A NOTE ON THE USE OF THE *PRAENOMEN*

It is recognized that Romans of the late Republic did not normally address or refer to one another by *praenomen* alone (for the conventions, see J. N. Adams, 'Conventions of naming in Cicero', *CQ* n.s. 28 [1978], 145 ff.; J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, ch. 11; Fordyce on Catullus 68 init.). Most instances in which the *praenomen* is used alone are easily explicable (see Adams, p. 161); either the persons concerned are members of the same family, with names otherwise identical ('Marce fili', 'Quinte frater'; 'Luci' in *de Fin.* 5. 71, cf. 15, etc.), or the *praenomen* itself is particularly distinctive and aristocratic (Appius Claudius or Servius Sulpicius). However, there are some cases in which these obvious considerations do not apply, and various explanations are resorted to: the use of the *praenomen* within the family suggests intimacy or mock-intimacy (Adams: this seems to apply well enough to, say, Cicero's use of 'Gnaeus' to refer to Pompey behind his back); while the supposition that the *praenomen* was used more in earlier times, being the original personal as opposed to family name, gives rise to the idea that it had a solemn or archaic ring (cf. C. W. Macleod, *CQ* n.s. 24 [1974], 82 n. 3, discussing Catullus 68a). I wish to suggest another possible explanation, not in order to cover all cases, but simply in order to provide what seems to me a better explanation for a certain number of occurrences of this form of address.

It is well known that the Greeks, from the time when they first came into contact with Romans until the first century A.D. or later, tended to use the *praenomen* alone when referring to Romans by name (see Balsdon, op. cit. pp. 158 f. for the evidence). Usually – and I believe rightly – this is thought to be a mere misunderstanding on the part of the Greeks of the complicated and apparently illogical Roman system of nomenclature. Naturally the Greeks would choose the *praenomen*, which looked like a personal name, rather than the *nomen*, which was clearly an inherited family name; and as Balsdon points out, the *cognomen* (the usual familiar mode of address among upper-class Romans) was not used officially when the Greeks first had cause to be interested in Roman names. It seems to me inherently more likely that the Greeks, never too keen to conform to the ways of foreigners, developed their own way of referring to Romans, than that Roman practice changed radically between the time of Polybius and the time of Cicero (as one would have to assume if one thought that Polybius' predilection for *praenomina* reflected contemporary Roman practice).

Given that a Roman of the second century B.C., and probably also of the first, would have been referred to by his Greek acquaintances as 'Titus', 'Lucius', etc., it seems to me that it would be almost inevitable that the *praenomen* itself should develop a sort of Greek atmosphere about it. Romans who wanted to be up to date with Greek fashion might well refer to themselves or address each other by the *praenomen*, and the more old-fashioned or nationalistic Romans might well make fun of this as an affectation. I believe that there is a case for supposing that this is exactly what is happening in two second-century examples. First, in Lucilius frr. 91 ff. M., Scaevola makes fun of the Hellenized Albucius:

> ...Graece ergo praetor Athenis,
> id quod maluisti, te cum ad me accedis saluto:
> 'chaere,' inquam, 'Tite!'

Evidently 'correct form' for addressing a Roman in Greek involved the use of the *praenomen* by itself. This cannot have been Scaevola's normal mode of addressing Albucius: in line 88 he calls him 'Albuci', according to the ordinary Roman fashion.

The second example is reported by Aulus Gellius (11. 8), who gives the source as Nepos *de illustribus viris*; Gellius himself would have had no reason to change the wording in this particular, and it probably goes back to Nepos at least, which is good enough for the present purpose. The anecdote is that of Cato reproving Aulus Albinus for writing history in Greek, while at the same time apologizing in the preface for any faults of Greek style; Cato's first words to Albinus are 'Ne tu, Aule, nimium nugator es'. Again, it seems to me, the Roman nationalist is using the *praenomen* to mock the affected Hellenist.

If this 'Hellenizing' use of the *praenomen* is genuine, it also helps to cast light on a number of instances of this form of address in Cicero. First one may notice *ad Att.* 2. 9. 4 and 2. 12. 4, where Atticus appears in Greek as *Τίτος* (which is, perhaps, what the Greeks usually called him: they clearly would not have called him 'Atticus', which was a Roman nickname acquired because of his Athenian culture). He is also addressed as 'Tite' in the *de Legibus*, and once in the *Brutus* (292). These are to some extent special cases, as in the former he is virtually one of the family, and in the latter 'Atticus' would have caused confusion in the middle of a discussion of which orators are 'Attici'; but it is not clear that the option of the *praenomen* would have been available in the case of a less Hellenized Roman. (The passages *ad Att.* 16. 3. 1 and 16. 11. 3, cited by Adams, are not genuine instances, since they both refer to the quotation 'O Tite si quid' at the beginning of the *de Senectute*.) Then there are four passages that may be taken together: two to Atticus, *ad Att.* 2. 16. 3 'Quare incumbamus, o noster Tite, ad illa praeclara studia' and 9. 6. 5 'obsecro te, mi Tite, eripe hunc mihi dolorem aut minue saltem, aut consolatione aut consilio aut quacumque re potes'; one to Q. Cornificius, *ad Fam.* 12. 25. 5 'Quamobrem, mi Quinte, conscende nobiscum et quidem ad puppim...'; and one concerning (probably) L. Saufeius, *ad Att.* 7. 2. 4 '...Lucius noster et Patron, qui cum omnia ad se referant nec quicquam alterius causa fieri putent...non intellegunt se de callido homine loqui, non de bono viro'. If one asks what these passages have in common apart from the use of the *praenomen*, there is a clear answer: they are all in a poetic or philosophical style, with a gentle nuance of parody. In the two Atticus passages the philosophical reference is obvious, and *ad Att.* 7. 2. 4 is explicitly about philosophy. In the letter to Cornificius the idea of the ship is more poetic than philosophical, though it seems quite likely that philosophy too is in the air (compare 12. 33. 4 to the same correspondent, 'haec...sic fero ut philosophiae magnam habeam gratiam...tibique idem censeo faciendum, nec a quo culpa absit quicquam in malis numerandum; sed haec tu melius'; see E. Rawson, *CQ* n.s. 28 [1978], 193 n.). It seems to me very likely that the mode of address is chosen to fit in with the Greek and philosophical atmosphere of these passages.

I repeat that I am not putting this forward as an explanation for all possible cases: different contexts need different explanations. I do not, for example, have any idea why M. Cincius calls C. Cento 'Gai' in Cicero, *de Or.* 2. 286, nor why the *scribae* call Horace 'Quinte' in *Sat.* 2. 6. 37. If one thinks of the highly complicated conventions that have prevailed recently in this country regarding forms of address, one may imagine that these instances convey some subtlety that is not easily recoverable. But I have not seen any more plausible explanation for the cases mentioned above than the one I suggest.

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