

PART I

**Periods**



## CHAPTER ONE

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# The Early Republic: the Beginnings to 90 BC

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### 1 The Beginnings

By the early first century BC the Romans had a literature. And they knew it. When Cicero (with some irony) taunts the freedman Erucius as a stranger ‘not even to *litterae*’ (*ne a litteris quidem*: *S. Rosc.* 46) or tells his friend Atticus that he is ‘sustained and restored by *litterae*’ (*litteris sustentor et recreor*: *Att.* 4.10.1) or argues for more serious attention to *Latinas litteras* (*Fin* 1.4), he means ‘literature’ in much the modern sense of verbal art that is prized as cultural capital, texts marked not simply by a quality of language but by a power manifest in their use. Literature thus provided a tool for the educated class to define and maintain its social position. How this idea of literature took hold among the Romans and how individual works acquired positions of privilege in an emerging canon are especially important questions for the study of early texts because they became ‘literature’ only in retrospect as readers preserved them, established their value and made them part of an emerging civic identity. The Republican literature we traditionally call ‘early’ is not just a product of the mid-Republic, when poetic texts began to circulate, but also of the *late* Republic, when those texts were first systematically collected, studied, canonized and put to new social and artistic uses.

The result of that process is clearly visible by 121, when Gaius Gracchus challenged a Roman mob with powerful words:

quo me miser conferam? quo vortam? in Capitoliumne? at fratris sanguine redundat.  
an domum? matremne ut miseram lamentantem videam et abiectam?

Where shall I go in my misery? Where shall I turn? To the Capitol? It reeks with my brother’s blood. To my home? So that I see my mother wretched, in tears, and prostrate? (*ORF* 61)

Even here in the face of death, Gracchus reflects his reading. His words echo Medea in a famous tragedy by Ennius:

quo nunc me vortam? quod iter incipiam ingredi?  
domum paternamne? ane ad Peliae filias?

Where shall I turn now? What road shall I begin to travel?  
To my father's house? To the daughters of Pelias?

(Ennius *Trag.* 217–18J)

In time, Gracchus' speech also became a benchmark text: he and his Ennian model can both be heard in the anguish of Accius' Thyestes (231–2R) and the despair of Catullus' Ariadne (64.177–81). How did the script of Ennius' *Medea exul* become a school text for Gracchus a generation later and his own speech survive to be quoted and imitated in turn (e.g. Cic. *de Or.* 3.124; *Mur.* 88; *Sall. Iurg.* 14.17)? What awakened Romans to the texts in their midst and the work they could do?

Traditional literary history does not offer much help with such questions. It has been too reluctant to shift its gaze from the work of authors to that of readers. Who was reading what, when and why are more difficult questions to address than who wrote what and when; traditional histories rarely ask why. Answers to questions about reading require a history more sensitive to the problems of reception and more willingness to problematize the very idea of 'literature' than those currently on the shelf. Such a history may well turn the traditional story we tell about early Roman literature on its head, but challenging old truths has the advantage of bringing some new ones into view.

The traditional story is at best inadequate. Though Romans of an antiquarian bent haggled over the details, they settled on some basic facts we can no longer accept at face value (see Cic. *Brut.* 72–3). Roman literature did not simply begin, as Romans apparently believed, in 240 BC when a Greek freedman named Livius Andronicus translated and produced Greek plays for the *ludi Romani* ('Roman Games'). The date is impossibly late. Early Latium had a rich and complex cultural history, with growing levels of literacy, a high level of social organization, and significant Greek influences discernible long before the third century. Much of the evidence for the cultural life of archaic Rome remains controversial, but the archaeological record certainly supports the philologists' long-standing suspicion that Andronicus' new constructions rested on significant native foundations. The fragments of his work, for example, show considerable skill in adapting the quantitative metres of Greek drama to Latin requirements. A line like *pulicesne an cimices an pedes? Responde mihi* ('Fleas or bugs or lice? Answer me', fr. 1) is not just a competent trochaic septenarius, the metre that became a favourite of Plautus, but employs the same parallelism, alliteration and homoioteleuton common to popular verse and to the emerging Roman comic style. A fragment from the tragedy *Equos Troianus* (20–22 Warmington)

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Da mihi  
hasce opes quas peto, quas precor! Porridge,  
opitula!

Grant me  
these powers which I request, for which I pray. Extend  
your aid!

preserves cretic dimeters, which suggests that Latin plays were lyric from the beginning. Since successful performance required actors sufficiently skilled to speak and sing complex Latin from the stage, the Roman theatre's first documented step cannot have been its first one. The notoriously obscure account of its origin in Livy (7.2), who says that Andronicus was the first to add plots to what he calls dramatic *saturae*, probably preserves a faint memory of the stage entertainments that gave Andronicus' Latin-speaking actors their start.

Nevertheless, the traditional date of 240 is also too *early* because what Andronicus and his successors created for the Roman festivals was not immediately 'literature' (on early Roman tragedy see Fantham, Chapter 8 below; on comedy see Panayotakis, Chapter 9 below). Their scripts were initially the jealously guarded possession of the companies that commissioned and performed them. Rome of the third century was unlike Athens of the fifth, where drama's role in civic and religious life bestowed official status and made it a cultural benchmark. The citizens who wrote, produced and performed Attic comedy and tragedy, who competed for its prizes at the great festivals, rehearsed its choruses, created its costumes and entertained its audiences had every reason to record and preserve the evidence of their success in monuments, inscriptions and, at least by the mid-fourth century, official copies of the plays performed. Rome was heir not to this Attic model of civic theatre but to the later, commercial model of the Hellenistic world, when plays were the property of self-contained, professional companies who performed for hire, bringing their own scripts, costumes, masks and music from city to city through the Greek, and eventually the Roman, world. Under this system, all a Roman magistrate did to provide plays for the festival in his charge was to contract with the head of such a company, a man like Plautus' Publilius Pellio or Terence's sponsor, Ambivius Turpio. He would then do the rest. Dramatists wrote for their companies, not for the state, and their scripts remained company property. The alternative scenes preserved in the manuscripts of Plautus' *Cistellaria* and *Poenulus* and Terence's *Andria* recall their origin as performance texts, produced and reproduced as the commerce of the stage required.

The production notes that accompany the plays of Terence (and, less completely, the *Pseudolus* and *Stichus* of Plautus) confirm this impression. Though their official look recalls the Athenian *didascaliae*, they are hardly as official or coherent as they appear. Here, for example, is the note for Terence's *Phormio* as printed in modern texts:

INCIPIIT TERENCE PHORMIO: ACTA LUDIS ROMANIS L. POSTVMIO ALBINO L. CORNELIO MERVLA AEDILIBUS CVRVLIBVS: EGERE L. AMBIVIVS TVRPIO L. HATILIVS PRAENESTINVS: MODOS FECIT FLACCVS CLAVDI TIBIIS INPARIBVS TOTA: GRAECA APOLLODORV EPIDICAZOMENOS: FACTA IIII C. FANIO M. VALERIO COS.

Here begins Terence's *Phormio*. Performed at the Roman Games when L. Postumius Albinus and L. Cornelius Merula were curule aediles. L. Ambivivus Turpio and L. Atilius from Praeneste starred. Claudius' slave Flaccus provided the music for unequal pipes. The Greek original was Apollodorus' *Epidicazomenos*. Written fourth. C. Fannius and M. Valerius were consuls.

Some of this may recall the first production. The year (161) is plausible, and a story in the commentary of Donatus (on line 315) confirms that the actor-manager Ambivivus Turpio played the title role. Much more, however, is odd. Why record the aediles, who did not preside over the *ludi Romani*? Who is Atilius of Praeneste, and why preserve his name? Would any magistrate care about Flaccus, the producer's hireling, or where the play fitted in the Terentian corpus?

The version of this note preserved in the late antique Bembine codex raises further questions.

INCIPIIT TERENCE PHORMIO ACTA LVDIS MEGALENSIB(VS) Q. CASPIONE GN SERVILIO COS GRAECA APOLLODORV EPIDICAZOMENOS FACTA IIII

Here begins Terence's *Phormio* performed at the *ludi Megalenses* when Q. Caspio and Gn. Servilius were consuls. The Greek was Apollodorus' *Epidicazomenos*. Written fourth.

As it happens, Donatus also assigns production of *Phormio* to the *Megalenses*, which could explain the aediles' appearance in the record. Was the production of *Phormio*, then, at the *ludi Megalenses* or *Romani*? In what year? The impossible formula 'Q. Caspione Gn. Servilio cos' probably disguises the name Cn. Servilius Caepio and the praenomen of his consular colleague, Q. Pompeius. Yet they were consuls in 141, nearly a generation after Terence's death. What, then, are we looking at, and where did it come from?

The simplest explanation is that the notes conflate performances on at least two separate occasions (*ludi Megalenses* and *ludi Romani*) a generation apart (161 and 141) as presented by two impresarios (Ambivivus and Atilius), and that likelihood suggests further deductions of interest. First, the source of the *didascaliae* is not official but professional: this is the kind of information that producers would preserve, not magistrates. Second, the fact of multiple productions means that the scripts, with scenes altered as required, remained with the companies that commissioned them until, presumably sometime after 141, someone outside the

professional world took an interest, secured (and thereby stabilized) the texts, sorted through the accumulated lore accompanying them, and turned them into the books that educated Romans like Cicero came to know. The process by which plays like *Phormio* became ‘literature’ therefore significantly postdates their creation, and this fact has serious consequence for the story we tell about how Romans acquired their literature.

The history of writing may have begun around 240, but serious reading began much later. There had long been teachers at Rome – Andronicus himself may have been one – but when Suetonius, in the second century AD, looked into the question, he could trace a disciplined interest in texts back only to the early 160s, when the Greek scholar Crates of Mallos came to Rome on a diplomatic mission from Pergamum. Crates, says Suetonius, took a false step near the Palatine, broke his leg, and spent his convalescence lecturing and discussing literary topics with an eager audience of Romans (Suet. *Rhet.* 1.2). His master classes were necessarily in and on Greek – a Roman competence in Greek is far easier to imagine than a learned Greek like Crates holding forth in Latin – but rather than intimidating his audiences, Crates stimulated them to apply his methods to their own texts, which they promptly did. But what texts? Not drama, since scripts remained with the acting companies. Epic was the genre that first caught their eye.

## 2 Roman Epic (see also Hardie, Chapter 6)

Epic too was, in a sense, Andronicus’ invention. At some unknown time, and for some unknown reason, he translated the *Odyssey* into Latin verse. Unlike his plays, however, which adapted Greek metres to Latin requirements, Andronicus’ epic poem used a native metre, the so-called Saturnian of oracles and hymns, and established a different relationship with its Greek predecessor. This is clear from its opening line:

Virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum  
Tell me, Camena, of the clever man  
(fr. 1)

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλά . . .  
Tell me, Muse, of the clever man who many things . . .

(*Od.* 1.1)

Cognates and calques (*insece* ~ ἔννεπε, *versutum* ~ πολύτροπον) and a similar word order recall the original, while the new metre and the Italian Camena standing in for Homer’s Muse put some distance between the Latin line and its original. This first line of the first Latin epic suggests a freshness well beyond the merely dutiful kind of translation Horace recalls in his *Ars poetica*: *dic mihi, Musa,*

*virum* . . . (141–2). Andronicus’ innovations may not themselves have been sufficient to win a following – Horace knew the poem only as a school text (Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.69–71) and Suetonius ignored it completely – but Naevius clearly saw possibilities in Andronicus’ approach to the challenge of writing epic in Latin. His *Bellum Punicum*, the first original Roman epic and the first poem restored to favour after Crates’ visit, continued the Saturnian experiment. The result was a highly innovative poem, blending myth and history in a powerful Roman idiom. His technique of layering epithets with a delayed identification, for example, as in the lines

dein pollens sagittis inclutus arquiteuens  
sanctus Iove prognatus Pythius Apollo

Then mighty with arrows, the famous bow-holder,  
blessed son of Jupiter, Pythian Apollo[,]

(fr. 20)

creates not only a larger unit than the short Saturnian cola might seem to encourage, but anchors its novelty in a characteristic Roman fondness for quasi-riddling effects. The sequence that culminates in identifying the bow-holding son of Jupiter as Pythian Apollo is but a solemn variation on the short cola followed by verbal payoff familiar from such unexceptional Plautine iambs as these:

Stultitia magna est, mea quidem sententia,  
hominem amatorem ullum ad forum procedere

It’s absolute folly, at least in my opinion,  
to follow any man in love to the forum

(*Cas.* 563–4)

The success still discernible in the fragments of Naevius’ poem suggests that Saturnian narrative might have had a future and that Roman epic might then have taken a different path had not the greatest poet of pre-Vergilian Rome, Quintus Ennius, turned his back on Naevius’ experiment and drawn closer to his Greek predecessors.

Ennius’ *Annales* not only created a Latin hexameter to replace the Saturnian but capitalized on its epic associations to incorporate Homeric mannerisms and Greek conventions: Ennius’ Jupiter becomes *patrem divomque hominumque*, ‘father of gods and men’, closely imitating a Homeric phrase (592); a Roman tribune at Ambracia fights like Ajax at the Achaean ships (391–8); A warrior rushing to battle is likened to the high-spirited horse of a repeated Homeric simile (535–9). The resulting change in epic style was profound, but it was not

inevitable. Nor does it represent a simple victory of Hellenism over native Italian impulses. Andronicus and Naevius were, like Ennius, products of Magna Graecia and scarcely innocent of Greek learning. Their choice of the Saturnian was as deliberate as Ennius' counter-choice. His greater willingness to exploit Greek forms is instead a mark of confidence in Roman culture, a recognition that Roman objectives could be enhanced rather than compromised by appropriating Greek devices and expanding the Latin idiom to embrace Greek examples. The fascination with Greek culture that comes to dominate second-century Rome brings with it a refusal to be intimidated by its example.

### 3 Historiography (cf. Kraus, Chapter 17)

Even Cato, who so famously resisted the more extravagant of Rome's Hellenizing tendencies, furthered this process of dominance through appropriation. Throughout his long life (234–149 BC), Cato exerted a profound influence on the cultural life of Rome. He was schooled in Greek and kept a Greek tutor in his household. He brought Ennius to Rome – they were said to have met in 204 while on campaign in Sardinia (Nep. *Cato* 1.4) – though Ennius went on to enjoy the friendship of many distinguished Romans. Cato was himself Rome's first significant orator, leaving a legacy of over 150 speeches (fragments of 80 survive) and figuring prominently in the major political and social controversies of his time. His manual on farming is our oldest intact example of Latin prose, but his greatest influence on Rome's literary development came through his history, the *Origines*.

This was not Rome's first historical narrative. By the end of the third century, the great deeds that were informing the Roman epic tradition were also being recorded in prose, and the first historians were not socially marginal figures like Naevius and Ennius. They were prominent Romans: Q. Fabius Pictor led the Senate's embassy to Delphi in the tense days after Cannae in 216, L. Cincius Alimentus was a praetor in 210 and held important commands in Sicily. Both wrote about the Punic Wars in Greek. That decision may have recommended their histories to Polybius and then to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but it was the task rather than the intended audience that determined what language they used. For them, Greek was the natural choice since it offered stylistic precedents and historiographic conventions that were easier to adopt than to replace, even if it meant beginning a contemporary history with an excursus on the city's founding and dating Roman events by Olympiads. Fabius in particular must have taken well to this task. The great Polybius, never hesitant to criticize his predecessors, not only acknowledges Fabius' importance but treats his account with respect, even when refuting the logic of his analysis (Polyb. 1.14, 3.8.1–9.5). The works of Fabius and Cincius show how comfortable Romans could be in this ostensibly foreign idiom, and since Latin was widely described as a Greek dialect – Romulus was thought to have spoken Aeolic – we might find ourselves wondering not why

there were so few efforts to make Greek do the Romans' work but why there were not more of them.

Cato's *Origines*, begun in 168 and still unfinished at his death in 149, established the Latin language as a medium capable of sustained prose narrative. There was still much Greek influence behind his work. He too, as the title suggests, owed a debt to Hellenistic foundation narratives. He drew examples from Greek history and dated Rome's founding from the Trojan War. When he claimed in his preface that 'what great men accomplished privately was as worthy of record as their official acts' (*clarorum hominum atque magnorum non minus otii quam negotii rationem exstare oportere*, fr. 2P), the elegance of his expression declares not just his mastery of Latin syntax but his ability to lift a sentence from Xenophon (*Symp.* 1.1) and make it his own. He also included in his history the texts of at least two of his own speeches, which automatically gave the language of political discourse new status and a new air of permanence. Cato thus set Roman history and Roman oratory on the road to becoming 'literature'.

#### 4 Hellenism

Greek nevertheless remained a potent force in literature as in life: even Cicero would eventually write his consular memoir in Greek. Its use, however, came increasingly to suggest affectation rather than necessity. When A. Postumius Albinus, consul in 151, wrote a history in Greek and apologized in his preface for any stylistic inadequacies, Cato mocked the insincerity of this gesture (*ap. Gell.* 11.8) and Polybius, who had lodged no such complaint against Fabius Pictor, endorsed Cato's opinion (*Polyb.* 39.1). Postumius had had a choice of languages, and he chose the wrong one. Too much Greek in conversation also sounded affected, as the satirist Lucilius would declare:

Porro 'clinopodas' 'lychnos' que ut diximus semnos  
anti 'pedes lecti' atque 'lucernas'

Furthermore, we said 'clinopods' and 'lychnos' pompously  
instead of 'couch legs' and 'lamps'

(15–16W)

Nevertheless, his choice of adverb (we should probably print *semnos* in Greek script), whether ironic or not, reflects the striking permeation of Greek ideas and tacit acceptance of Greek models increasingly characteristic of the second century. When the Scipios, early on, declared the moral qualities of their ancestor Barbatus to be the equal of his appearance (*quoius forma virtutei parisuma fuit*), the odd Latin phrase probably reflects the Greek idea of *kalokagathia*. A few generations

later, Q. Lutatius Catulus, who became consul in 102, welcomed the poets Archias and Antipater of Sidon to his company and wrote Latin erotic epigrams in the Greek style. These instances are all well known and much discussed. Less fully acknowledged is how the Romans' way of thinking about texts was also shaped by the Greek example.

This should be no surprise. It took Crates to show Romans that they already possessed the elements of a national literature, and however impressive the epics of Naevius and Ennius were to their original audiences, it required editors working after Crates' example to edit and preserve their books for posterity. Porcius Licinus, the first historian of Roman literature, therefore traced its origin to epic, probably with Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* in mind:

Poenico bello secundo Musa pinnato gradu  
intulit se bellicosam in Romuli gentem feram.

At the time of the Second Punic War, the warlike Muse  
with winged step introduced herself to Romulus' savage race.

(*ap.* Gell. 17.21.44)

The literary potential of drama was only acknowledged later, in the generation of Aelius Stilo and his son-in-law Servius Clodius (in the last part of the second century BC). In gathering texts, settling questions of authorship, and assembling the details of a theatre history, these first students of drama drew on the scholarly traditions of both Alexandria and Pergamum: the Terentian *didascaliae* suggest Callimachus' *Pinakes*, while Servius Clodius' use of sound to proclaim, 'This verse is not Plautine; this one is' (*ap.* Cic. *Fam.* 9.16.4) recalls the doctrine of poetic euphony for which Crates was famous. The process of reception that 'made' Roman literature was itself shaped by the Greek experience of texts, and the genres initially marked for canonical status all had Greek precedents: tragedy and comedy, epic, history and oratory. A negative example proves the point.

The *fabula praetexta* (see also Fantham, Chapter 8 below) was a genre that put the deeds of great Romans on the stage. It was said to be Naevius' invention: plays celebrating the founding of Rome (*Romulus* or *Lupus*) and a victory of Claudius Marcellus in 234 (*Clastidium*) are attributed to him. Ennius also wrote *praetextae*, as did the tragic poets Pacuvius and Accius. The plays were performed at festivals and triumphs and may have played a significant role in disseminating the facts of Roman history and developing a sense of Roman identity among the *populus*. Despite distinguished practitioners, however, and a well-defined role on the cultural scene, *praetextae* never became 'literature'. Accius' *Brutus*, a play about the last Tarquin that enjoyed a pointedly topical revival at the Floralia of 57, is cited once for content, but that exception only proves the rule (Cic. *Sest.* 123; cf. *Div.* 1.43–5). Fragments of *praetextae* are otherwise known only from

the lexical oddities they supplied for ancient grammarians. Their lack of Greek origin denied them the cultural authority of tragedy and comedy. They were also too closely tied to the politics of praise, as some famous testimony of Cato confirms.

At the beginning of the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero supports his claim that Romans have equalled the achievements of Greek culture by pointing to the success of Latin poetry, which rivals the Greek despite its late start:

Sero igitur a nostris poetae vel cogniti vel recepti. quamquam est in *Originibus* solitos esse in epulis canere convivas ad tibicinem de clarorum hominum virtutibus, honorem tamen huic generi non fuisse declarat oratio Catonis, in qua obiecit ut probum M. Nobiliori, quod is in provinciam poetas duxisset; duxerat autem consul ille in Aetoliam, ut scimus, Ennium.

Poets received late recognition or reception from our ancestors. Although he wrote in his *Origines* that guests around the table were accustomed to sing to the pipe about the deeds of famous men, Cato nevertheless declared in a speech that there was no honour in this sort of thing. That was the speech in which he criticized M. Nobilior for taking poets to his province; the consul had in fact, as we know, taken Ennius to Aetolia. (*Tusc* 1.3)

Cicero elsewhere treated these banquet songs, which modern scholars call *carmina convivalia*, as forerunners of epic (*Brut.* 75), and he may have assumed here that the object of Cato's displeasure was the description of Fulvius' Aetolian campaign in Book 15 of Ennius' *Annales*. This was not, however, the case. Cato's speech is dated to within a year of Fulvius' censorship in 179. What aroused Cato's scorn was therefore not *Annales* 15, a book not written until the late 170s, but Ennius' *praetexta* drama *Ambracia*, which was staged either at Fulvius' controversial triumph in 187 or at the votive games he held the following year. Cato was not attacking poetry in general or Ennius in particular but Fulvius' appropriation of poetry for political advantage in the highly charged atmosphere of the late 180s (cf. Liv. 38.44, 39.4–6).

The banquet songs also had a contemporary resonance for Cato, though Cicero's late Republican perspective again obscures the nature of Cato's concern a century or more earlier. The issue for him was the course of Roman Hellenization. Greek influences flooded Rome after the conquest of Macedonia in 168. The impact could be enlightening. Aemilius Paulus, the victor at Pydna, brought the royal Macedonian library to Rome, and Greek teachers and rhetoricians followed the books in such numbers that by 161 the Senate tried to curb their impact. Other developments were from the outset less benign. Drinking parties, for example, and musical entertainments in a Greek style grew increasingly lavish. Cato complained publicly about boys being sold for more than fields and preserved fish for more than plowmen. He railed at statues erected to honour Greek

cooks and trumpeted the austerity of his own household (Polyb. 31.25.5; cf. *ORF* 96, 174). He figured prominently in the sumptuary debates of the late 160s, and this struggle over contemporary *mores* provides the likely context for a famous passage known to Aulus Gellius from an anthology of Cato's pronouncements under the title *Carmen de moribus* (Gell 11.2):

Vestiri in foro honeste mos erat, domi quod satis erat. equos carius quam coquos emebant. poeticae artis honos non erat. siquis in ea re studebat aut sese ad convivia adplicabat, grassator vocabatur.

It used to be the custom to dress becomingly in public, modestly at home. They paid more for horses than for cooks. Poetic art was not respected. Anyone who applied himself to that activity or devoted himself to parties was called a flatterer.

His target is the contemporary party scene, where people dress up, eat elaborate foods, and hear themselves praised by their hangers-on. Cato's complaint, not to mention the sumptuary legislation of the time, reminds us, however, that another element in Roman society was losing its taste for the poetry of praise, and their reaction may explain how even Ennius' *Annales* lost its appeal by mid-century and had to be rescued by that later generation of readers, who created Roman literature in the study (Suet. *Gram.* 2.2).

## 5 The Status of Poets: Lucilius

The recuperation of poetry's reputation in the late second century was thus also the legacy of Crates, though the phenomenon is best illustrated from the late Republic, when praise poetry again became respectable. The rationale for its acceptance is articulated especially well by Cicero in his defence of the poet Archias:

At eis laudibus certe non solum ipse qui laudatur sed etiam populi Romani nomen ornatur. in caelum huius proavus Cato tollitur; magnus honos populi Romani rebus adiungitur. omnes denique illi Maximi, Marcelli, Fulvii non sine communi omnium nostrum laude decorantur.

All that praise honours not just the individual who is praised but also the name of the Roman people. The ancestor of our Cato here was praised to the skies, adding a great honour to the affairs of the Roman people. Thus all those Maximi, Marcelli and Fulvii are not honoured without praising us all as a group. (*Arch.* 22)

Cicero may again be reading a contemporary attitude back into an earlier time, but the literary history of early Rome is inevitably the product of such back-projection and hindsight.

The growing acceptability of poetry in the later second century was further encouraged by a narrowing of the gap between poetry's writers and its readers. The first poets were outsiders to the society whose literature they created. Livius Andronicus and Terence came to Rome as slaves and were never more than freedmen. Plautus, Naevius and Ennius were Italian provincials who earned a living by teaching and writing. Caecilius, an Insubrian Gaul, was also a professional. They must all have been well connected. Andronicus received senatorial commissions. Naevius and Ennius served in the wars of expansion that their poetry glorified, and Ennius mixed with the highest levels of aristocracy. Yet they stood only as witnesses to the achievements of their social superiors. Gaius Lucilius was the first poet to observe Roman society from within. His brother was the senator Lucilius Hirrus, whose daughter became the mother of Pompey the Great. Lucilius himself served in the entourage of Scipio Aemilianus at Numantia in 134/3, but though a public career was open to him, he settled instead for the private life of an equestrian landowner, with estates in southern Italy and a house in Rome, where he observed the affectations, hypocrisies and foibles of his contemporaries.

Later generations would call the resulting poems 'satires' and make him the founder of a genre, but the fragments themselves refer only to 'playful chats' (*ludus ac sermones*, 1039W), 'jottings' (*chartae*, 1014W) and 'improvisations' (*schedia*, 1131, W). In an age of keen generic expectations – drama was particularly conservative in form and epic preserved its Ennian ring until the late Republic – Lucilius' poems were extremely varied, even experimental (see Morgan, Chapter 12). As an aristocrat himself, he had no need to cultivate access to an audience as, in their different ways, Plautus and Ennius had to do. He needed only to circulate his poems among his friends. Nor, as a pioneer in a new style of writing, did he have to concern himself with the expectations of that audience or with any particular complex of generic conventions: subjects, metres, tone, diction were all of his own choosing, as their variety makes clear. His social status thus vastly enhanced his creative licence. It also offered a measure of protection from the consequences of his wit. Defamation was actionable at Rome, and the evident impunity with which Lucilius attacked the excesses around him suggests the advantages of high social position.

That position was itself a feature of the poems, but the biographical details so easily culled from their fragments present a significant interpretive challenge for modern readers. We clearly hear the voice of a landowner – *mibi quidem non persuadetur publiceis mutem meos* (I at any rate won't be persuaded to swap my own realm for a public one, 647W) – and an equestrian, who bore the poet's own name:

publicanus vero ut Asiae fiam, ut scripturarius  
pro Lucilio, id ego nolo, et uno hoc non muto omnia

That I become a tax collector in Asia or an assessor  
 instead of Lucilius, that I refuse and will not exchange for the world  
 (650–1W)

Horace would later say that the old satirist drew from his experience and put his life on view, as if on a painted tablet (*S.* 2.1.28–34). That may be so, but the alliance of poetry and biography, never an entirely comfortable arrangement for literary criticism, is especially problematic in the case of Lucilius: even a familiar face is not necessarily a good likeness. What, for example, are we to make of this fragment?

at libertinus tricorius Syrus ipse ac mastigias  
 quicum versipellis fio et quicum conmuto omnia  
 but a triple-skinned freedman, a very Syrus, a whipping-post  
 with whom I switch skins and with whom I trade everything  
 (652–3W)

The poet's voice has been heard here, too, taking on the role of gadfly, but the comic language (*libertinus*, *Syrus*, *mastigias*, *versipellis*, and probably *tricorius*) makes its sincerity problematic. Readers may even recall a notorious fragment from Naevius' comedy *Tarentilla*:

quae ego in theatro hic meis probavi plausibus,  
 ea non audere quemquam regem rumpere,  
 quanto libertatem hanc hic superat servitus.  
 What I in the theatre here approve with my plaudits  
 those things no grandee dares to contravene:  
 that's how much this servility surpasses that freedom.  
 (72–4R)

Once ascribed to the play's prologue, these lines became for biographically minded critics a bold declaration of free speech: the *rex* in question was even identified with Naevius' supposed 'enemy', Q. Caecilius Metellus. We now hear in them only the metatheatrical boast of a comic slave. The fragment has no programmatic significance, and the feisty Naevius, who mocked the Metelli from the stage and paid dearly for his independence, is increasingly recognized as a fiction of ancient biography.

A similar scepticism might be brought to the fragments of Lucilius, strengthened both by our experience with Naevius and by our recognition of voices and poses as a regular feature of later satire. Were Romans themselves equally wary of Lucilius? Probably not. When Cicero has a character remark that

‘Lucilius, a very educated and sophisticated man, used to say that he did not wish to be read by either the uneducated nor the most educated’, he suggests not just that programmatic statements were heard in Lucilius’ poems but that they carried the authority of the author’s own voice (Cic. *de Or.* 2.25; cf. *Fin.* 1.7). Cicero himself, hardly deaf to dialogic voices, did not doubt the reality of authorial intent. In referring his correspondent Volumnius, for example, to ‘what I discussed about wit through the character of Antonius in the second book of *De oratore*’ (*quae sunt a me in secundo libro ‘de oratore’ per Antoni personam disputata de ridiculis, Fam.* 7.32.2), his mouthpiece matters so little that he misidentifies him: the excursus in question belongs not to Antonius but to Caesar Strabo (*de Or.* 2.216b–290). Cicero did not doubt that the voice of Lucilius *was* Lucilius.

This matters because Lucilius’ social status determined the nature of his poetic authority. Cicero’s poetic quotations generally take their point from their content, not their source. In *De Officiis*, for example, he illustrates the nobility of wars for supremacy (*de imperio*) with an admiring quotation of Pyrrhus’ words after the battle of Heraclea (‘what a truly regal sentiment!’) without noting that the verses in question belonged to Ennius, not Pyrrhus (*Off.* 1.38). Hecuba’s dream in Ennius’ tragedy *Alexander* is quoted *despite* its origin: ‘although this is a poet’s invention, it is not unlike the manner of dreams’ (*Div.* 1.42). Contrast the beginning of *de Oratore*, where Crassus, speaking to Scaevola, introduces the central idea that good oratory requires wide learning:

Sed, ut solebat C. Lucilius saepe dicere, homo tibi subiratus, mihi propter eam ipsam causam minus quam volebat familiaris, sed tamen et doctus et perurbanus, sic sentio neminem esse in oratorum numero habendum, qui non sit omnibus eis artibus, quae sunt libero dignae, perpolitus . . .

But I agree with C. Lucilius, a man rather hard on you and for that very reason less close to me than he wished, but nevertheless both learned and refined, who was often accustomed to say that nobody should be reckoned among the orators who is not accomplished in all those arts that befit a gentleman. (*de Or.* 1.72)

In citing Pyrrhus, Cicero offered the words without the poet. Here he cites the poet without the words, and for an opinion divorced from poetic context. Though Lucilius is introduced in terms of his poetry – *tibi subiratus*, ‘a little angry with you’, recalls the mockery of Scaevola in Lucilius’ second book – his authority derives from personal qualities (*et doctus et perurbanus*, ‘both learned and highly cultured’) and commands the respect of a great orator and the pre-eminent voice of *De oratore*. The aristocrat Crassus acknowledges one of his own.

Cicero’s studied invocation of Lucilius is far from the tumult of the early *ludi* or the respectful hush when Crates lectured on Greek poetry or even

from Gracchus' unconscious echo of Ennian tragedy, and that is a measure of how far the Romans' literary sensibility travelled from its beginning to the last generation of the Republic. Rome's early literary history is of course a story of authors, but it is also a story of the readers who came to value their work. It took the joint effort of writers and men of letters to ensure that by the time of Sulla there was an ample stock of texts to read, to value, and to call by the name of literature.

### FURTHER READING

The best author-centred histories of early Latin literature are the chapters by Gratwick in Kenney and Clausen (1982: 60–171) and, from the historian's perspective, Gruen (1990: 79–123). In recent years, significant challenges to the assumptions and results of this traditional approach have been posed by more theoretically aware critics; for example, Habinek (1998: 34–68), Rüpke (2000) and Schwindt (2001). Much of the impetus for these developments derives from archaeological discoveries, which have changed the nature of what was once a largely philological discussion. Contrast Momigliano (1957) with Zorzetti (1990), expanded by Zorzetti (1991), who is in turn challenged on key points by Cole (1991) and Philips (1991). Poucet (1989), Cornell (1991) and Horsfall (1994) review the problem. Holloway (1994) and Coulston and Dodge (2000) provide good introductions to the archaeological evidence. Rawson (1985) offers much useful information about the late Republican interests through which most knowledge of this earlier period has been filtered.

For the origins of Roman theatre and the *ludi scaenici*, see Schmidt (1989), Gruen (1993: 183–222) and Bernstein (1998: 234–51); for the impact of Crates on Roman letters, Pfeiffer (1968: 234–46) and the commentary on Suetonius by Kaster (1995). The teachings of Crates have themselves been the subject of much new work with important ramifications for Roman literary studies; for example, Asmis (1992) and Janko (2000: 120–34). Gruen (1990: 158–92) analyses the influence of Greek rhetoric and philosophy on the mid-Republic.

For the emerging epic aesthetic and its social position, see Barchiesi (1993a), Hinds (1998: 52–74) and Rüpke (2001a). Garbarino (1973) and Kaimio (1979) gather important source material for the influx of Greek culture in the mid-Republic. For Philhellenism as a cultural phenomenon in this period, see Gruen (1984: 250–72), and for Cato in particular, Gruen (1993: 52–83). Early Roman historiography is the subject of ongoing re-evaluation. Compare Badian (1966), Timpe (1973) and Dillery (2002).

The cultural significance of the *fabula praetexta* is examined by Zorzetti (1980), Flower (1995) and Wiseman (1994: 1–22; 1995: 129–41). The textual evidence is analysed in detail by Manuwald (2001).

Lucilius is not particularly well treated in modern scholarship. There is no authoritative edition of the fragments, and their interpretation is fraught with difficulties. In addition to Gratwick's spirited treatment in Kenney and Clausen (1982: 162–71), see Coffey (1976: 35–62), and for the satirist's political and social background, Gruen (1993: 272–317).