

NAEVIUS, TARENTILLA FR. I (72-74 R³)

Naevius' *Tarentilla*, the best preserved of his *palliatae*, depicts the sojourn of two young men in a foreign town, probably Tarentum. They are dissipating their families' fortunes in the company of a delightful young *meretrix*, the "little girl of Tarentum" after whom the play is named, when their revels are suddenly interrupted by the unexpected arrival of their two fathers. After several embarrassing confrontations, fathers and sons are apparently reconciled, and the young men return to the path of virtue and economic responsibility¹).

The most puzzling fragment of the *Tarentilla* is assigned by Warmington²) to the play's prologue (72-74 R³):

quae ego in theatro hic meis probaui plausibus,
ea non audere quemquam regem rumpere:
quanto libertatem hanc hic superat seruitus!

Most commentators, as we shall see, have been so eager to discuss what they believe to be the concealed political implications of these lines that they have made no attempt to explain the primary meaning of the passage as it relates to the plot of the play. The only such explanation I have been able to discover is that offered by Suerbaum³): the speaker, he suggests, is a slave, boasting that, despite his slavery, he is really much freer than another character in the play who happens to be legally free. The lines, then, mean something like this: "As for me, I say⁴) that not even a king dares to annul anything that I have approved by my applause in the theater here: that's how much better slavery here

1) The complete fragments of the play, together with a reconstruction of the plot, appear in O. Ribbeck, ed., *Scaenicae Romanorum poesis fragmenta 2* (Leipzig 1898³) 21-26. Although I have followed Ribbeck in suggesting that the sons give up their dissipated life at the play's conclusion, there is nothing in the surviving fragments to rule out the possibility of a comic reversal of this expectation, as in Plautus' *Bacchides* (V. ii), where two fathers who plan to castigate the *meretrices* who are ruining their sons finally succumb themselves to their blandishments.

2) E. H. Warmington, ed. and tr., *Remains of Old Latin 2* (LCL 1967²) 99.

3) W. Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter* (Hildesheim 1968) 29-31.

4) As Suerbaum says, (supra n. 3) 30 n. 92, "Der Acc. c. Inf. wird von einem Verbum des Sinnes 'ich kann von meiner Stellung sagen', ich kann für mich in Anspruch nehmen' abhängen."

(pointing to the scenery – i. e., the town – or to himself) is than this freedom (pointing to the character he is speaking about).”

Though the lines do not belong to the prologue, Suerbaum says, it is impossible to tell how they fitted in to the play’s plot.⁵⁾ But perhaps we can do better than this. First, we know that the speaker is a slave (*seruitus* 74). He is from Tarentum (*hic* 72, 74) – if we are right in assuming that the scene of the play is Tarentum; at least he is from the city where the action is taking place. Therefore he cannot belong to the young men or their fathers, who are strangers to the city, as other fragments of the *Tarentilla* prove (*peregre* 84, *peregri probra* 93). So the only character we know of who is left for the slave to belong to is the Tarentilla. The speaker may have been a *puer* or indeed (since the words give no indication of the speaker’s gender) an *ancilla* in the Tarentilla’s household; the butt of the speech would no doubt be one of the *adulescentes* who are making fools of themselves over the *meretrix*. The general import of the lines would be, “When I say something no one can make me change my mind, but my mistress can wrap this so-called ‘free’ man around her little finger.” The young man (or men) need not have been present: Astaphium, a *meretrix*’ maid in the *Truculentus*, in a mocking speech about an *adulescens* refers to him as *huic homini* and *hunc* even though he has left the stage (*Truc.* 213, 215).

Almost all the scholars who have dealt with these lines have assumed that they contain a political *double entendre*⁶⁾. Leo⁷⁾ explains the secondary meaning of the passage as follows: “In der *Tarentilla* sagte ein Sklave: in Rom bestimmen die Vornehmen ob ein Stück gut oder schlecht ist, und die kleinen Leute mucksen nicht: ‘wenn ich in Tarent etwas durch meinen Beifall für gut erklärt habe, so wagt kein König das zu brechen; die

5) Suerbaum (supra n. 3) 30.

6) Th. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* 1 (Berlin 1874⁶) 893; F.F. Abbott, “The Theatre as a Factor in Roman Politics under the Republic,” *TAPA* 38 (1907) 53–54; Fr. Leo, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* 1 (Berlin 1913) 77; S. Sabbadini, *Poeti latini: Nevio* (Udine 1935) 60–61; A. Kappelmacher and M. Schuster, *Die Literatur der Römer bis zur Karolingerzeit* (Potsdam 1934) 70; E. V. Marmorale, *Naevius poeta* (Florence 1950²) 219; Warmington (supra n. 2) 98 n. c; Suerbaum (supra n. 3) 30. The only scholar, to my knowledge, who objected to such explanations was C. Dziatzko, “Zur Kritik und Exegese der griechischen und lateinischen Komikerfragmente”, *RbM* 31 (1876) 376–377.

7) Leo (supra n. 6) 77.

Sklassen in Tarent sind freier als die Freien in Rom.'” In other words, Naevius is covertly complaining of prior censorship of his material by Roman magistrates; unlike the audiences in Greek cities, his audience has no opportunity to judge the quality of his work. It is questionable whether modern scholars would ever have arrived at such an interpretation had they not had the dubious assistance of Naevius’ biographical tradition, according to which he was thrown into prison at one point in his career for publicly insulting the leading men of Rome (Gell. 3. 3. 15). This tradition is highly untrustworthy, as many scholars have shown⁸). But even if it is accepted, it offers no evidence that *prior* censorship was ever a problem for Roman playwrights. Of course the aediles were responsible for producing plays⁹), and it is possible that libel laws existed in Naevius’ time¹⁰), but there is no indication that magistrates ever tampered with the text of a play before (or after) it was acted, or that they ever refused to produce a play for political reasons. How, then, was the audience expected to understand the supposed political comment hidden in this speech? The evidence in Plautus and Terence points entirely in the opposite direction: their standard expectation is that the *spectators* are the judges of the play; cf. *Poen.* 57-58, *locus argumentost suom sibi proscaenium, nos iuratores estis*, and *Rud.* 1249-1253, *Trin.* 705-707, *Capt.* 67-68, *Cas.* 13-14, and all the prologues of Terence.

It would appear, then, that there are no political overtones in the passage. The *regem* in 73 is not “Q. Caecilius Metellus,”¹¹) but simply the usual hyperbolic term used in comedy for a very important man¹²): cf. *Stich.* 287 (from a *seruus currens* speech), *si rex opstabit obuam, regem ipsum priu’ peruortito*; also *Poen.* 671,

8) See H. B. Mattingly, “Naevius and the Metelli”, *Historia* 9 (1960) 414-439, who includes a survey of earlier work on the problem; and, most recently, H. D. Jocelyn, “The Poet Cn. Naevius, P. Cornelius Scipio and Q. Caecilius Metellus”, *Antichthon* 3 (1969) 32-47.

9) Ter., *Eun.* 20; G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton 1952) 73-76.

10) T. Frank, “Naevius and Free Speech”, *AJP* 48 (1927) 105-110; L. Robinson, “Censorship in Republican Drama”, *CJ* 42 (1946-47) 147-150.

11) Warmington (supra n. 2) 98 n. c.

12) Ed. Fraenkel, *Elementi plautini in Plauto*, tr. F. Munari (Florence 1960) 178-187, discusses the expression *rex* in Roman comedy, and maintains that its use indicates original Roman composition; for counter-arguments see P. W. Harsh, “Possible Greek Background for the Word *Rex* as Used in Plautus”, *CP* 31 (1936) 62-68.

Capt. 825, *Miles* 1225, and *Stich.* 133. The speech, in short, is no more than a typical example of the boasting of a comic slave, given an interesting twist by having the speaker (as in *Rud.* 1249–1253) recall his own experiences as a spectator in the theater.

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FRAGMENTE EINER BISHER UNBEKANNTEN TERENZHANDSCHRIFT

Dr. Johannes Papritz hat während der fünfziger Jahre in der Umgebung Marburgs Handschriftenfunde gemacht. Er wird über sie selber berichten, einstweilen jedoch erlaubte er mir, Reste einer 1952 gefundenen Terenzhandschrift und eines Liviuscodex¹⁾ zu veröffentlichen. Ich lege heute die Fragmente des Terenzmanuskripts vor.

I

Beschreibung. Es haben sich vier Seiten erhalten, als Schutzklappen verleimt in einem Bande des 17. Jh. Dank der ausgezeichneten Leistung von J. Papritz sind die Blätter gut lesbar geblieben. Sie finden sich im Staatsarchiv Marburg unter Hs. 6, Nr. 10. Das erste enthält Phor. 1054 (NA. pol. usw.) bis zum plaudite, dann mindestens drei abgewaschene Zeilen in Silbertinktur, über deren letzte der Beginn des Ht. geschrieben ist. Dieser Beginn besteht aus dem Argumentum ohne Überschrift, dann fängt der Prolog mit „Prologus“ an und reicht bis cogitare (v. 14). Das Argumentum wurde offenbar von einer von der Texthand verschiedenen Hand auf einem freigelassenen Spatium (vgl. die Hs. Z, Marouzeau Bd. 1, 77) nachgetragen. Das zweite Blatt bietet den Prologtext von commode bis (inclusive) induxi ma (v. 49). Das dritte reicht von nro erit (Ende von 255 nach Dp) bis offendim²⁾ (285), das vierte schließt an, es liefert den Text von

¹⁾ Das Livius-Fragment ist inzwischen von R.M. Ogilvie, diese Ztschr. 114, 1971, 209ff. (vgl. bes. 209, A. 1) veröffentlicht. Die sachkundige Kritik meines Kollegen Dr. Lübke hat mich vor etlichen Voreiligkeiten und Fehlern bewahrt. Ihm sei für seine Hilfe herzlich gedankt.