

THE FAMILY TRADITIONS OF THE *GENS MARCIA* BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND THIRD CENTURIES B.C.*

ABSTRACT

In the mid fourth century B.C. some Roman gentes drew on a Pythagorean tradition. In this tradition, Numa's role of Pythagoras' disciple connected Rome (and the gentes) with Greek elites and culture. The Marcii, between 304 and 300 B.C., used Numa's figure, recently reshaped by the Aemilii and the Pinarii for their propaganda, to promote the need for a plebeian pontificate. After the approval of the Ogulnium plebiscite (300 B.C.), the needs for this kind of propaganda fell away. When Marcius Censorinus became censor, Numa's pontificate was no longer relevant for promoting the gens. For this reason, the Marcii used another genealogy for similar propagandistic effect: the figure of Marsyas, a symbol of plebeian ideals.

Keywords: *gens Marcia*; Marsyas; symbolic capital; Roman propaganda; Roman politics; Roman tradition

Rome, during the Mid Republic, was a very difficult political arena to master. The *nobiles* struggled to compete against each other for magistracies and to acquire pre-eminence over their peers. Victory could be achieved in several ways, amongst which the use of lineage, the history of the *gens*, was among the most important. In Pierre Bourdieu's words, it was part of their 'symbolic capital', a group of characteristics that made every *gens* unique. By recalling the ancient origins and merits of the *gens*, the candidate strengthened his claims on magistracies and/or priesthoods. This constituted an early form of what we could cautiously call 'familiar propaganda', with all the caveats that this term brings with it.¹ Specifically, it is very difficult to identify and define ancient Roman propaganda in Mid Republican times, since the few certain proofs of this practice usually come from Late Republican coinage.²

K.-J. Hölkeskamp thoroughly examined the subject.³ Many clues tell us that mythical origins were, as expected, an active part in this process as well.⁴ By connecting their families

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¹ For Roman Republican propaganda, see in general J. de Rose Evans, *The Art of Persuasion. Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus* (Ann Arbor, 1992), especially 1–16.

² See again de Rose Evans (n. 1), 17–34. Many scholars studied Roman coins as vectors of propaganda: see, for example, A. Alföldi, 'The main aspects of political propaganda on the coinage of the Roman Republic', in R.A.G. Carson and C.H.V. Sutherland (edd.), *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly* (Oxford, 1956), 63–95; and G.G. Belloni, 'Monete romane e propaganda. Impostazione di una problematica complessa', in M. Sordi (ed.), *I canali della propaganda nel mondo antico* (Milan, 1976), 131–59.

³ K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Reconstructing the Roman Republic. An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research* (Princeton, 2010; original ed. Munich, 2004), 107–24.

⁴ See Hölkeskamp (n. 3), 118–19 for the representative case of the Caecilii Metelli.

with mythical figures, the Romans used them in order to reinforce their political role: between the fourth and third centuries B.C. the Marcii seem to have done so.

I will henceforth describe how the *gens Marcia* used its traditions for more than one goal between the fourth and third centuries B.C. A first tradition is about King Numa and involves Roman history in a genealogical perspective. A second is about the relationship between the Marcii and Marsyas. Defining the use of these traditions in the late fourth- and early third-century B.C. political debate will better reveal the reasons that led to their formation.

THE MARCII AND NUMA

Five Roman *gentes* traced their genealogy back to King Numa Pompilius: the *gentes Aemilia*, *Pinaria*, *Calpurnia*, *Pomponia* and *Marcia*.⁵

Modern scholars⁶ have examined these traditions and established some conclusions with a reasonable degree of confidence. The first *gentes* claiming to descend from Numa were probably the Aemilii and the Pinarii. Some sources provide an etymological explanation for their names, which is an important clue to determine the antiquity of these traditions. Specifically, Plutarch states about the *gens Aemilia*:

... that the first of them, and the one who gave his surname to the family, was Mamercus, a son of Pythagoras the philosopher, who received the surname of Aemilius for the grace and charm of his discourse [αἰμιλία], is the statement of some of those writers who hold that Pythagoras was the educator of Numa the king. (transl. B. Perrin)⁷

Schwarze⁸ already noticed that a similar description was contained in Paul the Deacon's *excerptum* of Festus' *De significatione uerborum*,⁹ an epitome of the larger work by Verrius Flaccus.¹⁰

⁵ The fundamental witness for the first four *gentes* is Plut. *Num.* 21.2–3. For the Marcii, Livy traces the family lineage back to the marriage between a Marcus and Pompilia, Numa's daughter (Livy 1.32.1); the same tradition can be found e.g. in Plut. *Num.* 4–6.

⁶ Many studies address the problem, including A. Storchi Marino, *Numa e Pitagora. Sapientia constituendae civitatis* (Naples, 1999). See also, among others, R. Verdière, 'Calpus, fils de Numa, et la tripartition fonctionnelle dans la société indo-européenne', *AC* 34 (1965), 425–31; E. Fabbriotti, 'Numa Pompilio e tre monetieri di età repubblicana', *AION* 15 (1968), 31–8; K. Buraselis, 'Numa und die *gens Pomponia*', *Historia* 25 (1976), 378–80; A. Storchi Marino, 'C. Marcio Censorino, la lotta politica intorno al pontificato e la formazione della tradizione liviana su Numa', *AION(archeol)* 14 (1992), 105–47; M. Humm, 'Numa et Pythagore: vie et mort d'un mythe', in P.-A. Deproost and A. Meurant (edd.), *Images d'origines. Origines d'une image. Hommages à Jacques Poucet* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2004), 125–37; F. Russo, 'Genealogie numaiche e tradizioni pitagoriche', *RCCM* 47 (2005), 265–90; id., 'I *carmina Marciana* e le tradizioni sui Marcii', *PP* 60 (2005), 5–32; L. Ferrero, *Storia del pitagorismo nel mondo romano. Dalle origini alla fine della Repubblica* (Forlì, 2008²; 1st edn: Turin, 1955), 140–8; F. Russo, 'Le statue di Alcibiade e Pitagora nel *Comitium*', *ASNP* 3 (2012), 105–34, at 117–19.

⁷ Plut. *Aem.* 2.2: ὅτι δ' ὁ πρῶτος αὐτῶν καὶ τῷ γένει τὴν ἑπωνυμίαν ἀπολιπὼν Μάμερκος ἦν, Πυθαγόρου παῖς τοῦ σοφοῦ, δι' αἰμιλίαν λόγου καὶ χάριν Αἰμιλίου προσαγορευθεὶς, εἰρήκασιν ἔνοι τῶν Πυθαγόρα τὴν Νομᾶ τοῦ βασιλέως παίδευσιν ἀναθέντων.

⁸ W. Schwarze, *Quibus fontibus Plutarchus in uita L. Aemilii Paulli usus sit* (Leipzig, 1891), 12–14.

⁹ Paulus ex Festo, page 22 Lindsay: *Aemilium gentem appellatam dicunt a Mamercio, Pythagorae philosophi filio, cui propter unicam humanitatem cognomen fuerit Aemylos.*

¹⁰ Schwarze (n. 8), 13 traces Flaccus' sources back to Varro, but the issue is much debated. See e.g. F. Glinister, 'Constructing the past', in F. Glinister, C. Woods, J.A. North and M.H. Crawford (edd.), *Verrius, Festus & Paul* (London, 2007), 11–32, with related bibliography.

Mamercus' name becomes a *cognomen* in the family branches of the Pinarii and the Aemilii 'Mamercini', who held important magistracies between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. before disappearing towards the end of the century.¹¹ This led many scholars to think that these two families were the most ancient to connect their name and genealogy with Pythagoras, the 'Italian philosopher', through Numa.¹² This claim would have constituted a strong basis on which to build political relations with Western Greek elites, who were deeply involved in Pythagorean culture and philosophy.

As for the Pomponii and the Calpurnii, their entrance on the Roman political stage happened later. The Calpurnii made their political appearance in the first half of the third century B.C. and they only sporadically held magistracies until the second century. A few members of the *gens Pomponia* were active in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., but they did not hold any high office until the end of the third century. It is probable that they added their families to an already existing tradition. Establishing a precise chronology, however, remains difficult.¹³ Evidence about their inclusion in Numa's lineage can be found, as previously stated, in Plutarch: these *gentes* are mentioned, together with the Aemilii ('Mamerci') and the Pinarii, as descendants of the king's four sons, Pompos, Calpus, Pinus and Mamercus.¹⁴

The tradition of the Marcii, on the other hand, has probably nothing to do with Pythagoras.¹⁵ Their Numan genealogy originated in connection with political-religious institutions, when the plebeians started to have access to the pontificate.¹⁶ The same sources suggest this, starting with the presence of the Marcii in the earliest period of the Roman monarchy. According to both Livy and Plutarch, Numa Marcus was a friend of Numa Pompilius. Or rather, he was the man who persuaded him to accept the crown. The sources report significant variations, which are worth recalling.

In Livy, Marcus is *Marci filius*. This can be translated as either 'son of Marcus' or 'son of Marcus'.¹⁷ In this case, the literary use of the unabbreviated patronymic¹⁸ tips the scale towards the first meaning, thus giving a *praenomen* to Numa Marcus'

¹¹ On the Pinarii Mamercini, see O. Stein, 'Pinarius 11–13', *RE* 20.2, cols. 1400–1; for the Aemilii, E. Klebs, 'Aemilius 93–101', *RE* 1.1, cols. 568–72. Moreover, *Mamercus* was a *praenomen* often used by these Aemilii. Both *gentes* still existed after the fourth century B.C. but with other family branches. See also L. Loreto, 'Osservazioni sulla politica estera degli Emili Mamercini e di Publilio Filone', *Prometheus* 19 (1992), 58–68.

¹² Storchi Marino (n. 6 [1999]), 24–31. It is hard to think that some Roman *gentes* already linked their name to Pythagoras during the fifth century B.C., when the *cognomen* of *Mamercus/Mamercinus* first appeared. Their onomastics must have developed independently for other reasons. This *cognomen* has also other meanings: for some of them, see F. Münzer, 'Mamercus 2', *RE* 14.1, col. 950. Cf. L. Derois, 'Les noms latins du marteau et la racine étrusque «mar-»', *AC* 28 (1959), 5–31, who connects the *cognomen* to artisanal activities (at 17–31). These *gentes* might have fabricated a connection between their existing *cognomen* and Pythagoras' son only in the mid fourth century B.C., with the first official institutional contacts between Rome and Magna Graecia.

¹³ Storchi Marino (n. 6 [1999]), 24 n. 20 and 154 n. 155, with related bibliography, thinks that the origin of this tradition has to be located around the second or first century B.C. *Contra*, F. Coarelli, *Il Foro romano. 2: Periodo repubblicano e augusteo* (Rome, 1985), 115 dates the same tradition between the fourth and third centuries. Almost certainly, Storchi Marino's hypothesis is much preferable for the Calpurnii. The benefit of the doubt must be given in relation to the Pinarii.

¹⁴ Plut. *Num.* 21.2–3.

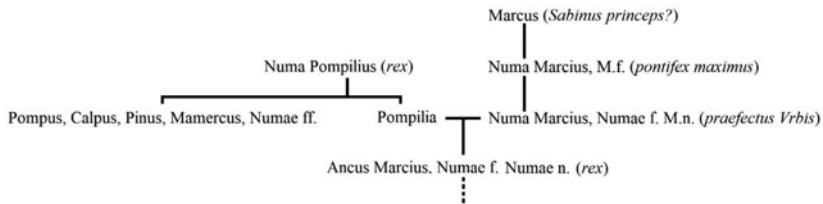
¹⁵ But see Storchi Marino (n. 6 [1999]), 144 on the relationship between the Marcii and the Pythagorean use of Apollo.

¹⁶ Cf. Storchi Marino (n. 6 [1999]), 139; ead. (n. 6 [1992]), 121–6.

¹⁷ Remember e.g. Gell. *NA* 3.3, who tells how the comedies of a Plautius (gen. *Plauti*) were thought to be written by Plautus (genitive *Plauti* again).

¹⁸ *Marci filius*: Enn. *Ann.* 9.306 Skutsch; Cic. *Brut.* 109; Cic. *Lael.* 1.3; Livy 2.18.6.

father.¹⁹ Numa Pompilius would have appointed Numa Marcus (the father) senator as a sign of honour;²⁰ then, he would have co-opted him as *pontifex*.²¹ For Plutarch, eventually, ‘everybody agrees’²² that Pompilia, Numa’s daughter, would have married Numa Marcus’ son. He calls Marcus (the father) συγγενής²³ when Numa takes the throne. It is possible that, according to the tradition, when Numa Pompilius became king, his daughter and Numa Marcus’ son were already married, or at least engaged. Then, according to Tacitus, Tullus Hostilius appointed Numa Marcus (the son) *praefectus Vrbi*.²⁴ The son of Pompilia and Numa Marcus will be Ancus Marcus, the future king. According to the tradition reconstructed from the sources, this is the family tree for the known Marcii of the regal period:



Doubts on whether the Marcii of the regal period were considered patricians or plebeians, and on their characterization in the ancient sources, are legitimate. Considering both the close kinship with King Numa and the kingship of Ancus, the *gens* was probably patrician. Plutarch calls Coriolanus’ family Μαρκίων οἶκος [...] τῶν πατρικίων, and states that it was the same as the monarchic and Republican Marcii (those, for example, of the *aqua Marcia*: Plut. *Cor.* 1.1). At the same time, both the Marcii Rutili (such as C. Marcus Rutilus Censorinus) and the Marcii Reges were plebeian families. For the Rutili in particular, C. Marcus Rutilus’ appointment as *dictator* and, then, as *censor* had a wide resonance, as he was the first plebeian to gain access to these magistracies.²⁵ Other members of the Marcian family became

¹⁹ Who, in this case, could have formed his *nomen* from his father’s *praenomen*, following a common practice among Latin-speaking peoples: see H. Rix, ‘Zum Ursprung des römisch-mittelitalischen Gentilnamensystems’, *ANRW* 1.2 (1972), 700–58, at 717–18; B. Salway, ‘What’s in a name? A survey of Roman onomastic practice from c.700 B.C. to A.D. 700’, *JRS* 84 (1994), 124–45, at 125 n. 13.

²⁰ Plut. *Num.* 21.5.

²¹ Livy 1.20.5. *Contra*, see Russo (n. 6 [2005 ‘*I carmina Marciana*’]), 13–14, who identifies the son (not the father) as the *pontifex maximus* co-opted by Numa.

²² Plut. *Num.* 21.4: πάντες δ’ οὖν ὁμολογοῦσι τὴν Πομπιλίαν Μαρκίῳ γαμηθῆναι, ‘all are agreed that Pompilia was married to Marcus’ (transl. B. Perrin). This is, presumably, because Ancus’ ancestry was part of the tradition well before the birth of the Republic.

²³ Plut. *Num.* 5.4.

²⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 6.10.3–11.1. In this case, Numa Marcus *filis* cannot be mistaken for his homonymous father: Plutarch tells us (*Num.* 21.3) that Numa Marcus *père* let himself die at the beginning of Tullus’ reign, realizing that he would not become king himself. The passage in Tacitus, therefore, is the only passage that reveals the name of Pompilia’s husband with certainty, together with a tradition about his permanence in Rome. Livy (1.59.12) confirms that a *praefectus Vrbi* existed in the Regal period despite many uncertainties on the duties of this magistracy: Sp. Lucretius Tricipitinus, Lucretia’s father, was a *praefectus*, as reported by Tacitus in the same passage quoted above. According to Livy 1.60.4, this magistracy was created by King Servius. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.71.6, on the other hand, asserts that also the ἄρχων κελερῶν (‘commander of the *Celeres*’: this was Brutus) exercised some powers in the absence of the king.

²⁵ Dictator in 356 B.C. (Livy 7.17.6); censor in 351 (Livy 7.22.6). See *MRR* 1.123 and 1.126–7, and G. Poma, ‘Su Livio, VII, 17, 6: *dictator primus e plebe*’, *RSA* 25 (1995), 71–90.

tribunes of the plebs during the Mid Republican period.²⁶ There is therefore an ancient tradition of both a patrician and a plebeian branch of the same *gens*.²⁷ The patrician lineage vanished early, so that the plebeian one freely claimed descent from the Marcii of the Regal period.²⁸

The Marcian family would not have been the first plebeian *gens* (or so considered in the fourth century) to assume the pontificate, but it was the first to count a *pontifex maximus*, Numa Marcius, among its members,²⁹ under the ‘protection’ of Numa Pompilius, the most ancient and respected Roman religious authority.

THE MARCII AND MARSYAS

The Marcii had a further tradition. They linked themselves to Marsyas, the satyr punished by Apollo for his *hybris*. L. Marcius Censorinus, moneyer in 82 B.C., coined a *denarius* representing a statue of Marsyas in the Roman Forum.³⁰ Another Marcian moneyer had also coined also a series with the iconography of Numa and Ancus Marcius, indicating that both traditions were still alive during the Late Republic.³¹

First, we must notice that ancient sources do not clearly establish the nature of the relationship between Marsyas and the Marcii. The date of this tradition and the association between the satyr and the *gens* are neither clear nor certain. Many scholars have tried to define these elements.

As for the origin of this tradition, it is known that some colonies seem to have copied the statue of Marsyas in the Forum. A famous witness is the Paestum copy of this artwork, dated not too long after the foundation of the colony

²⁶ In addition to the Marcii Philippi, Rutili and Censorini: Cn. Marcius in 389 (Livy 6.1.6); Q. Marcius Ralla in 196 (Livy 32.25.6); Q. Marcius Scilla and M. Marcius Sermo in 172 (Livy 42.21–2).

²⁷ An uncommon condition that can also be found, for example, among the Claudii, both the plebeian (Marcelli) and the patrician (Pulchri): Asc. *Scaur.* 25–6 Clark.

²⁸ This is clearly what the Romans believed at the end of the fourth century. T.J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome. Italy from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars* (London and New York, 1995), 242–71 convincingly showed (at 244) that ‘there was no “Conflict of the Orders” (properly so called) until the fourth century, when the battle over the Licinio-Sextian Rogations began.’

²⁹ Livy calls Numa Marcius simply *pontifex*, chosen among the *patres*, but the significant attribution of *sacra omnia exscripta exsignataque* (Livy 1.20.5) makes him a likely *pontifex maximus*. R.M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy. Books I–V* (Oxford, 1965), 101 noted the archaic phrasing (used elsewhere only in Plaut. *Trin.* 655); Storch Marino (n. 6 [1992]), 111 thinks that Livy directly recalls an annalistic source, albeit impossible to identify. According to Eutr. 1.5.1 and Zonar. 7.6 (from Cassius Dio), Ancus was the son of Numa’s daughter, without specifying his paternal lineage. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.76.6 tells us that he read this same information in Cn. Gellius (*FRHist* F 22 Cornell), who thus becomes one of the most ancient witnesses on the Numan tradition, perhaps the most ancient witness. On Cn. Gellius’ role in the Marcian tradition, see again Storch Marino (n. 6 [1992]), 133–8; ead. (n. 6 [1999]), 153–5 with bibliography; T.J. Cornell (ed.), *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* (Oxford, 2013), 3.238, F 22 and related cross-references. On the *sacra* given to the *pontifex maximus*, see also E. Peruzzi, ‘Livio I, 20, 5’, *RFIC* 99 (1971), 264–70.

³⁰ *RRC* 363/1; see also Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.120 and Sen. *Ben.* 6.32.1. For modern analysis, see M. Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 99–106; Coarelli (n. 13), 91–110; D. Miano, *Monimenta. Aspetti storico-culturali della memoria nella Roma medio-repubblicana* (Rome, 2011), 109–26; F. Santangelo, ‘The statue of Marsyas’, in M. Garcia Morcillo, J.H. Richardson and F. Santangelo (edd.), *Ruin or Renewal? Places and the Transformation of Memory in the City of Rome* (Rome, 2016), 49–71 with further bibliography.

³¹ *RRC* 346/1, 3 and 4 (88 B.C., coined by C. Marcius Censorinus).

(273 B.C.);³² this year constitutes therefore a *terminus ante quem* for the erection of the statue in the Roman Forum. By extension, we may infer that the tradition that linked Marsyas and the Marcii was born around this period. This argument is still debated, but there is no compelling reason to think of a different date for both the statue and the Marcian tradition.

Defining the meaning of this tradition is much more complex. The statue, with shackles but without chains, suggests an interpretation linked to the concept of *libertas*, traditionally associated with the satyr.³³ Valentina Arena, however, has recently questioned this association: according to her, Marsyas became a symbol of *libertas* only in modern reconstructions based on late antique witnesses. Earlier sources did not mention *libertas* with Marsyas, and this association certainly did not exist during the Mid and the Late Republic. Marsyas was, instead, a figure associated with the iconography of the Sun.³⁴

Moreover, ‘Marcius’ and ‘Marsyas’ sounded very similar. This is another possible reason for believing that Marsyas could be associated with the Marcii. Michael Crawford assumes that this is the correct interpretation,³⁵ but it does not seem to be enough to justify any kinship. Surely, if the name had been the only link between Marsyas and the Marcii, there would have been no reason to represent him in chains as the coins (and the statue) did.

Finally, Daniele Miano recently advanced the hypothesis that there was an association between Marsyas and the augurate.³⁶ This would fit well with the character of C. Marcus Censorinus, who became augur a short time after the *plebiscitum Ogulnium*, which allowed the plebeians to become *pontifices* in 300 B.C.³⁷ This plebiscite passed with almost no opposition from the patricians, *adsueti iam in tali genere certaminum uinci*, ‘used to be defeated in this kind of quarrels’.³⁸ Moreover, Miano rightly stated that there is no reason to consider Marsyas as a progenitor of the Marcii, as some scholars did, and that the resemblance of the names ‘Marsyas’ and ‘Marcius’, again, is not enough to justify any connection.³⁹ These are compelling arguments: the sources do not explicitly state any kinship between Marsyas and Roman *gentes*, and similar-sounding names alone are not enough to explain any connection with mythical figures. Moreover, as Miano stated, it is likely that such a

³² See Coarelli (n. 13), 95–100; Miano (n. 30), 117–19 with further bibliography; A. Mastrocinque, ‘Marsia e la civitas Romana’, in M. Chiabà (ed.), *Hoc quoque laboris praemium. Scritti in onore di Gino Bandelli* (Trieste, 2014), 331–41.

³³ For the link between Marsyas and *libertas*, besides Miano (n. 30), see also P. Basso and A. Buonopane, ‘Marsia nelle città del mondo romano’, *MediterrAnt* 11 (2008), 139–59 and Mastrocinque (n. 32), 334.

³⁴ V. Arena, ‘The status of Marsyas, Liber, and Servius: an instance of an ancient semantic battle?’, in M. Nebelin and C. Tiersch (edd.), *Semantische Kämpfe zwischen Republik und Prinzipat* (forthcoming); P. López Barja de Quiroga, ‘The *Quinquatrus* of June, Marsyas and *libertas* in the Late Roman Republic’, *CQ* 68 (2018), 143–59.

³⁵ *RRC* 1.378, followed by Coarelli (n. 13), 116–18.

³⁶ Miano (n. 30), 132.

³⁷ See *MRR* 1.172–3.

³⁸ Livy 10.6.11. See K.-J. Hölkeskamp, ‘Das *plebiscitum Ogulnium de sacerdotibus*. Überlegungen zu Authentizität und Interpretation der livianischen Überlieferung’, *RhM* 131 (1988), 51–67; J.H. Valgaeren, ‘The jurisdiction of the pontiffs at the end of the fourth century B.C.’, in O. Tellegen-Couperus (ed.), *Law and Religion in the Roman Republic* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 107–18, at 115–18 with further bibliography.

³⁹ Miano (n. 30), 131.

statue constituted some sort of political symbol rather than a mere reference to the gentilician name.

Mario Torelli and Filippo Coarelli linked Marsyas' statue to the censorship of C. Marcus Censorinus in 294 B.C. This date would fit well with the Paestum statue, and it is close to the date of Censorinus' augurate.⁴⁰ Whether the connection between Marsyas and the Marcii is connected to the augurate or not, however, the most likely date for the statue remains the beginning of the third century. The link between the artwork and the Marcii is certain, if a Marcus could still mint a coin with the representation of this statue in the first century.

As for its general meaning, we can only speculate: Marsyas was certainly a victim, 'persecuted' by a higher power (in his case, Apollo). Even if we do not consider the aspect of *libertas*, in fact, Marsyas was certainly considered at least a 'hero' by the poor people and, by extension, by the plebeians: he was a talented satyr punished by the Olympian gods for his insolence but also for his unquestionable talent. We can assume that the tradition about Marsyas represented something similar (underlining again that this interpretation is a hypothetical reconstruction). However, the Marsyas in the Forum was clearly a free man. Setting *libertas* aside, Marsyas must have been at least a symbol of the oppressed people, which brings us back to the condition of the *plebs*.⁴¹ As Miano said, there is no need to look for a connection with either the myth or its details: Marsyas' figure is understandable even if conceived 'merely' as a political symbol.

One should also understand why the sources forgot this symbol. The easiest explanation is that the process of formation of the patrician-plebeian *nobilitas* drew to a close very soon after the placement of the statue. Livy himself specifies that the *plebiscitum Ogulnium* passed with no significant opposition from the patricians; in 287 B.C., only thirteen years after the *plebiscitum*, the *lex Hortensia* brought to an end the conflict of the orders.

The Marcii were one of the most powerful plebeian *gentes* in the early third century; they exploited every opportunity to underline their role within the *nobilitas*. C. Marcus Rutilus was the first plebeian to become both dictator and censor, and this was an undeniable achievement of his *gens*. These two aspects can relate to each other: if Valentina Arena is right, any link with *libertas* in Marsyas' figure is difficult to interpret, but there are no difficulties in considering it a symbol of the oppressed people and a symbol of the plebeians as victims of the patricians, at least in a propagandistic point of view. Considering Marsyas in this way could surely help in looking for a connection between his figure, his statue and the *gens Marcia*.

MARCIAN TRADITIONS IN CONTEXT

This leads to some considerations. The Numan Marcian tradition is almost opposite to the Aemilian-Pinarian one. In the first version, Numa had only one daughter. In the second, he also had four sons. This divergence of the traditions about Numa's lineage

⁴⁰ Torelli (n. 30), 103 and Coarelli (n. 13), 91–110. Miano (n. 30) substantially agrees with Torelli and Coarelli. See again Storch Marino (n. 6 [1992]) on Censorinus.

⁴¹ See also Coarelli (n. 13), 106–7, who sees a connection with the liberation of the *nexi* (slaves by debt).

was already noted in ancient times, as one can see in the multiple versions that Plutarch reports. Second, as we said, the Aemilii and the Pinarii emphasized the Pythagorean aspect of their genealogy for political reasons (related to the first official political contacts with Magna Graecia, after 343 B.C.).⁴² The Marcian tradition, by consequence, would probably be a later one: the Marcii took advantage of Numa's revived prestige. These *gentes* would have revived the king's character in different perspectives, which could be more useful for them in their propaganda. In the end, the struggles concerning the plebeian pontificate—well linked to the Numan 'pontifical' tradition of the Marcii—took place not long before 300 B.C., the year in which the *plebiscitum Ogulnium* passed and the plebeians obtained the possibility of becoming *pontifices*. As previously mentioned, the plebiscite passed with almost no opposition.

Therefore, it is likely that the plebeian *nobilitas* started discussing their ambitions to become pontiffs not long before 300 B.C. and that, around this year, they initiated political action to obtain this right.

As *terminus post quem* the year 304 B.C. is plausible for two main reasons. This is the year in which the Samnite War ended, which probably reopened some struggles that the 'political groups'⁴³ set aside during the war, defending their common interests.⁴⁴ Once the war finished, it is not surprising if at least some internal conflicts started again on these themes.

The second reason is that in 304 B.C. Cn. Flavius became curule aedile. Flavius was Ap. Claudius Caecus' former scribe and, obviously, a plebeian.⁴⁵ This election caused an unprecedented scandal, mostly relating to his actions within the religious sphere. Flavius published, in fact, the pontifical *arcana*, then consecrated a temple to Concordia in the Vulcanal without being a pontiff and therefore forcing the *pontifex maximus*, Scipio Barbatus,

to suggest the ritual words, even though he stated that, according to the *mos maiorum*, no one could dedicate a temple without being either consul or *imperator*.⁴⁶

⁴² This would be an approximate date, without even engaging with the chronological problems of the fourth century. Even the Capuan *deditio* is much doubted. See, among others, P.J. Burton, *Friendship and Empire. Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353–146 B.C.)* (Cambridge, 2011), 122–4, for recent considerations about the *deditio* and bibliographical discussion on the topic.

⁴³ The matter of Roman Republican political groupings is still very complex and debated. I use these terms for the sake of simplicity. Some of the most important historiographical discussions can be found in M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart, 1912); F. Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (Stuttgart, 1920); F. Cassola, *I gruppi politici romani nel III sec. a.C.* (Trieste, 1962); K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Die Entstehung der Nobilität: Studien zur sozialen und politischen Geschichte der römischen Republik im 4. Jhd. v.Chr.* (Wiesbaden, 1987); F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1998); Hölkeskamp (n. 3).

⁴⁴ Thus Cornell (n. 28), 343, referring to the first years after the Licinian-Sextian laws and to the modifications with the *leges Genuciae*: 'An important result of the new situation was that the two groups forming the patricio-plebeian nobility were not locked in conflict, but on the contrary were bound together by the peculiar rules of the power-sharing system.'

⁴⁵ See Livy 9.46; Plin. *HN* 33.17–19; Val. Max. 2.5.2. For Flavius' aedileship in 304 B.C., see *MRR* 1.168. These events were thought to be remarkable: the aedile's deeds fill a whole chapter in Livy. On Flavius' deeds and their connection with Ap. Claudius, see also M. Humm, *Appius Claudius Caecus. La République accomplie* (Rome, 2005), 441–80.

⁴⁶ Livy 9.46.6: *uerba praeire, cum more maiorum negaret nisi consulem aut imperatorem posse templum dedicare.*

It seems likely that this series of deeds would have stirred up political debate concerning the *sacra* and, more specifically, the relationship between pontificate and plebs. For these reasons, the year 304 B.C. can probably assume this role of *terminus post quem* for the origin of this 'pontifical' tradition.⁴⁷

There are, however, other considerations to make about the propaganda of the Numan *gentes*. If it dates back to the second half of the fourth century, and if the Marcii, years later, used Numa's figure for their own propaganda while untying it from Pythagoreanism, the following can be inferred:

- 1) Numa's figure was the key element of Aemilio-Pinarian propaganda in Rome. This propaganda was very successful, even if it included the public display of Pythagorean tendencies (as seen, for example, in the erection of Pythagoras' and Alcibiades' statues in the Forum).⁴⁸
- 2) Marcian propaganda was based on the lineage from Numa through the female line, the only line that was certain. The Marcii, by consequence, in the Numan tradition placed themselves in a stronger position than the Aemilii and the Pinarii. The latter *gentes* descended from Numa's sons, whose tradition was still considered uncertain centuries later.
- 3) The cornerstone of the matter is the meaning both sides gave to Numa's figure. The 'Pythagorean Numa' represented the cultural connection between the aristocracies of Magna Graecia and the Roman *gentes*. The 'pontifical Numa' embodied the relationship between the Roman plebeian *nobilitas* and the pontificate. From this perspective, the Romans clearly appreciated Numa's figure, and for good reasons: many propagandistic uses of Numa's figure can be seen throughout Republican and Early Imperial history.⁴⁹

There is another possible solution for this Numan Marcian tradition: the Marcii might have been willing to compete for the pontificate after, and because of, the approval of the *plebiscitum Ogulnium*. Therefore, the argument should be reversed: their Numan tradition (and propaganda) would have seen its birth in 300 B.C. or a short while later in order to obtain the pontificate. Popular appreciation of Numa's figure and the vitality of Numan propaganda would have remained the same: these few years would not make any difference. In this case, however, this tradition would become a purely familial propaganda, and not a measure to promote a *lex* for the benefit of the plebeians.

The strongest objection against this interpretation comes from the other Marcian tradition. As previously stated, Marcus Censorinus probably erected Marsyas' statue in order to advertise his familiar tradition as a plebeian when he became censor. If so, it would be hard to think that the two traditions coexisted: the result is, from a propagandistic point of view, at least confusing.⁵⁰ These two traditions must have

⁴⁷ The year 304 B.C. is very eventful: many Italian peoples signed agreements after the defeat at *Bouianum* (Livy 9.45.18; Diod. Sic. 20.101.5); the censor Q. Fabius Rullianus annulled Ap. Claudius Caecus' reform of the tribes (thus assuming the *cognomen* 'Maximus': Livy 9.46.13–15); see e.g. Cassola (n. 43), 108–9. The intervention of Cn. Flavius took place in an extremely dynamic political, religious and cultural context, with Roman 'political groups' starting to differentiate themselves more decisively.

⁴⁸ Plin. *HN* 34.26; Plut. *Num.* 8.20. Cf. Russo (n. 6 [2012]); see also Storchi Marino (n. 6 [1999]), 146–52 and Coarelli (n. 13), 119–23.

⁴⁹ See also G. Aricò Anselmo, 'Numa Pompilio e la propaganda augustea', *ASGP* 57 (2014), 27–62: propagandistic uses of Numa continued in the Augustan period, reflecting the persistent influence of this figure.

⁵⁰ It remains true that in the 80s of the first century B.C. the *gens Marcia* struck coins at the same time with, respectively, Marsyas' iconography and Numa with Ancus (see above). Between these

been established at different times, possibly with a few years of distance which would have certainly helped. This reinforces the dating of the Numan tradition before 300 B.C. and the onset of the Marsyas tradition some years after that date. Moreover, the Numan tradition made the Marcii the first plebeian *gens* to obtain the highest priesthood, while the Marsyas tradition appears to be a more generic instance of plebeian propaganda. Since priesthood was the central point of the discussion of the Ogulnian plebiscite, Marsyas and plebeian ideals constituted a weaker argument than a Numan tradition would have. The same Numan tradition would have had nothing to do with the electoral competition for the censorship. On the contrary, using Marsyas to revive the ideal of the free men within the *plebs* would have been an effective political strategy. Another example of 'plebeian sculpture' was the Ogulnian she-wolf, probably erected with a similar purpose in the same period.⁵¹

If Marsyas' statue had been erected in order to promote Censorinus' role (or candidature) as augur, we could equally see the differentiation of two traditions for different purposes. The first, with Numa, would have supported the approval of the *plebiscitum Ogulnium* (or, more generally, the plebeian access to the priesthood). The second, after the *plebiscitum*, aimed to promote the Marcii and plebeian ideals. As for the role of the Marcii as augurs, this interpretation relies on weaker bases, since Marsyas as a symbol of the augurate is a debated interpretation. The theory that sees Marsyas as a general symbol for the plebeians still seems more probable.

The Marcian Numan tradition came into being between 304 and 300 B.C. and was quickly abandoned once the *plebiscitum Ogulnium* passed. After a few years, with the candidature of C. Marcius for the censorship, the Marcii decided to use another means of propaganda, more suitable for promoting the importance of plebeians in Roman politics: their association with Marsyas.

CONCLUSIONS

The 'symbolic capital' of a *gens* included many different elements. The Marcii had precise political aims in creating these traditions, which none the less remained linked to their *nomen* for at least two centuries. There are, obviously, other aspects of the Marcian tradition that have been excluded from this article: the *carmina Marciana* are a perfect example of that.⁵²

Even if we look only at these two traditions, it is clear that the Marcii were very active in creating traditions in order to be elected, thus enhancing their familiar history. Hölkeskamp's arguments can be confirmed: in the first century, the Marcii still recalled their mythical lineage from Numa and their association with Marsyas, using their rich 'symbolic capital'. Other families preferred to use their recent glories, as is the case, for example, with the Aemilii, who minted coins with a more 'personal' iconography, which represented L. Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus' triumph or the deeds of

periods, however, passed almost two centuries, more than sufficient to crystalize a 'double tradition'.

⁵¹ Livy 10.23.12; see A.W.J. Holleman, 'The Ogulnii monument at Rome', *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987), 427–9 and Miano (n. 30), 143–72. Coarelli (n. 13), 102 believes that the statue of the she-wolf and the statue of Marsyas are connected, presenting other good reasons related to the commission of the two works and to the political climate of the period.

⁵² See Russo (n. 6 [2005 'I *carmina Marciana*']). The fragments are in *FPL*⁴ 14–16 Blänsdorf.

M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 187).⁵³ Being unable to use new traditions, the Marcii used more ancient ones, thus giving us a perfect example of the duration and the aims of a Roman familiar tradition.

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⁵³ Respectively, *RRC* 415/1 and 419/1.