

CICERO, *DE DIVINATIONE* 1.55

Sed quid ego Graecorum: nescio quo modo me magis nostra delectant. Omnes hoc historici, Fabii Gellii sed proxume Coelius: cum bello Latino ludi votivi maxumi primum fierent, civitas ad arma repente est excitata . . .

Quintus goes on to tell the story of the countryman's dream, with its divine warning about the ominous *praesul*, which is also related by Livy, Dionysius, Valerius Maximus, and Macrobius.¹

The problem is *proxume*. L. Coelius Antipater is firmly dated by Cicero himself as a contemporary of C. Fannius, who was consul in 122.² The only sure indication of Cn. Gellius' date is the *terminus post quem* (at least for the later books) provided by his reference to the Secular Games of 146 B.C.;³ there is, however, a certain amount of circumstantial evidence to suggest that the years 130–90 B.C. are the most appropriate background to his surviving fragments. Badian suggests that the unprecedented volume of Gellius' work may result from his use of the *Annales maximi* published in the pontificate of P. Scaevola (130–c.115 B.C.);⁴ Elizabeth Rawson wonders whether his evident interest in the pseudo-history of the Marsi and other Italian peoples was because he was affected by the build-up to the Social War;⁵ Gabba has argued convincingly that Gellius' view on Numa and his sons was a deliberate refutation of Piso's⁶—and since Piso is regularly cited as *ensorius*,⁷ that may mean that both sets of Annals post-date 120.

Coelius' history of the Second Punic War was just seven books long, as is clear from the surviving fragments. Gellius' Annals, however, whether or not we accept the citation of a ninety-seventh book, were demonstrably on a scale even more ample than Livy,⁸ and must have taken twenty years or more to complete.⁹ The writing careers of the two men must surely have overlapped, at the very least; more probably Coelius' seven books were all written after Gellius had begun his *magnum opus*, but before—perhaps long before—he had finished it.

¹ Livy 2.36.1, Dion. Hal. 7.68.3–69.2, Val. Max. 1.7.4 (who places the *ludi* in the Circus Flaminius: cf. *PBSR* 44 (1976), 44–5), Macr. *Sat.* 1.11.3 (who reveals the aetiological significance of the story: *furca* > *σφαυρός* > *instauratio*). cf. also Aug. *C.D.* 4.26, Arnob. 7.39, Lact. *Div. Inst.* 2.7.20.

² Cic. *leg.* 1.6: 'Fanni autem aetate coniunctus Antipater . . .'

³ Censorinus, *de die nat.* 17.11: 'at Piso censorius et Cn. Gellius sed et Cassius Hemina, qui illo tempore vivebat, post annum factos tertium adfirmant, Cn. Cornelio Lentulo L. Mummio Achaico consulibus, id est anno DCVIII.'

⁴ E. Badian, in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London, 1966), p.12. The argument is not invalidated by Miss Rawson's demonstration (in *CQ* 21 (1971), 166–9)

of the unhistorical character of the material in the *Annales maximi*: Gellius too evidently wrote antiquarian aetiology.

⁵ E. Rawson, *Latomus* 35 (1976), 716.

⁶ E. Gabba, in *Les Origines de la république romaine*, Entrepreneurs Hardt 13 (Geneva, 1967), p.161.

⁷ Dion. Hal. 2.38.3 and 39.1, 12.9.3, Pliny *N.H.* 13.84, Cens. *die nat.* 17.11; cf. Rawson, *Latomus* 35 (1976), 706 and 709 on fragments that show an interest in censorial matters.

⁸ Fr. 26P, cited by Charisius from book 33 and by Priscian from book 30, evidently dealt with the same episode as Livy 22.24.11. (Fr. 29P from the 97th book: the numeral may not be reliable.)

⁹ Compare Livy: 133 books in about thirty years, c. 29 B.C. to A.D. 1? R. Syme, *HSCP* 64 (1959), 50 ff.

In that case the precise adverb *proxume* is illogical: it would be like saying 'Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, but most recently Oscar Wilde.'

It could be argued that the story must have come in one of Gellius' earlier books, and that if they were published seriatim it would therefore have appeared before Coelius' treatment of the subject. But would Cicero have known, or cared, about the relative dates at that distance in time? If I may use another parallel, one would not expect Seneca, for instance, to call Virgil's account of Aeneas *proximum* in comparison with Livy's.

A much better hypothesis would be that Coelius had read the story in Fabius Pictor or in (early) Gellius, and cited them both; Cicero would then be taking his information entirely from Coelius, and inferring the relative chronology of Gellius from the citation.¹ The corollary would be that Cicero did not know when Gellius had been writing, and indeed—if the circumstantial evidence referred to above is reliable—that he got it wrong, to the extent of implying that Gellius was earlier than Coelius rather than a contemporary. That may be acceptable in itself, since the only other possible evidence that Cicero had read Gellius is notoriously controversial.² I should prefer to argue, on a *priori* grounds, that through his work on the *de republica* and *de legibus*, by about 50 B.C. Cicero was familiar with every substantial history of early Rome, and that if he had read someone as obscure as Vennonius, he would surely have read Gellius and known when he wrote.³ But there is in any case a further objection to *proxume*.

The *de divinatione* has a contemporary dramatic date.⁴ How can Quintus say both that *all* the historians have the story and that Coelius has it most recently? In strict logic, it ought to mean that Coelius was the most recent historian to have written before 44 B.C. That is obviously absurd: Cicero cannot have meant that. But even if he meant that Coelius was the most recent historian to include the story of the dream, it is hard to accept. Varro's work on *scaenicae origines* was surely known to Cicero,⁵ and the origins of *ludi* were demonstrably one of the preoccupations of Valerius Antias in his history;⁶ it is highly improbable that either omitted the story Cicero tells. It is, I suppose, conceivable that Varro's work on the subject was all later than 44, and that Cicero, for some reason, never read Antias at all;⁷ but even with that much special pleading, the logical absurdity cannot be exorcised. Consider Licinius Macer, whom Cicero had certainly read, and who certainly dealt with the period in question: if he did not mention the dream story, why does Quintus say *omnes*? If he did, why does Quintus say *proxume*?

I suggest that we read *maxume*. The corruption is a simple one,⁸ and *maxume* not only avoids the difficulties spelt out above, but actually makes better sense.

¹ This was suggested to me by Professor Badian.

² Cic. *leg.* 1.6: 'ecce autem succedere huic [sc. Antipatro] †belli†, Clodius, Asellio: nihil ad Coelium, sed potius ad antiquorum languorem et inscitiam.'

³ Cic. *leg.* 1.6 and Att. 12.3.1 (Vennonius); cf. Rawson, *JRS* 62 (1972), 35 f. on Cicero's historical studies.

⁴ Cic. *div.* 1.8: 'nuper cum essem cum Q. fratre in Tusculano . . .'

⁵ H. Funaioli (ed.), *Grammaticae*

Romanae fragmenta (Teubner, 1907), pp.215 ff., cf. p.182.

⁶ Antias frs. 18, 22, 40, 55P.

⁷ This is, indeed, widely believed; but see J. D. Cloud, *LCM* 2 (1977), 211–13 and 225–7, whose counter-arguments seem to me conclusive.

⁸ 'Solent passim has voces commutare librarii': A. Drakenborch on Livy 22.22.7 (Amsterdam, 1740). I owe this reference to Dr. Woodman.

Coelius was the only second-century historian Cicero is likely to have enjoyed reading, the only one who employed a little *ornatio* on his narrative;¹ he was one of Cicero's main sources for the *de divinatione*, particularly on the question of dreams and divine warnings, which were evidently a speciality of his.² 'All the historians have this—Fabius, Gellius, but above all Coelius.'

There is even some manuscript support for *maxume*, though its value is hard to determine. V², who corrected the ninth-century Vindobonensis very shortly after the scribe had finished,³ has *vel maxime* at this point. The Teubner editor holds that V, with A and B, descends directly from the archetype of the manuscript tradition;⁴ if so, it is possible that V²'s alternative reading comes from the archetype itself. There can be no certainty, however, and it has been argued that hyparchetypes should be inferred above A, B, and V in the stemma,⁵ which would rob V² of any authority.

All we can do is to see what V²'s record is like. His variants are practically all minor changes of two or three letters, sometimes merely altering the spelling of a word, sometimes changing the word itself. There are some unintelligent readings among them,⁶ but also a number which have rightly commended themselves to editors, even with no support from any other manuscript; for instance, only V² gets *rosissent* right at *div.* 2.59 (*rossent*, *possent*, *nocte essent* in the other manuscripts), or *perniciem* at *N.D.* 3.66 (*pernitium*, *permitiem*, etc.), and on a smaller scale but no less significant, *et ex eo* instead of *ex eo* or *ex quo* at *div.* 2.69, *-que quae* instead of just *-que* or *quae* at *N.D.* 3.84. At *N.D.* 2.136, a passage quoted by St. Augustine, only V² in the Cicero manuscript tradition has the verb in the form Augustine uses.⁷ On the other hand, the spelling *maxime* rather than *maxume* counts against the idea that V²'s alternative reading represents a more reliable tradition.

But whether the scribe of V² had good evidence for his variant, or whether it was just a lucky guess, I submit that it represents essentially what Cicero wrote.⁸

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¹ Cic. *leg.* 1.6 ('paulo inflavit vehementius'), *de or.* 2.54 ('addidit maiorem historiae sonum').

² Badian, *op. cit.*, p.16: 'he is fond of portents and divine interventions'. e.g. *div.* 1.48, 49, 56, 78.

³ See O. Plasberg's preface (1917) to W. Ax's edition of *de natura deorum* (Teubner, 1933), p.vi. cf. A. S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis de natura deorum libri III* (Harvard, 1955), pp.83–5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.v–ix.

⁵ T. J. Hunt, *Pegasus* 5 (1966), 52–7. I am grateful to my colleague John Glucker for drawing my attention to this point.

⁶ Notably *summa manus* for *Summanus* (*div.* 1.16), Theseus for Rhesus (*N.D.* 3.45), and—splendidly—*extis piscium* for *extispicum* (*div.* 1.29).

⁷ Aug. *contra Iulianum* 4.12.58 (*Patrologia Latina* xlv.766): 'pulmones autem et cor extrinsecus spiritum adducant'. The other Cicero manuscripts have *ducant* or *adducantur*.

⁸ This note has been very greatly improved by the comments of Ernst Badian and Tony Woodman on an earlier version. It should not necessarily be assumed that they both agree with its conclusion.