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POETRY, POLITICS, AND ENNIUS*

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hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
saecula...(*Aen.* 6.791–93)

Modern readers, who might well be uneasy with the explicit merger of poetry and politics, have learned to cope with Anchises' fervor by observing how the triumphal frieze of *Aeneid VI* ends emotionally and quietly with the frustrated promise of the young Marcellus. Vergil's patriotic vision strikes us as sincere, but also deliberately disquieting, as the famous verities of the Roman past lead only to the uncertainties of the Augustan present. Context saves Art from jingoism, encouraging us to recognize and accept the *Aeneid's* flashes of Roman pride as not the goal of Vergil's poetry, but only one aspect of the moral dilemma it explores. The patronage that protected and nourished him as he wrote neither compromises his poem nor requires our defense. So complex a problem of patriotism and poetry is hardly unique to Vergil, but we have not been sufficiently quick to generalize its lessons. Though we know better than to subordinate poetic to political readings in a work like the *Aeneid,* we have not so willingly extended this tolerance of complexity to the poetry of other periods. Vergil's greatest Roman predecessor has perhaps suffered most from this reluctance. Ennius' ties to socially and politically prominent figures of his own day are well documented, but the fragmentary survival of his epic has deprived its manifest patriotism of a larger poetic context to give it perspective. Recent discussions of Ennius tend to ignore his poetic gifts and think the worst of his motives. The legitimate use of historical evidence to place otherwise isolated fragments in plausible sequence has combined with the free use of prosopographical techniques to reconstruct a political agenda for the poet as well as a structure for his poem. Ennius emerges from such treatment as an ingratiating court poet, suiting his Muse to the political climate. *Poeta cliens* has become a dark, or at best demeaning label for Rome's first great poet.[1] It warrants review.

* Ennius is quoted from the edition of O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford 1985), hereafter cited as "Skutsch." Note that text and line numbers may differ substantially from those of Vahlen. Works cited by short title are: Badian, "Ennius" = E. Badian, "Ennius and his Friends," *Fondation Hardt Entretiens XVII: Ennius* (Geneva 1972) 149-208; Broughton, *MRR* = T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic, Vol. I* (Cleveland 1968); Jocelyn, "Poems" = H. D. Jocelyn, "The Poems of Quintus Ennius," *ANRW* I.2 (1972) 987-1026; Martina, "Cliens" = M. Martina, "Ennio, 'poeta cliens,'" *QFC* 2 (1979) 13-74; Skutsch, *Stud. Enn.*= O. Skutsch, *Studia Enniana* (London 1968); and Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* = W. Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter* (Hildesheim 1968). This paper owes much to the advice and encouragement of Elaine Fantham and Erich S. Gruen, to whose forthcoming *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* I am especially indebted. Only the faults of this present work are entirely my own.

[1] Thus "an engaging courtier" (Jocelyn, "Poems" 993) and "un poeta 'cortigiano'" (Martina, "Cliens" 73). Skutsch, 1–2 imagines the poet passing from

The issue is not whether Ennius had prestigious social connections. That is certain. The problem lies in how those connections may have affected his epic poetry then and should color our estimation of it now. The very point of his *Annales* is at issue, and so is the nature of its influence on the subsequent course of Latin literature.

Politics may certainly be difficult to disentangle from the poetry of the *Annales*. The most striking case lies in a fragment from Book XV, which dealt with M. Fulvius Nobilior's campaign in Aetolia.

> undique conveniunt velut imber tela tribuno:
> configunt parmam, tinnit hastilibus umbo,
> aerato sonitu galeae, sed nec pote quisquam
> undique nitendo corpus discerpere ferro.
> semper abundantes hastas frangitque quatitque.
> totum sudor habet corpus, multumque laborat,
> nec respirandi fit copia: praepete ferro
> Histri tela manu iacientes sollicitabant. (391–98)

Macrobius preserves the passage because it has a Homeric model, that moment in the *Iliad* when Ajax is forced to retreat from the Achaean ships. Homer's scene was striking for its vivid details as it portrays the hero laboring under a shower of Trojan arrows, and it was famous as the turning point in the battle as the Trojans bring fire to the ships (*Il.* 16.102–11). In adapting this description to his own needs, Ennius not only avoids Homer's characteristic repetitions and graphic details, but also alters Homer's basic organization. The original passage focused squarely on the hero crouched behind his towering shield:

> ὁ δ' ἀριστερὸν ὦμον ἔκαμνεν
> ἔμπεδον αἰὲν ἔχων σάκος αἰόλον, οὐδ' ἐδύναντο
> ἀμφ' αὐτῷ πελεμίξαι ἐρείδοντες βελέεσσιν. (106–8)

Ennius, in contrast, moves from the shower of missiles in the first four lines to his hero's efforts to ward them off, and then back again to the enemy. Emphasis lies on the attack, not the defense. The image has had to change because Ajax's towering σάκος has of necessity become the small, round *parma* of a tribune facing not the will of Zeus, but only the Istrian weaponry.[2] We are no longer in some distant heroic age. Ennius is casting in epic terms a world that was for him both real and contemporary. The year is 189 B.C., and the poem is describing the courage of a recognizable Roman fighting before the walls of a real Ambracia. Ennius has sacrificed Homer's image to introduce a new element of authentic immediacy, and his motive may not be purely aesthetic.

Ennius not only could have, but did witness the battle at Ambracia, for he had accompanied the consul Fulvius to Aetolia. Ennius had seen military service himself with Calabrian auxiliaries during the Second Punic War, but this

patron to patron like a talented cook. *Poeta cliens* is in any case too bald a term. Romans would, out of politeness if nothing else, have said *amicus*, even if *cliens* was meant. See R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge 1982) 8–15.

[2] Such details of combat help explain the shift of focus that troubles G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968) 687–89. More on the literary qualities of this passage in Williams, and M. von Albrecht, *Römische Poesie* (Heidelberg 1977) 21–43.

was his opportunity to study a major Roman campaign at close range.[3] It must have impressed him deeply. Upon his return, he composed a work called *Ambracia*, which was probably a play dealing with the campaign, and he originally designed this second, epic treatment of the siege to bring the *Annales* to its climax.[4] How his experience colored his writing is unknown—most battle fragments survive precisely because of their Homeric echoes—but Fulvius must surely have welcomed the good press. His Aetolian exploits were dogged by political controversy. Ambracia was never taken by storm. It surrendered while under siege, and its citizens soon afterwards sent a delegation to the Senate complaining of Fulvius' subsequent pillage of their city. The Senate listened, voted them significant compensation, and eventually declared that Ambracia had not been captured by force.[5] That decree combined with the continued opposition of M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 187) to delay and becloud Fulvius' claim of a triumph. It was finally voted in 187. Fulvius staged lavish games to Juppiter Optimus Maximus and then hastily celebrated the triumph itself before Lepidus could return to Rome and interfere (Liv. 39.4.5). The whole episode has an odd odor. Fulvius tried to sweeten things by holding still more lavish games in 186, but a few years later Cato could still taunt "Nobilior mobilior" with the memory of his dubious achievement:

> iam principio quis vidit corona donari quemquam cum oppidum captum non esset aut castra hostium non incensa essent? (fr. 148M)[6]

Such was the campaign in which Ennius' heroic tribune figured, and the battle where

> occumbunt multi letum ferroque lapique
> aut intra muros aut extra praecipe casu (389–90)

[3] For Ennius' service, presumably in Sardinia, see F. Leo, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur I* (Berlin 1913) 154–55 and Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen*, 137–39. To explain his purpose at Ambracia as "herald-to-be of his [i.e. Fulvius'] achievements" (Skutsch, 2) may explain why Fulvius invited him, but not necessarily why Ennius went.

[4] Ribbeck was first to identify *Ambracia* as a play, probably staged at games Fulvius sponsored in 187 or 186. Only four lines survive, in dubious meters and without context. Ribbeck and Vahlen thus arrange and print them rather differently. For Book XV as the original end of the *Annales*, see Skutsch, 563–65 and 675–76. The actual date of composition for this or any other book is unknown, though much discussed. Ennius may well have begun the epic upon his return from Greece, but the idea of writing it may just as easily have predated Fulvius' invitation. Full discussion in Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* 114–65.

[5] Livy 38.3–10 (the campaign); 38.43–44 (the delegation and debate). For the special circumstances of the Senate's action, see E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, vol. 1 (Berkeley 1984) 310–11. Ennius' account of the siege cannot be reconstructed from the apparent Vergilian echoes. See the astute demolition of such attempts by M. Wigodsky, *Vergil and Early Latin Poetry* (Wiesbaden 1972) 61–62 and 145–47.

[6] Cf. Livy 39.5 describing the triumph: "aureae coronae centum duodecim pondo ante currum latae sunt." Malcovati, *ORF* 57, discusses the speech *In M. Fulvium Nobiliorem*, which she dates to about 178. M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi, *Catonis Orationum Reliquiae* (Paravia 1982) 294–98 has little to add. For the games of 186, which featured Greek actors, athletes, and exotic animals, see Livy 39.22.

The heroic dignity of the fragments stands in curious contrast to the sordid tale that Livy tells.

Such timely elevation of the Aetolian campaign makes it hardly surprising that Cato eventually criticized Fulvius in the Senate for having taken Ennius with him to Ambracia.[7] Nor was Cato's irritation, which he must have thought his audience would share, an isolated outburst. There is a larger context for Roman suspicion of poetry, especially when linked as here with particular individuals. Poetry of that kind certainly existed from early times. Cato referred in his *Origines* to old banquet songs extolling "clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes," and Varro makes their performance sound like a perfectly respectable activity.[8] Yet their composers might not be thought so respectable. In the good old days, claimed Cato in a different context, when Romans still dressed modestly and horses cost more than cooks, poetic talent earned scant respect: "poeticae artis honos non erat. siquis in ea re studebat aut sese ad convivia adplicabat, grassator vocabatur" (Gel. 11.2 = *Carm. de mor.*, fr. 2J). A *grassator* was a flatterer more like the parasites of comedy than the poets who created them, and by the next century, the self-serving manipulations of private *laudationes* had become the bane of antiquarian research.[9] It was thus easy for Cato to cast aspersions on Nobilior's tie to Ennius, but how should the exigencies of this political attack color our own evaluation of the poet? Cato himself, if Cicero can be believed, continued to regard Ennius highly and was himself the beneficiary of laudatory verse.[10] Did political considerations shape Ennius' poetry in a significant way? Is Fulvian partisanship the most plausible motive for creating the heroic tribune at Ambracia?

These questions need a context, and since the poetic one is in ruins, something else must serve. Sub-literary *laudationes* aside, what relationship do we generally find between poetry and politics in the middle years of the Republic? Did poets normally depend on private patrons for their livelihood, and did they then shape their poems accordingly? We cannot take Cato's partisan attack at face value: that is naive. Nor can we impose our understanding of later Roman

[7] Cic., *TD* 1.3 speaks of an "oratio Catonis, in qua obiecit ut probrum M. Nobiliori, quod is in provinciam poetas duxisset; duxerat autem consul ille in Aetoliam, ut scimus, Ennium." Malcovati assigns this remark to the speech quoted above, note 6. Note that Cato's criticism was apparently of Fulvius, not Ennius.

[8] *Orig.*, fr. 118P, with multiple sources, including *TD* 1.3. Cicero himself thus links Ennius' work with the old *carmina*. Cf. Varro ap. Nonius 107L s.v. *assa voce:* "in conviviis pueri modesti ut cantarent carmina antiqua, in quibus laudes erant maiorum, et assa voce et cum tibicine." On the historicity of such songs, see A. Momigliano, "Perizonius, Niebuhr, and the Character of Early Roman Tradition," *JRS* 47 (1957) 104–14. Cato may have been offering his own history as a substitute; cf. fr. 2, with its echo of Xen., *Mem.* 1, and his refusal to mention distinguished Romans by name (Nep., *Cat.* 3).

[9] Festus 86L: "grassari antiqui ponebant pro adulari. grassari autem dicuntur latrones vias obsidentes; gradi siquidem ambulare est, unde tractum grassari, videlicet ab impetu gradiendi." J. Préaux, "Caton et l'ars poetica," *Latomus* 25 (1966) 710–25 thus equates *grassatores* with πλάνοι. M. Martina, "*Grassatores* e *Carmentarii*," *Labeo* 26 (1980) 155–75, esp. 155–60 makes too much of their likeness to comic parasites. Cic., *Brut.* 62 disparages the *mortuorum laudationes* full of false triumphs, excessive consulships, and similar exaggerations *ad inlustrandum nobilitatem suam*. Cf. Livy 7.9.5 on the familial bias of Licinius Macer.

[10] At *de Sen.* 10 Cicero has an aged Cato refer to Ennius as his *familiaris*. Cf. *Arch.* 22: "in caelum huius proavus Cato [ab Ennio] tollitur."

literary patronage on the scanty evidence of these earlier times: that is anachronistic. What Roman literature became is not what it once was, nor were the conditions that fostered it constant over the centuries. We must set our assumptions aside and think things out afresh.

What evidence we have begins, like Roman literature itself, with Livius Andronicus. The facts are few but encourage certain inferences. His name suggests a Greek freedman of the Livii, which may itself be the ultimate source of St. Jerome's statement that he tutored the sons of Livius Salinator and eventually won his freedom *ob ingenii meritum*. Suetonius also says he was a teacher, and two further, more reliable sets of facts encourage belief in a Livian connection.[11] At *Brutus* 72, Cicero argues on good authority that Andronicus was commissioned to produce the first plays in Latin for the *ludi Romani* of 240. Inscriptional evidence identifies a M. Livius Salinator as one of the *decemviri sacris faciundis* presiding over the Saecular games of 236, and it is easy to imagine him in that office as early as 240 (*MRR* 223). The second point of contact involves events of 207: Andronicus was commissioned to compose a hymn to Juno for performance at the elaborate expiatory rites decreed after lightning had struck the temple of Juno Regina on the Aventine just as Hasdrubal's army was poised to cross the Alps.[12] M. Livius Salinator, most probably a son of the decemvir of 236, was then consul for the second time. Coincidence? Probably not, but there is more to this than a simple case of Livian patronage. Both commissions involved affairs of state and senatorial decisions of major import. The pioneering dramas of 240, authorized in the exuberant aftermath of the First Punic War, represent a significant expansion of the native *ludi* and brought them closer to the level of Hellenistic festivals. This was a bold cultural initiative on Rome's part, and we know that the result was sufficiently impressive to attract Hiero, the Greek tyrannt of Syracuse, who came to Rome for the occasion with a large gift of grain (Eutrop. 3.1). The hymn of 207 involved a national mobilization when the very safety of Rome appeared to be at stake. Religious and secular authorities were joining together in an unprecedented sequence of rites, which included a magnificent procession of magistrates and priests, and a chorus of virgins singing Andronicus' hymn. These unusual events should be associated less with specifically Livian interests than with Livian responsibilities. No evidence suggests that Andronicus' execution of either commission, much less the plays written between, was or could have been designedly partisan. The Livian connection may explain how Andronicus came to the Senate's notice, but his selection was their collective choice.

Andronicus served the Senate, not the Livii, and he eventually received a unique public reward for that service.

> Itaque cum Livius Andronicus bello Punico secundo scripsisset carmen, quod a virginibus est cantatum, quia prosperius respublica populi Romani geri coepta est, publice adtributa est ei in Aventino aedis Minervae, in qua liceret scribis histrionibusque

[11] *Chron. ad a.* 1830; Suet. *gram.* 1.1. Cic., *Brut.* 72 quite plausibly records his city of origin as Tarentum, but there is much dispute over the date and circumstances of his arrival at Rome. Detailed discussion of the testimonia in Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* 1–8 and 297–99; J. H. Waszink, "Anfangsstadium der römischen Literatur," *ANRW* 1.2 (1972) 873–74.

[12] Livy 27.36–37. See B. MacBain, *Prodigy and Expiation: A Study of Religion and Politics in Republican Rome*, Collection Latomus 177 (Brussels 1982) 65–71.

consistere ac dona ponere; in honorem Livi, quia is et scribebat fabulas et agebat.

ei *Urs.*: et *F* (Festus,446L)

The right to meet and make offerings in a temple are the marks of an official Roman *collegium*,[13] and both the fact of this foundation and its intent as an honor are important clues to the literary climate of the period.

Theater production in the third century was a commercial enterprise, state-sanctioned if only partly state-funded, and involved extensive professional concerns and associations. The rapid expansion of the *ludi scaenici* in the later second century indicates not just the opportunism of public figures using mass entertainments to further their careers, but the availability of a theatrical community able to meet their growing demand for productions and to handle the increasing technical sophistication of the Latin scripts themselves.[14] The organization of these professionals reflects the Greek σύνοδοι τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνιτῶν, not the familial ties of Roman *clientela*, and the acceptance of all *scribae* into their new *collegium* is an important indicator of the social position these Roman τεχνῖται occupied.[15] In the third century, the term *scriba* embraced a range of occupations characterized by literacy and a certain upward mobility: "scribas proprio nomine antiqui et librarios et poetas vocabant" (Festus 446L). It was not a disreputable calling. The first descendant of *liberti* to win a curule chair, an aedile of 304 named Gn. Flavius, had been *scriba* to Ap. Claudius the Censor; a *scriba* of the elder Scipio, C. Cicereius, reached the praetorship in 173 and was a man of real distinction.[16] That Andronicus himself was both *scriba* and actor should suggest not the low status of the former, but the comparative respectability of the latter. It is wrong to read the prejudices of later times into this more neutral testimony.[17] What Andronicus won for his

[13] N. Horsfall, "The Collegium Poetarum," *BICS* 23 (1976) 79–95 and further references there.

[14] Compare the political climate described by H. H. Scullard, *Roman Politics, 220–150 B.C.*, 2 ed. (Oxford 1973) 24–25 and F. Millar, "The Political Character of the Classical Roman Republic, 200–151 B.C.," *JRS* 74 (1984) 1–19 with the complementary discussions of growing technical skill by J. N. Hough, "The Development of Plautus' Art," *CP* 30 (1935) 43–57 and W.B. Sedgwick, "The Origin and Development of Roman Comic Metres," *C&M* 10 (1949) 171–81. L. R. Taylor, "The Opportunities for Dramatic Performance in the Time of Plautus and Terence," *TAPA* 68 (1937) 284–304 remains basic.

[15] A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2 ed. (Oxford 1968) 279–87; E. J. Jory, "Associations of Actors at Rome," *Hermes* 98 (1970) 224–53.

[16] Broughton, *MRR* 168 and iii.92 (Flavius); 406 n. 2 and 408 (Cicereius). M. Martina (above, note 9) 166–67 perhaps infers too much from likely exceptions to the norm—the story of Cicereius at Val. Max. 4.5.3 suggests a man respected despite his origins—but Horsfall (above, note 13) 79–81 is unnecessarily contemptuous of *scribae*.

[17] Cf. Livy's comment that he is setting out the origin of the *ludi scaenici* "ut appareret, quam ab sano initio res in hanc vix opulentis regnis tolerabilem insaniam venerit" (7.2.13). Dramatists had a separate *collegium* by the early first century, and we begin hearing more negative comments about actors under the principate. All that, however, was in the future. See B. Tamm, "Le Temple des Muses à Rome," *Opuscula Romana* 3 (1961) 157–67 and the prosopographical data assembled by C. Garton in *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre* (Toronto 1972) 231–65 and *ANRW* II 30.1 (1982) 580–609.

peers was not just official acknowledgment of the Roman theatrical profession, but confirmation of their independent status.

The subsequent history of drama reinforces the point. While official approval was necessary for staging plays at public festivals, and aristocratic connections were doubtless needed to win the similar contracts for funeral and triumphal games, the patronage itself was impersonal and the plays essentially apolitical. Neither Plautus nor Caecilius has been associated with any political figures, and such contemporary allusions as have been suspected in their texts are, as befits the genre, more critical than laudatory.[18] The biographical fantasies spun around Plautus suggest, if anything, a struggling and independent agent. Gellius' report that he had earned money *in operis artificum scenicorum* may preserve an allusion to the Greek-style τεχνῖται of the later third century (Gel. 3.3.14), and recurring references to the selling of plays remind us that the theatrical community had to be self-supporting. Access to the aediles normally involved the assistance of established peers like the actor-managers Publilius Pellio and Ambivius Turpio; Caecilius himself was eventually cast as such a sponsor for Terence.[19] Our evidence for patronage in the early Roman theatre thus centers on the relationship between producers and playwrights, not between the theatrical community as a group and the artistocrats who ultimately footed the bill for their services. The magistrates' power to grant and withhold contracts does not seem to have affected the conception or execution of these early literary enterprises.

The oft-cited exception is, of course, Naevius, whose creation of a *fabula praetexta* first put Roman achievements on the stage. His *Clastidium* presumably dealt with M. Claudius Marcellus' victory over the Gauls before that city in 222 B.C. It may well have depicted Marcellus' winning of the *spolia opima*—he was consul and killed the Gallic chief Viridomarus—and his subsequent triumph: its sole surviving line, "vita insepulta laetus in patriam redux," suggests the return of a victorious general, as does its one other attested word ("vitulantes"). The date and circumstances of production, however, are unknown. An association with the triumph itself is usually dismissed on the grounds that living Romans could not appear on the stage. A production in either 208, at Marcellus' funeral games, or 205, when his son finally dedicated the temple to Honos et Virtus that had been vowed at Clastidium, is therefore favored, and on such grounds is Naevius claimed as a client of the Marcelli.[20]

[18] On the thorny issue of topicality in Plautus, see P. Harvey, "Historical Allusions in Plautus and the Date of the *Amphitruo*," *Athenaeum* 59 (1981) 480–89 and D. C. Earl, "Political Terminology in Plautus," *Historia* 9 (1960) 234–43.

[19] This romantic story in the ancient *vita Terenti* was either supported or inspired by the pairing of Terence and Caecilius in the second prologue to *Hecyra*. On the organization and financing of plays, see W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 3 ed. (London 1968) 164–70. Cf. Jer., Chron. ad a. 1817: "scribere fabulas solitus [Plautus] ac vendere," and Horace's sneer about Plautus' commercialism at *Ep.* 2.1.175–76.

[20] H. D. Jocelyn, "The Poet Cn. Naevius, P. Cornelius Scipio and Q. Caecilius Metellus," *Antichthon* 3 (1969) 32–47, p. 34. The ingenious reconstruction by H. B. Mattingly, "Naevius and the Metelli," *Historia* 9 (1960) 414–39, esp. 432–38 is unconvincing. Historical references to the events in Broughton, *MRR* 233. The presumption that drama avoided the living is founded on Cic, *Rep.* 4.10, though Cicero says only "veteribus displicuisse Romanis" and the context seems to be comedy. Discussion in E. V. Marmorale, *Naevius Poeta*, 2 ed. (Florence 1953) 50–51, 130; 202–3 for the fragments themselves. H. Zehnacker, "Tragédie

Yet this is hardly evidence for a patron/client relationship. It makes major inferences from a hypothetical dating and, even more seriously, makes an unwarranted assumption about the nature of the *fabula praetexta*. These plays were not necessarily so explicitly topical. In addition to his *Clastidium*, Naevius wrote a *Romulus*. (*Lupus* is likely to be an alternate title.) In the next century, Ennius wrote a *Sabinae* as well as his *Ambracia*, and Accius wrote an *Aeneadae*. There was more to the genre than political puffery and familial prestige. Its celebration of legendary as well as contemporary deeds suggests a literary form that used the stage, the first medium for serious literary expression in Latin, to define a context for Roman achievement, not simply to glorify it.[21] The closest kin to Naevius' *Clastidium* is thus his *Bellum Punicum*, an epic that deliberately cast contemporary events in a mythological context. It too singled out individual Romans for praise (and blame) and owed much to Naevius' own experience and pride in the achievements of the First Punic War.[22] And it was a poem without a patron. Neither epic nor *praetextae* leaves evidence of partisan interests.

But what of the notorious line "Fato Metelli Romae fiunt consules" which, if the handbooks carry belief, engendered a quarrel with the powerful Caecilii Metelli ? This certainly looks like evidence of the poet's engagement in contemporary politics. The case, however, collapses under scrutiny. We owe knowledge of the line only to the impudence of Gaius Verres, which enabled Cicero to raise a laugh at the expense of Verres' ally Q. Metellus Creticus, consul designate at the time of the trial in 70: "nam hoc Verrem dicere aiebant, te non fato, ut ceteros ex vestra familia, sed opera sua consulem factum" (*Ver.* 1.29). A fifth-century commentator, probably drawing on the work of Q. Asconius Pedianus four centuries earlier (p. 215 Stangl), explains the allusion.

> dictum facete et contumeliose in Metellos antiquum Naevii est "fato Metelli Romae fiunt consules," cui tunc Metellus consul iratus versu responderat senario hypercatalecto [sic], qui et Saturnius dicitur: "dabunt malum Metelli Naevio poetae."

The famous exchange thus comes to us through the filter of late Republican politics, when it was not uncommon to give new political twists to lines of verse. This, for example, was the way a line from Pacuvius' tragedy *Armorum iudicium*, "men servasse, ut essent qui me perderent!" came to be recited at Caesar's funeral (Suet. *Caes.* 84, cf. Ap. 2.146). Verres possibly, and Cicero certainly used this line against a Metellus. We do not know that Naevius did: the insulting contrast between *fato* and *opera* is in the parody, not the original. *Fato* alone is not so easily read pejoratively. Nor do we know that it enraged the Metelli. "Iratus" is only the scholiast's word, and he, like most scholars since, probably failed to hear in the Metellan reply the less than horrific *ira* of comedy,

prétexte et spectacle Romain," *Théâtre et spectacle dans l'antiquité* [Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 1981 (Leiden 1983)] 31–48 prefers to date Ennius' *Ambracia* after the death of Fulvius for a similar reason (pp. 42–44).

[21] N. Zorzetti, *La pretesta e il teatro latino arcaico* (Naples 1980) 61–62 thus rightly pairs *Clastidium* and *Romulus* in his general discussion of the *praetexta* as a celebration of Roman achievement. Beare (above, note 19) 39 and 41–42 makes an artificial distinction between historical and legendary plays.

[22] E.g. *BP* (Strzelecki): fr. 3 (Manius Valerius), fr. 37 (Claudius Pulcher), fr. 44 (his own service). For the epic's combination of myth and history, see H. T. Rowell, "The Original Form of Naevius' *Bellum Punicum*," *AJP* 68 (1947) 21–46. It has never been claimed as a product of patronage.

where phrases like "malum vobis dabo" abound.[23] There is more wit (of a kind) than anger in this exchange. Nor, finally, have we any more right to attribute Naevius' senarius to a play—whether *palliata* or *praetexta*—than we would to claim an epic origin for the reply just because it is a Saturnian.[24] Iambic verse was never restricted to the stage. The couplet aimed at Caninius Rebilius, consul suffectus for a single day in 45 B.C., offers a nice parallel for this kind of circulating barb.

> vigilantem habemus consulem Caninium
> qui in consulatu somnum non vidit suo. (Macrob. 2.3.6)

The whole story of Naevius' quarrel with the Metelli, including its claims of subsequent imprisonment and eventual exile at Utica, smacks of fantasy and has before now rightly been called into question.[25] Our handbooks would do much better to popularize Cicero's explicit statement that Roman comedy, unlike the Greek, kept politics off the stage.

> sed Periclen, cum iam suae civitati maxima auctoritate plurimos annos domi et belli praefuisset, violari versibus et eos agi in scaena non plus decuit, quam si Plautus noster voluisset aut Naevius Publio et Gnaeo Scipioni aut Caecilius Marco Catoni maledicere. (*Rep.* 4.10.11)

Efforts to find more veiled political significance in the numerous fragments of Naevius' comedies have been no more convincing and in recent times have rightly fallen from favor. Ostensible topical allusions in his *palliatae* do not carry conviction when set against the genre's conventions. The best example comes from Gellius. Many (later) readers, he says, saw a reference to Scipio Africanus in the lines,

> etiam qui res magnas manu saepe gessit gloriose,
> cuius facta viva nunc vigent, qui apud gentes solus praestat,
> eum suus pater cum palliod unod ab amica abduxit.
> (108–10 Ribbeck = Gel. 7.8.5)

Scipio, ever a controversial figure, did in fact raise eyebrows for sporting the pallium in Sicily, but the stock *miles gloriosus* might wear similar garb, and the fragment's structure, with its ironically grandiose description followed by a sudden deflation, even finds a parallel in the plight of Menander's Polemon:

[23] Pl. *Per.* 847, cf. 817, 827: a host of examples in Lodge's *Lexicon Plautinum* v. 2 (New York 1932) 19, s.v. *malus*. The grammarian Caesius Bassus, our other source for the exchange, says "Metelli...ad eo versu lacessiti" (GLK 6.266). Bassus was a contemporary of Asconius.

[24] E. Flintoff, "Naevius and Roman Satire," *Latomus* 47 (1988) 593–603 attempts (pp. 598–99) to claim Naevius' line as a Saturnian. It can indeed be broken into uneven cola on the Saturnian pattern, but the first colon lacks the *caesura korschiana* typical of seven-syllable cola and the second ends with a distinctly iambic cadence unparalleled among authentic Saturnians. See T. Cole, "The Saturnian Verse," *YCS* 21 (1969) 3–73, esp. 19–20 (caesura) and 39–41 (cadence).

[25] Jocelyn (above, note 20) *passim* deftly explodes the story point by point. His own attempt to defend the historicity of an outspoken Naevius is ingenious but unconvincing.

ὁ σοβαρὸς ἡμῖν ἀρτίως καὶ πολεμικός,
ὁ τὰς γυναῖκας οὐκ ἐῶν ἔχειν τρίχας
κλάει κατακλινείς. (*Perikeiromene* 172–74)

A seemingly bold line like "libera lingua loquemur ludes Liberalibus" (113R) is also too easily paralleled by the boasting slaves of Roman comedy to be read as a serious statement of artistic freedom.[26] We thus have no sound reason to doubt that Naevius conformed to the pattern of third-century Latin poets, independent entrepreneurs who worked freely and apolitically with the literary forms of their time.

This brings us again to Ennius, whose career must be read against this background of commercial literary endeavor centered on the stage. Suetonius indeed paired him with Andronicus as a bilingual poet-grammarian teaching *domi forisque (gramm.* 1.2). He was also a major dramatist, writing plays continuously until his death in 169. His comedies took but last place in Volcacius Sedigitus' canon of comic poets (*ap.* Gel. 15.24), and that only "causa antiquitatis," but his tragedies were masterful. There were at least twenty-one. Several became classics of the Roman theatre, read and produced into Augustan times. Fondness for them led Cicero in particular to extensive quotation that has preserved hints of their considerable skill. Yet these highly successful tragedies were, as best we can judge, uniformly apolitical. We may on occasion, as in a contrast between *opulenti* and *ignobiles,* discern elements of second-century Latin political vocabulary, but no factional interests or political causes have left their mark.[27] Ennius' dramatic career reflects the standards of the independent theatrical community that also fostered the talents of Naevius, Plautus, and the others. In other ways, though, his career was significantly exceptional.

A Calabrian from Rudiae, he claimed descent from the legendary king Messapus and liked to say that he had three hearts because he spoke Greek and Oscan as well as Latin (Sil. 12.393; Gel. 17.17.1). Such pride in Italic origins finds a place in his epic: "Nos sumus Romani," someone claimed there, "qui fuimus ante Rudini" (525). His association with important public figures has left much explicit testimony. He came to Rome in 204 in Cato's entourage. The young quaestor had met him in Sardinia and, as plebeian aedile in 199, might well have offered a first dramatic contract.[28] After that, the associations multiply. Ennius eventually had his own household on the Aventine. There was a maid to greet Scipio Nasica at the door when he came calling and gardens for walks with his neighbor, Sulpicius Galba. Fulvius Nobilior, of course, took him to Aetolia in 189, and he probably owed his Roman citizenship to Fulvian contacts. There was also a story that his portrait bust adorned the tomb of the

[26] J. Wright, *Dancing in Chains* (Rome 1974) 56–57. Wright ignores the historic fact of Scipio's Greek affectations (cf. Livy 29.19.12), but if accepted, Gellius' statement would in any case only bring us to the inconclusive kind of argument that surrounds discussions of Plautine topicality.

[27] *Hecuba,* 173J. Cf. the honorific language of *Medea* 219. These are hints of contemporaneity, not political involvement. See H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge 1967) 309–10, 362.

[28] Cato shared responsibility for the *ludi plebeii* of that year (Livy 32.7.13). Badian, "Ennius" 155–59 doubts the explicit testimony of Nepos, *Cat.* 1.4 that Cato had brought Ennius to Rome, but he has convinced few. See the comments there by Jocelyn and Suerbaum, 200–202, and Skutsch, 1.

Scipios.[29] His poetry, too, involved links with contemporary public figures. The meager fragments of a poem called *Scipio* sound something like a triumphal song, and *Ambracia* presumably glorified the campaign of 189.[30] The *Annales* was by its very nature full of references to distinguished Romans. The central point, however, is that no pattern of reference, much less bias, is discernable among its fragments. Nearly half the poem told of events before Ennius' lifetime: Books I–III dealt with Aeneas and the kings, Books IV–VI with the conquest of Italy and war with Pyrrhus, and Book VII, in deference to Naevius, dealt but briefly with the First Punic War.[31] We find special praise for such disparate figures as Cornelius Cethegus (304–6), Aelius Paetus (329), and Fabius Maximus (363). Cicero explicitly absolved Ennius of partisanship in the praise of Cethegus ("nulla suspicio est amicitae causa esse mentitum," *Brut.* 58), and attempts to find Fulvian bias in other fragments are unconvincing. The most compelling such case involves a line from Book X dealing with the consuls of 200 B.C.:

Graecia Sulpicio sorti data, Gallia Cottae (324)

Cotta's province was actually Italia, not Gallia, which was under the praetor L. Furius Purpurio. Consul and praetor came into conflict when Purpurio won a major victory at Cremona with the consul's army and claimed a triumph for it. Otto Skutsch thus suspects Ennius here of taking Cotta's side in the resulting controversy, since Purpurio was an *inimicus* of Fulvius Nobilior. This is really too subtle, and not just because it ignores the elegant balance of *Graecia...Gallia* that Ennius has created by replacing the technically correct *Macedonia...Italia.* Book X in fact deals with the campaign of Sulpicius, not events in Gaul, much less the eventual wrangle over Purpurio's triumph.[32] The very order of clauses here indicates as much. The long shadow of the *poeta cliens* has obscured the salient features of the line, which are poetic rather than political.

Other curious aspects of the work also merit greater attention to their artistic rationale. Emphasis on the Aetolian campaign of 189, for example, furnished an elegant climax to Book XV and can justify its Homeric qualities on what are essentially poetic grounds. Ambracia had been Pyrrhus' capital. Ennius thus ended the account of foreign wars with this final victory over Rome's first great foreign enemy. His attention to the Muses also makes artistic and

[29] Cic. *de Or.* 2.276 (Nasica); *Acad. Pr.* 2.51 (Galba); *TD* 1.3 (Nobilior); *Brut.* 79 (citizenship); *Arch.* 22 and Livy 38.56.4 (bust). Jocelyn, "Poems" 991–96 provides a summary. Badian, "Ennius" 183–85 casts legitimate doubt on Cicero's identification of a (too) young Q. Fulvius as Ennius' sponsor, though not on the likelihood of a Fulvian connection. For the Aventine locale, see Badian, 166–68; for the bust, Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* 210–13.

[30] U. W. Scholz, "Der Scipio des Ennius," *Hermes* 112 (1984) 183–99; Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* 239–48. The political reading of Ennius' career forces Martina, "Cliens" 17 to date the work after 180.

[31] For structure and content of these books see Skutsch, 5–6; Jocelyn, "Poems" 997–99, 1005–10, 1020–21. Plin., *NH* 7.101 clearly indicates that Book XVI was added to a previously completed work.

[32] Skutsch 501–2 duly notes the "metrical advantage" of *Gallia,* but not the artistry of the line. References to Purpurio's achievement in Broughton, *MRR* 323. As for the controversy, J. Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy, Books XXXI–XXXIII* (Oxford 1973) 158 rightly observes that "the politics of the episode are obscure." It would be difficult enough to imagine what a "Fulvian" position would have been, much less to assume that Ennius championed it here.

structural sense, though a Fulvian initiative again provided the opportunity. Fulvius himself took an interest in their cult that went beyond political posturing. It is reflected in statuary, perhaps a choregic monument, that he brought back from Ambracia, and a bronze *aedicula Camenarum* previously displaced from the grove of Numa. Fulvius arranged to house both on the Campus Martius in what became known as the *templum Herculis Musarum*, where he also deposited his own compilation of *fasti*.[33] The *Annales*, too, recognized the association of the Muses, poetic patrons of Ennius' Hellenized epic world, with the Camenae of older, Saturnian epic.

> Musas quas memorant nosce nos esse Camenas (487)

If Skutsch is right in assigning this fragment to Book XV—Vahlen had placed it in the exordium to Book I—Ennius' original plan would have ended the poem with the dedication of Fulvius' new shrine. The work would thus return in its finale to that praise of the Muses characteristic of the major proemia to Books I and VII.

The subsequent extension of the *Annales* with three more books of *bella recentia* might suggest the workings of a propaganda mill, but its putative beneficiaries have proven impossible to find. The valiant Caecilii featured in Book XVI are otherwise unknown, and Fulvius Nobilior's reconciliation with his bitter rival Aemilius Lepidus was told from Lepidus' side. The battle fragments have a distinctly Homeric ring. Historically-minded critics have had to claim that the Caecilii were but surrogates for A. Manlius Vulso (cos. 178), a younger brother of Fulvius' consular colleague of 189, who badly needed good publicity for his Istrian campaign, and that the emphasis on Lepidus was designed to show Fulvius in a good light, but such arguments reflect rather than support the hypothesis of a dutiful *poeta cliens*.[34] We do better to remember Ennius' own statement of Roman priorities: "moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque" (156). If Skutsch has correctly attributed this line to the famous story of T. Manlius, who executed his brave but impetuous son for disobeying his own consular command, we have explicit support in the poem for an important principle: national achievement—and the broad sweep of the *Annales* made it Rome's preeminent national poem—must take precedence over individual *gloria*. This is the same broadly-based sense of patriotism that appears in the famous epigram preserved by Cicero:

> Aspicite, o cives, senis Enni imaginis formam:
> Hic vestrum panxit maxima facta patrum. (*TD* 1.34)

The statue in question may have graced the tomb of the Scipios, but the call is to Romans as a community. *Patrum* is deliberately and proudly general.[35]

There is thus no secure internal evidence that Ennius' epic championed partisan causes, nor would financial considerations necessarily have dictated such narrow loyalties. How, then, should we envision the social position of this gifted poet, whose stage writing provided an independent livelihood impossible

[33] Nobilior's dedication of what was probably a portico to an existing temple is best dated to his censorship in 179, but the issue is complex and problematic. See Skutsch, 144–46 and 313–14; *Stud. Enn.* 18–29; M. T. Marabini Moevs, "Le Muse di Ambracia," *BdA* 12 (1981) 1–58.

[34] Badian, "Ennius" 185–87 and Martina, "Cliens" 37–44 (Vulso); Martina, "Cliens" 21–37 (Lepidus), given credence by Skutsch, 572–73.

[35] Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen* 208–10.

for a Vergil or Horace, and who was yet on easy terms with a wide range of distinguished public figures? *Poeta cliens* is both a tactless and incorrect label. His documented associations with Cato and Fulvius, with Cornelii and Sulpicii, make it extremely difficult to claim him as the client of any one family, nor is *clientela* the right term to describe the relationship between a poet of Ennius' stature and his admirers. The *amicitia* that bound them was doubtless unequal, but Ennius' was not simply a talent for hire.[36] We need a different model for the kind of relationship possible between, say, Ennius and Fulvius, and a famous fragment of the *Annales* may provide a hint.

The scene is probably Cannae. Cn. Servilius Geminus, consul in 217 until the defeat at Lake Trasimene, has just made a speech, perhaps to the Celtiberian deserters from Hannibal.

> Haece locutus vocat quocum bene saepe libenter
> mensam sermonesque suos rerumque suarum
> consilium partit, magnam quom lassus diei
> partem fuisset de summis rebus regundis
> consilio indu foro lato sanctoque senatu;
> quoi res audacter magnas parvasque iocumque
> eloqueretur †et cuncta† malaque et bona dictu
> evomeret si qui vellet tutoque locaret;
> quocum multa volup
> gaudia clamque palamque;
> ingenium quoi nulla malum sententia suadet
> ut faceret facinus levis aut mala: doctus, fidelis,
> suavis homo, iucundus, suo contentus, beatus,
> scitus, secunda loquens in tempore, commodus, verbum
> paucum, multa tenens antiqua, sepulta vetustas
> quae facit, et mores veteresque novosque †tenentem
> multorum veterum leges divomque hominumque
> prudentem qui dicta loquive tacereve posset:
> hunc inter pugnas conpellat Servilius sic: (268–86)
>
> 280 iucundus *Sk.*: facundus *Gel.*

This passage is among our longest fragments of the *Annales* and would in any case, despite its textual difficulties and apparent lacuna, be a significant example of Ennius' descriptive style. It has long claimed special attention, however, because in Gellius' words, "L. Aelium Stilonem dicere solitum ferunt Q. Ennium de semet ipso haec scripsisse picturamque istam morum et ingenii ipsius Q. Enni factam esse" (12.4). Aelius Stilo, the teacher of Varro and Cicero, is a reputable source and presumably had good reason for this identification, though modern scholars sensitive to the vagaries of biographical criticism should be allowed their skepticism.[37] A self-portrait need not have been intended to be

[36] See W. Allen, Jr., "Lucretius' Friendship with Memmius," *CP* 33 (1938) 167–81 and P. White, "*Amicitia* and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome," *JRS* 68 (1978) 74–92. Saller (above, note 1) 11 n. 15 offers an important correction of White, but the situation was different in the middle years of the Republic, when poets could support themselves by supplying plays for the *ludi scaenici*. B. Gold, *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill 1987) 39–50, adds nothing new to our understanding of this period.

[37] Stilo's opinion is defended at length by Badian, "Ennius" 180–83 and accepted by Skutsch, 450, but note the doubts expressed in the discussion of

helpful. It was not literally true in any case. Whether this Servilius was indeed, as Skutsch claims, the consul of 217 or, as Badian would prefer, the consul of 252 and 248, the passage certainly deals with a time before Ennius' own appearance on the Roman scene. What matters is the fact that he has, for whatever reason, given literary form to a social relationship congruent with his own circumstances.

The modest congeniality of this "good companion" is not unparalleled in epic, though the parallels are not poets. Otto Skutsch thought he saw in the passage a Hellenistic epic *topos* of the dependable social inferior attending a royal patron, but his evidence for such a *topos* consists only of a verbal parallel in Terence and a snippet of Ptolemaic encomium.[38] There are other, clearer, and less subservient good companions to be found. We might recall Patroclus offering comfort to Achilles sulking in his tent (*Il.* 9.189–91), or even the faithful Achates, walking in step with a troubled Aeneas as "multa inter sese vario sermone serebant" (*Aen.* 6.160). These are hardly servile examples, nor does Servilius' companion lack dignity. Though the mention of table talk in the passage may remind us of Cato's complaint about *grassatores*, this is not the portrait of a flatterer. *Scitus* and *commodus*, which in other circumstances befit the parasite,[39] here mean only "discerning" and "pleasant," while the other adjectives of this favorable context become the catchwords of later generations. *Doctus, suavis*, and *iucundus* will come to denote qualities central to the neoteric world of, say, Catullus 50; *suo contentus* and *beatus* provide the theme of Horace's first Satire and the essence of his poetic persona. Nor is Ennius' companion just an after-hours friend. He does not simply, to borrow Cato's phrase, "sese ad convivia adplicabat." While the companion seems initially to have taken no part *de summis rebus regundis*, his good qualities are evidently valued at all times. We are far from casual conversation. This portrait comes at a dangerous time, and praise is not what Servilius seeks. It is, if anything, his *lack* of servitude that makes the companion so valuable. Knowledge, discretion, and perspective are the relevant qualities, and he is a good listener. This description is flanked by Servilius' own speeches: the companion himself may never have spoken a word. These are the qualities that young Cato may well have recognized in Sardinia, that Scipio Nasica and Sulpicius Galba found worth cultivating at home, and that Fulvius Nobilior valued on campaign. The passage thus has significant resonances within Ennius' own time. It also looks ahead to the developing social context for poetry at Rome.

Respectable birth, an independent means of livelihood, and immense talent enabled Ennius to move easily in high circles. He may well have been the first poet at Rome to do so, but his example did not remain unique for long. He died in 169. By 160, Terence would publicly claim the friendship of anonymous *homines nobilis*. He, like Ennius, owned property, and his daughter was thought to have married an equestrian (*Ad.* 15–21; *Vita Ter.* 99). Within a

Badian's article by Jocelyn and Suerbaum, 206–7. Identification of speaker and context here follows Skutsch, 447–50. It is likely, but conjectural; *contra* Badian, "Ennius," 174–77 and 180.

[38] Skutsch, *Stud. Enn.* 92–94, repeated in the commentary, 450–51. Skutsch's figure of "the king's trusted companion" would equally well fit the confidants discussed by R. Lattimore, "The Wise Advisor in Herodotus," *CP* 34 (1939) 24–35.

[39] "Scitum hercle hominem!" says Parmeno of the parasite Gnatho (Ter., *Eun.* 254); Cicero describes Apronius, a minion of Verres, as "aliis inhumanus ac barbarus, isti uni commodus..." (*Ver.* 3.23).

generation, even native Romans were writing poetry of note. The greatest poet of the mid-second century, Lucilius, was himself an *eques*. By the end of the century, a distinct *collegium poetarum* was meeting in the Temple of the Muses on the Campus Martius with the aristocrat Julius Caesar Strabo in attendance (Val. Max. 3.7.11), while the Hellenized epigrams of such upperclass Romans as Lutatius Catulus mark the developing cultural climate that would nourish the literary interests of, among so many others, Varro and Cicero. This growing interest in poetry, an interest which parallels the aristocracy's own developing achievements in history and oratory, first becomes manifest with Ennius' social acceptance and artistic renown. The *Bellum Punicum* of Naevius was the epic pioneer, but it had been a work of limited scope and, if only for technical reasons, of limited success. The broader sweep and sophistication of the *Annales* completed the legitimization of Roman achievements as a theme for poetry and subsumed the tradition of individual *laudationes* under the greater, communal theme of Roman *gloria*. Its Homeric echoes gave special significance to Roman achievements, while Ennius' ability to carry his poem from mythical origins to contemporary events brought a new coherence to the Roman record and a new sense of its greatness. Certain episodes might indeed have been especially pleasing to individual Romans, but the poem's ultimate significance lay far beyond isolated particulars. Cicero would eventually put the case well when, in defending Archias, he could call poetry not only pleasant, but useful to the man of affairs.

> Quam multas nobis imagines non solum ad intuendum verum etiam ad imitandum fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores Graeci et Latini reliquerunt. Quas ego mihi in administranda re publica proponens, animum et mentem meam ipsa cogitatione hominum excellentium conformabam. *(Pro. Arch.* 14)

He will claim Scipio, Laelius, Furius, and even Cato as adherents to this view (16) and Ennius as the poet who first convinced them of it (22). Archias, of course, was truly a pen for hire in a way that Ennius never was,[40] nor was he an artist of comparable merit, but he, like Vergil after him, thrived in a climate made possible by Ennius' success. A balanced view of that success demands a fuller examination of the *Annales*' artistic qualities, but to bring them to light, we must first bring the poem itself out from the shadow of the *poeta cliens*.

[40] G. Williams, "Phases in Political Patronage of Literature in Rome," in B. K. Gold, ed., *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Austin, Texas 1982) 4–5, puts cart before horse by interpreting the careers of Naevius and Ennius in terms of Archias.