Caesar…'.

The transition to Augustus does not follow immediately. Only when Symmachus has not only mentioned the dead Caesar, but also told a joke about Augustus' co-triumvir Lepidus, is the change of topic complete[42]. It would be easy to interpret the little intermezzo as a meta-literary reference to the genre of table talk literature, as the narrator himself explicitly does (*ut fieri in sermonibus convivalibus solet*)[43]. On the other hand, this does not explain why it happens just here. I suggest that the moment is not chosen by chance. Instead, I propose that Macrobius with the transition from Cicero to Augustus reminds his readers of the historical change from republican to imperial Rome, a moment that was similarly unsmooth and took a second attempt to be successful (after Caesar's attempts and his subsequent murder, Augustus was the second in line to succeed in a monarchic system)[44].

That Augustus indeed marked a new era, would not be doubted by many of Macrobius' contemporaries. Not only was he the founder of the Empire and served as a reference point for all future Emperors who continued to call themselves *Augusti* and *Caesares*, he also could be associated with the beginning of the Christian era, as under his rule Jesus Christ was born[45]. In the first half of the fifth century, when Macrobius was writing his *Saturnalia*, Rome had officially become a Christian state, and most readers of the text would at least *pro forma* have become Christians in order to be able to remain in their public offices (in fact, as Cameron has argued convincingly, this must also hold for Macrobius himself)[46]. The *Saturnalia* preserving the memory of members of the last generation living before the sack of Rome in 410 and at the same time of Rome's non-Christian heritage, does not mean that Macrobius was also critical towards Christianity or actively silenced its beliefs (suffice to think of Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*, which does not mention Christian philosophy, whereas other writings of the same author are rooted in the new religion)[47].

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[42] Kaster 2011, vol. 1, 344, explains this as follows: "presumably, because M. Aemilius Lepidus was the future Augustus' colleague in the Triumvirate".

[43] Thus, e.g., Benjamin 1955, 144.

[44] Vell. 2.36.1 is a fine example of a writer who reflects explicitly on this epochal transition: *consulatui Ciceronis non mediocre adiecit decus natus eo anno divus Augustus abhinc annos LXXXII, omnibus omnium gentium viris magnitudine sua inducturus caliginem*. ('Cicero's consulship received no little honour by the birth of Augustus in that very year, now 82 years ago, a man who would overshadow all men of all nations with his greatness').

[45] Cf. Burgersdijk (forthcoming) on Augustus' exemplary function in the *Panegyrici Latini* and the *Historia Augusta* and other sources of the fourth century, i.e., as "the legendary founder of the empire". A positive Christian response to Augustus (which stood next to a negative one) is summarized by Burgersdijk: "… it was under this emperor's reign that the Saviour Child was born, which had been made possible by the peace and rest that Augustus brought to the empire".

[46] Cf. Cameron 2011, 261; Kaster 2011, vol. 1, xxi-xxxiv; Schmidt 2008, 50, who argues that the addition of the names Ambrosius (bishop of Milan) and Theodosius (the Orthodox emperor) to the old family name Macrobius shows the Christian background of the family. *Contra* Doepp 1978, 620 and Jones 2014, 155-157. See for a useful overview of the pros and cons Brugisser 2010, 848-852.

[47] Cf. Cameron 2011. For the difficulty in judging the extent to which Christian and

The argument that Augustus' reign could be interpreted as marking the beginning of Christ's reign, was surely known to Macrobius. Among others, Orosius had argued for this in his *Historia contra paganos*, written about two decades before the *Saturnalia*[48]. The moments Orosius chooses as evidence for this claim are, as the following quote demonstrates, Caesar's murder and the receiving of Pompey's and Lepidus' legions by Augustus. These transitional elements, I argue, are reminiscent enough of the Macrobian passage quoted above (which also mentions Caesar's death and Lepidus[49]) that I would be inclined to speak of a conscious allusion, meant to be grasped by the literary elite for which Macrobius was writing (Oros. 6.20.5-6)[50]:

> *Nam cum primum, C. Caesare avunculo suo interfecto, ex Apollonia rediens urbem ingrederetur, hora circiter tertia repente liquido ac puro sereno circulus ad speciem caelestis arcus orbem solis ambiit, quasi eum unum ac potissimum in hoc mundo solumque clarissimum in orbe monstraret, cuius tempore venturus esset, qui ipsum solem solus mundumque totum et fecisset et regeret. Deinde cum secundo, in Sicilia receptis a Pompeio et Lepido legionibus, triginta milia servorum dominis restituisset et quadraginta et quattuor legiones solus imperio suo ad tutamen orbis terrarum distribuisset ovansque urbem ingressus omnia superiora populi Romani debita donanda, litterarum etiam monumentis abolitis, censuisset: in diebus ipsis fons olei largissimus, sicut superius expressi, de taberna meritoria per totum diem fluxit. quo signo quid evidentius quam in diebus Caesaris toto orbe regnantis futura Christi nativitas declarata est?*
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> 'In the first place, when Augustus was entering the city on his return from Apollonia after the murder of his uncle C. Caesar, though the sky was clear and cloudless at the time, about the third hour a circle resembling a rainbow suddenly formed around the sun's disk. This phenomenon apparently

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non-Christian identity could eventually overlap or converge, thus forming multiple, even syncretic identities, see Consolino 2013, 94 ("a grey zone, probably wider than C[ameron] seems inclined to admit"). Cf. also Liebeschuetz 1999, 201. *Contra* Frateantonio 2007, 370-371 (on Macrobius mocking superiority towards the 'Christian' Euangelus).

[48] Cf. Formisano 2013, 169-170 (the *convenientia temporis* as a powerful argument to convince the *Historia*'s pagan readers of the necessity of the Christian future of Rome), Sloane 2018, 104-105 and 108 ("Orosius protects Octavian's reputation as the 'bravest and most merciful of men' [follows a reference to Oros. 6.1.6]"). Cf. also Origen, *Cels.* 2.30; Euseb. *HE* 4.26.7-11 (quoting Melito). *Contra* Van Nuffelen 2012, 188-189, who stresses that Orosius relativizes Augustus' role in the history of Christianity considerably.

[49] The third moment which foreshadows Christ's adventure in Orosius is the closing of Janus' temple: *pax Augusta* as foil for the *pax Christi.* See my suggestion above that in the first book of the *Saturnalia*, Janus as god of peace refers to Augustan discourse.

[50] On the preceding paragraphs in Orosius and on their tendency to "downplay" Octavian's violent acts during the years following the murder of Caesar, see Sloane 2018, 107-113; cf. also p. 114: Orosius "harmonises secular history with the events of the New Testament".

indicated that Augustus alone was the most powerful man in this world and alone was the most renowned in the universe; it was in his time that Christ would come, He who alone had made and ruled the sun itself and the whole world. In the second place, when Augustus, after receiving in Sicily the legions from Pompey and Lepidus, had restored thirty thousand slaves to their masters and by his own authority had distributed forty-four legions for the protection of the world, he entered the City with an ovation. He decreed that all the former debts of the Roman people should be remitted and the records of account books should also be destroyed. In those same days an abundant spring of oil, to use my former expression, flowed from an inn a whole day long. What is more evident than that by this sign the coming nativity of Christ was declared in the days when Caesar was ruling the whole world?'.

A second element shows that Macrobius, even if he does not write a Christian work, was aware of the Christian discourse of his time. Augustus' jokes are very different from the Ciceronian ones. The climactic arrangement according to social hierarchy that one finds in the section of Ciceronian *dicta* is not repeated. Instead, Augustus, after a first joke about himself, mostly mocks soldiers, accusers, merchants, slaves, and *equites* – in short, he directs his witticisms against inferiors[51]. Only three jokes are addressed to more prominent members of the upper class: Maecenas, Vatinius, and Cato Uticensis. The main organizing principle of the passage therefore is another one: after sixteen jokes by Augustus, Avienus also relates twelve jests that are directed against Augustus. Within this second part, the *princeps*' endurance plays a major role. Twice, Avienus stresses that Augustus condoned the speakers, and interprets this as a sign of his astonishing forbearance, *mira patientia* (2.4.19 and 25):

Soleo in Augusto magis mirari quos pertulit iocos quam ipse quos protulit, quia maior est patientiae quam facundiae laus.

I tend to admire more the jokes which Augustus endured that those which he himself enunciated, because the praise for forbearance is greater than that for eloquence.

Mira etiam censoris Augusti et laudata patientia.

The forbearance of the censor Augustus was stunning.

The term *patientia* (and not, as Benjamin Goldlust wrongly implies[52], the more common *clementia*) is here applied to a political ruler. Within such a politi-

[51] This is not surprising: within an imperial system, there are by definition only inferiors to the Emperor.

[52] Goldlust 2010, 452 refers to Val. Max. 5.1 and the *clementia Augusti* – but this is *not* the category Macrobius is using.

cal context, *patientia* was not an uncontested virtue. The term saw an impressive development between the end of the republic and the time of the adoptive emperors, as Yasmina Benferhat has shown[53]. Substantially, it was treated as a sub-category of the cardinal virtue of *fortitudo* and meant 'endurance of pain' (as in Val. Max. 3.3). On the other hand, stressing his own *patientia* when being provoked by his enemies had been an important element in Caesar's self-fashioning and probably via this route became part of the catalogue of praiseworthy virtues under the Julio-Claudian emperors, as is visible in a passage from Seneca's *De ira* 3.23, where he praises Philip of Macedon for the same endurance of blame (though not necessarily in the context of jokes) that Augustus demonstrates in Macrobius. But as Benferhat shows, towards the end of the first century AD the unconditioned positive evaluation of *patientia* was problematized. Whereas Pliny in the *Panegyricus* praises Trajan for his forbearance, in one of his letters he speaks of Emperor Claudius' exaggerated *patientia*[54]. Furthermore, Tacitus stresses Agricola's *patientia* as a symbol of lacking freedom under a tyrannical ruler, as Aske Damtoft Poulsen has recently argued[55]. Following up on Benferhat's material, I add that political *patientia* remained contested in later biographies of and historiography about emperors. For Suetonius, it is no important quality[56]. In the *Historia Augusta*, the word *patientia* is only used twice, in both cases with respect to Marcus Aurelius: once in a positive sense in the Life of Avidius Cassius within an acclamation of the senate where the emperor's virtues are listed[57], and once with negative connotations at the end of Marcus Aurelius' own *vita* (HA *Marc.* 29.3: *et de hoc quidem multa populus, multa etiam alii dixerunt patientiam Antonini incusantes*, 'and the people in the city and others talked a lot about the affair and blamed Marcus Aurelius for his forbearance'). This second passage is intriguing as it shows parallels to the Macrobian passage on jokes directed against Augustus. Marcus Aurelius watches a mime in which the sexual escapades of his wife are represented. At the end of the show, the people of Rome blame him because he did not punish the actors. On the other

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[53] The following summarizes Benferhat 2015, from whom I also borrow the quotes from Seneca and Pliny. Her contribution adds nuances to Kaster 2002, whose analysis is mostly directed towards the moral quality of the term.

[54] Plin. *Ep*. 8.6.15 where the negative connotation of Claudius' *patientia* is obvious because of two other attitudes with which it forms a tricolon: *insolentia* of an individual (Pallas) and *humilitas* of the senate, cf. Benferhat 2015: 8.

[55] Damtoft Poulsen 2017.

[56] When Augustus is said to have listened patiently to recitations of literature (Suet. *Aug*. 89.3: *recitantis et benigne et patienter audiit, nec tantum carmina et historias, sed et orationes et dialogos*, 'he listened with patience to people reciting in his presence, not only when they read poems and historiography, but also speeches and dialogues'), this seems rather different from the attitude at stake in Macrobius. The only emperor whose *patientia* Suetonius mentions is Claudius, but similarly to the Plinian quote above, here too it is a sign of weakness as the lawyers misuse it (*Claud*. 15.3: *causidicos patientia eius solitos abuti*).

[57] HA *Avid. Cass.* 13.5: *philosophiae tuae, patientiae tuae, doctrinae tuae, nobilitati tuae, innocentiae tuae* (i.e., philosophy, *patientia*, learnedness, nobility and innocence).

hand, in the *Historia Augusta* we find emperors who are praised for indulgently tolerating witty criticism on two occasions: Antoninus Pius and – again – Marcus Aurelius[58]. But these cases are rather isolated, as is the only passage in Ammianus Marcellinus in which an emperor is praised for *patientia* towards one of his subjects[59]. In short, by the time Macrobius was writing his *Saturnalia*, *patientia* seems to be a contested term with reference to rulers. An emperor who shows *patientia*, while on the one hand demonstrating his praiseworthy clemency, could on the other hand be criticized for his inactiveness or weakness.

But imperial historiography was not the only place where a discussion of *patientia* could be expected. In Christian treatises *de patientia*, the term was hailed as a core virtue of the new religion[60]. Augustine defines it as the best way to minimize any evil that one encounters (*De patientia* 2):

> *Patientia hominis, quae recta est atque laudabilis et vocabulo digna virtutis, ea perhibetur qua aequo animo mala toleramus, ne animo iniquo bona deseramus, per quae ad meliora perveniamus.*
>
> ‘ The *patientia* of man which is straightforward, praiseworthy, and worthy to be called virtue shows itself when we tolerate bad things with equanimity so that we do not abandon with wicked spirit the good things by means of which we reach even better ones’.

This quote shows that, apart from a strictly Christian idealization of *patientia* (i.e., the endurance which Christ showed during his Passion), the term could also be vindicated from any criticism on a more philosophical ground: showing *patientia* when being attacked or criticized must not be interpreted as a sign of weakness, but helps the attacked to keep his inner peace. It is well possible that this concept is at the core of Avienus’ praise of Augustus’ *patientia* in the second book of the *Saturnalia*. I argue that the fact that the text extols Augustus’ *patientia* twice (and not his *clementia vel sim*.) is a reaction to Christian interest in the term. It also suggests that Macrobius knew about Augustus’ image in the discourse of the late fourth and early fifth century: the emperor who brought a new political order and under whose reign a new religious order was established. Thus, Augustus could be regarded as a symbol of the most substantial temporal transition in Roman history.

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[58] HA *Ant. Pius* 11.8 and *Marc.* 12.3 (both texts use the formulation *patienter tulit*).

[59] Cf. Amm. Marc. 22.9.10 and 16 in which Julian’s juridical and political *patientia* is mentioned (in paragraph 16, his renunciation of vengeance is labeled *patientiae eius et lenitudinis* documentum *leve*, ‘a weak proof of his *patientia* and mildness’). The third time Ammianus uses the term *patientia* is in 16.10.11 when he describes Constantius II’s ability to control his natural wants.

[60] Skibbe 1965, Adiavu Ayedze 2000: 284 (the term enabled the Christian theorists to harmonize the “paradox of passivity and activity in the notion of patience”).

Macrobius' interest in preserving the cultural past in the present is influenced by the ongoing discourse of his time about how to deal with ruptures and inconsistencies in history. Just as the transition from republican Cicero to imperial Augustus represents a break in history, the gap that divides Praetextatus (whose generation was raised in a world that was informed by the old Roman religious practice) and Macrobius (who lived not only after Gratian's far-reaching anti-pagan politics of 382, but after the sack of Rome in 410 which had shaken trust in Rome's eternal presence[61]) marks the beginning of a new era[62]. But whereas Orosius, Augustine, and others argue in a more or less polemical way against the 'pagans', Macrobius' harmonizing attitude is completely different. He participates in the discourse of his time by transforming it into a plea for the value of order via learnedness in dramatically changing times[63]. Augustus' own political program of restoration of the past and of harmonizing it with his new *aetas Augusta* (a heyday of Roman culture and political power) is a fitting symbol for this literary program. We have seen that regardless of all differences between the Ciceronian and the Augustan jokes, in one respect they are equal[64]. The interlocutors treat them as representing the only state of mind a Roman gentleman should bother about: learnedness and sophistication. Only a few men can become symbols of a new era, but all wise men can learn to control the effects these changes might have on them: through their dedication to letters they can reach a kind of everlasting *litterata laetitia.* Only after having elucidated this in the first two books, will the *Saturnalia* move on to the discussion that occupies the second and third days: Virgil, the major cultural icon of the Augustan age and of all times that subscribe to Macrobius' claim of order through wit.

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[61] On the literary reflections of the event see Rebenich 2009 and Mathisen 2013. Even if the actual impact of the event on contemporaries might have been less great, Christian sources like Jerome (e.g., *In Dan*. 1.2.31-35) shaped the image of the sack as "a sign for the end of the world" (Mathisen 2013, 99).

[62] Cf. Bevilacqua 1973, 73: "è un'opera che rappresenta tipicamente una nuova epoca."

[63] Goldlust 2008, 158 and 2010, 94 has interpreted Macrobius' perpetuation of previous literature (especially that of Virgil) as his wish to prove its permanence even when old ages end and new ages begin.

[64] Cf. Avienus' claim that Augustus is *nec Tullio minor* (*Sat*. 2.3.14).

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