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Wessels, A.B.; Vöhler, M.; Alekou, S.; Pechlivanos, M.

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Antje Wessels

Shaping the (Hi)story of Innovation: Livius Andronicus as the First Poet of Latin Literature

From our modern perspective,¹ there is little doubt that Roman literature – specifically at its very beginning – greatly imitated Greek models.² In his recently published monograph *Beyond Greek: The Beginnings of Latin Literature*, Denis Feeney even goes so far as to assume the prevalence of a “Roman translation project”.³ The ancient reception of early Roman literature seems to support this view: the first Roman epic, Livius Andronicus’s *Odusia*, was considered to be a mere translation of the Homeric *Odyssey*;⁴ Ennius’s statement that he had been inspired by Homer and Sleep⁵ was understood as a claim to be a “second Homer” (*alter Homerus*);⁶ and if

1 My thanks to John Hamilton, Bettina Full, the research groups ‘Nachleben der Antike’ and ‘Anchoring Innovation’ and the participants of my Research Master Seminar on (Per-)Forming Comedy, Leiden 2015.

2 Cf. e.g. Kramer (1997) 130: “So wie die lateinische Literatur in Nachahmung der griechischen Literatur entstand, so bewegt sich auch die lateinische Literatursprache in einem engen Abhängigkeitsverhältnis von der griechischen Literatursprache.”

3 Feeney (2016) ch. 2, 45–64.

4 In his famous passage on *imitatio*, written at the very end of the first cent. AD, the rhetorician Quintilian – when pleading for a technique of productive and creative imitation – admits that Livius Andronicus had introduced something. However, he disqualifies him from being a good poet, respectively from producing a good imitation (which should include new aspects): “Once again, what would have happened if no one had achieved more than the man he was following? We should have nothing in poetry better than Livius Andronicus” (Quint. *Inst.* 10.2.7: *quid erat futurum si nemo plus effecisset eo quem sequebatur? Nihil in poetis supra Livium Andronicum [...] haberemus*). Cf. n. 29.

5 According to Fronto *de Eloq.* 146 N., Ennius’ instructors were Homer and Sleep (*magister Enni Homerus et Somnus*); according to Cic. *Ac. Pr.* 2.16.51, Homer the poet appeared at his side, when Ennius dreamed: *Cum somniavit [sc. Ennius] narravit visus Homerus adesse poeta* (= Enn. *Ann.* frg. 3 Skutsch).

6 Cf. e.g. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.50–51f.: *Ennius et sapiens et fortis et alter Homerus / ut critici dicunt* (“Ennius, the wise and valiant, the second Homer, as literary scholars say”). Ennius’ statement has been read as a claim to be the reincarnation of Homer, see Porphyrio *ad loc.*, Rudd (1989) 83 (comm. ad Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.51–52), and Suerbaum (2012) 188. However, this seems to be a rather late construction. The fragments themselves give a quite different impression: “[W]hatever we might be missing in terms of lost narrative parallels with Homer in the *Annales*, Ennius does not come close to this [sc. Virgil’s engagement with Homeric epic]. In Bloom’s terms, there is no great *agon*.” (Goldsmith 2013, 14).

we take seriously what Plautus himself suggested in a large number of his prologues, his contemporary audiences highly appreciated the idea that he would adopt Greek models and turn them into Roman *palliatae*:⁷ while largely employing elements of the indigenous Italic theater,⁸ Plautus still presents himself explicitly as a translator of Greek comedies.

Apparently, the Romans had little interest in presenting their literature as part of an Italic tradition or in understanding their early poetic production as something new or specifically Roman,⁹ but instead aimed at ‘anchoring’ it in a Greek origin. In the present paper, I shall argue that this holds true, specifically, for the narrative that the Romans, through the centuries, shaped about the very beginning of Roman drama. We have evidence that, from the fourth century on, there had been an indigenous tradition of dramatic culture. The most famous *testimonium* of these performances is given by the Augustan historian Titus Livius, who dates the beginning of drama shortly after 364 BC, when during a pestilence outbreak Etruscan dancers and flute players were called to Rome in order to perform *ludi scenici* that would conciliate the gods. According to Livy, these performances were imitated by the Roman youth shortly hereafter, and finally, after evolving into *iocularia* (versified, ludicrous dialogues) and *saturae* (a potpourri

7 In more than a half of the prologues of his comedies Plautus claims that the present comedy is an adaptation of a Greek model. E.g. Plaut. *As.* 10q. *huic nomen graece Onagost fabulae; / Demophilus scripsit, Maccus vortit barbare*. On the general implications of *vertere* cf. Traina (1970); on Plautus’ technique of anchoring see below, n. 44. As to the discussions on Plautus’ relation to Hellenistic comedy (and the question to what extent he actually adopted Greek models or rather not) see specifically the research done by the Freiburger Schule (Eckart Lefèvre, Lore Benz, Ekkehard Stärk *et al.*), e.g. Stärk (1989).

8 E.g. stock characters (which go back to the Oscan *Atellana*) or improvisational techniques (respectively the pretension to employ them). Cf. e.g. Marshall (2006); Auhagen (1999) 111–129; Moore (1998).

9 A remarkable exception is the *satura*, which, in Horace’s version of the ‘history of the genre’, is claimed to go back to Attic comedy (Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.1–5: *Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae / atque alii, quorum comoedia prisca virorum est, / siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur, / quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui / famosus, multa cum libertate notabant, / hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus [...]*), however, according to Quint. *Inst.* 10.93, is a specific Roman genre (*satura quidem tota nostra est*).

of different metric forms)¹⁰ and gradually turning into art,¹¹ were combined with what we know as the Oscan *Atellana*. Yet, even though there is indeed no indication that these early performances had been written down or that they even featured any characteristics of ‘literature’,¹² it is unclear to what extent Livy’s story of a ‘pre-literary’ period is true or rather aimed at imitating the well-known story of the history of ‘Greek’ poetry, which was preceded by a long oral tradition.¹³ There are quite a lot of strands that contributed to the development of Roman drama and the trustworthiness of Livy’s account is rather limited. Consequently, it seems impossible to draw a clear line between a ‘pre-literary’ and a ‘literary’ period, let alone determine a concrete date when Roman literary drama actually started. Nevertheless, Roman literature and scholarship, from the first cent. BC to the fourth cent. AD, were intensely working towards a narrative which assigns the beginning of Roman drama to one single moment and to a Greek as its protagonist: the performance of a drama in 240 BC, which had been translated from Greek into Latin by a ‘Greek slave’, Livius Andronicus. Moreover, in modern

10 Liv. 7.2.5–7: *Imitari deinde eos iuventus, simul inconditis inter se iocularia fundentes versibus, coepere; nec absoni a voce motus erant. Accepta itaque res saepiusque usurpando excitata. Vernaculis artificibus, quia ister Tusco verbo ludio vocabatur, nomen histrionibus inditum; qui non, sicut ante, Fescennino versu similem incompositum temere ac rudem alternis iaciebant, sed impletas modis saturas descripto iam ad tibicinem cantu motuque congruenti peragebant.* “Next the young Romans began to imitate them, at the same time exchanging jests in uncouth verses, and bringing their movements into a certain harmony with the words. And so the amusement was adopted, and frequent use kept it alive. The native professional actors were called *histriones*, from *ister*, the Tuscan word for player; they no longer – as before – alternately threw off rude lines hastily improvised, like the Fescennines, but performed medleys, full of musical measures, to melodies which were now written out to go with the flute, and with appropriate gesticulation.” (transl. Foster 1924, 361).

11 Liv. 7.2.11–12: *Postquam lege hac fabularum ab risu ac soluto ioco res avocabatur et ludus in artem paulatim verterat, iuventus histrionibus fabellarum actu relicto ipsa inter se more antiquo ridicula intexta versibus iactitare coepit; unde exorta quae exodia postea appellata consertaque fabellis potissimum Atellanis sunt.* “When this type of performance had begun to wean the drama from laughter and informal jest, and the play had gradually developed into art, the young men abandoned the acting of comedies to professionals and revived the ancient practice of fashioning their nonsense into verses and letting fly with them at one another; this was the source of the after-plays which came later to be called *exodia*, and were usually combined with Atellan farces.” (transl. Foster 1924, 363).

12 There are quite a lot of testimonia, such as Liv. 7.2; Val. Max. 2.4.4; Euanth. *De com.* p. 7 R.; Diom. 1.489f.; Tac. *Ann.* 4.14; Porphyrio ad Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.145; Festus 436 Lindsay; however, the earliest fragments date from the second cent. BC, see Frassinetti (1967). Cf. further Benz/Stärk/Vogt-Spira (1995); Benz (2001); Höttemann (1993) 89–112; Blänsdorf (1997/1999) 151ff.

13 Cf. e.g. Conte (1994) 13.

scholarship, this narrative which had been coined with respect to the history of drama finally culminated in the idea that the performance in 240 BC was the start of Roman literature in general.¹⁴ Why Livius Andronicus? Why 240 BC? And to what extent does this correspond with the actual evidence we have?

The first documented testimonium which claims 240 BC as the year of a beginning is a passage from Cicero's *Brutus*.¹⁵ According to Cicero (Cic. *Brut.* 72), "Livius (sc. Livius Andronicus) was the first one to stage a *fabula*, in the year, when Gaius Claudius, son of Caecus, and Marcus Tuditanus held the consulship, one year before Ennius was born and five hundred fourteen years after the founding of Rome."

<i>hic Livius (sc. Livius Andronicus) [qui] primus fabulam</i>		
<i>C. Claudio Caeci filio et M. Tuditano consulibus</i>		= - 240
<i>docuit anno ipso ante, quam natus est Ennius</i>	[sc. - 239 - 1]	= - 240
<i>post Romam conditam [...]</i>	[sc. - 753]	
<i>quartodecimo et quingentesimo</i>	[sc. + 514]	= - 240

Unlike Livy (Liv. 7.2.8) who would mention Livius Andronicus as the first one to compose a play with a plot (*Livius [...] ausus est primus argumento fabulam serere*),¹⁶ without, however, specifying the date,¹⁷ Cicero is extremely precise: he does not restrict himself to one single piece of evidence. Rather, he confirms the date three times – a technique, which is, of course, highly suspicious of veiling uncertainty. And, indeed, immediately hereafter he adds:

... ut hic ait, quem nos sequimur. est enim inter scriptores de numero annorum controversia.

... according to the authority, whom I follow. For there is a dispute among writers about the precise number of years.

¹⁴ E.g. Baier (2010) 7: "Im Jahr 240 v. Chr. erhielt Livius Andronicus von den Ädilen den Auftrag, eine *fabula*, also ein Theaterstück, aufzuführen. Das literarische Leben begann somit durch ein magistratisches Edikt, gleichsam auf Befehl."; Albrecht (2012) 97: "[sc. Livius Andronicus] der Archeget der römischen Literatur".

¹⁵ Cicero's *Brutus*, published in 46 BC, is not just a history of Roman oratory. The chronological survey, which starts from Lucius Junius Brutus and finally culminates into Cicero's own biography as a rhetor, rather aims at a defense of Cicero's own vision on rhetoric art.

¹⁶ Cf. on this passage Oakley (1998) 54.

¹⁷ Liv. 7.2 does not give any information on the year when Livius Andronicus composed this play nor does he say that Livius Andronicus used Greek models; on the other hand, Livy is precise when dating Livius Andronicus' performance of his cultic song to Iuno Regina in 207 BC (see Liv. 27.37.7–14). Cf. Manuwald (2016) 140.

As we learn from the subsequent passage,¹⁸ the dispute that Cicero refers to was due to two competitive sources for dating Livius's performance. On the one hand, the evidence given by the authorities Cicero was relying on: Atticus,¹⁹ some other documents not further specified (*commentarii antiqui*),²⁰ and, presumably, Varro in his work on poets, *De poetis*;²¹ and, on the other hand, the evidence provided by the Roman playwright and scholar Accius.²² According to Accius – the source Cicero wants to dismiss –, Livius came to Rome only in 209 BC, when he was brought there after the fall of Tarentum, and performed his first drama eleven years thereafter, in 197 BC at the *ludi Iuventatis*.

The two sources definitely contradict each other: if both were right, Accius and the Cicero-group, Livius Andronicus would have been brought to Rome thirty-one years after his first performance of a drama at the *ludi Romani*.²³ However, whoever may have supplied the correct data (in his article on “Accius, Porcius Licinus and the Beginning of Latin Literature” Jarret Welsh²⁴ has argued that Accius' chronology must be mistaken,²⁵ and that the testimonies that Cicero relies on are more plausible than the data given by Accius), the reconstruction of the ‘precise year’ is not Cicero's main concern: Cicero does not use his triple approach in order to draw more specified conclusions – if you present a date three

18 Cic. Brut. 72–73: *Accius autem a Q. Maximo quintum consule captum Tarento scripsit Livium, annis xxx post quam eum fabulam docuisse et Atticus scribit et nos in antiquis commentariis invenimus, (73) docuisse autem fabulam annis post xi C. Cornelio Q. Minucio consulibus ludis Iuventatis, quos Salinator Senensi proelio voverat. In quo tantus error Acci fuit, ut his consulibus xl annos natus Ennius fuerit; quoi aequalis fuerit Livius: minor fuit aliquanto is, qui primus fabulam dedit, quam ei, qui multas docuerant ante hos consules, et Plautus et Naevius.* “Accius however stated that Livius was taken captive from Tarentum by Quintus Maximus in his fifth consulship, thirty years after Livius had produced his first play, according to Atticus, whose statement I find confirmed by early records. Accius goes [73] on to say that Livius produced his first play eleven years after the date (of his capture) in the consulship of Gaius Cornelius and Quintus Minucius at the Ludi Iuventatis, which Livius Salinator had vowed at the battle of Sena. In this the error of Accius is so great that in the consulship of these men Ennius was already forty years of age. But suppose that Livius was his contemporary: it will appear then that the first one to produce a play at Rome was somewhat younger than the two who had already produced many plays before this date, Plautus and Naevius.” (transl. Henderson 1939, 69).

19 Cf. Carratello (1979) 12ff.

20 Wiseman (2015) 47: “documentary evidence, perhaps from curule aediles”.

21 Dahlmann (1963).

22 Accius frg. 18 Funaioli (Cic. Brut. 72).

23 The *Ludi Romani* took place at the Ides of September and included the *ludi scaenici* and the *ludi circenses* at the Circus Maximus.

24 Welsh (2011) 32–38.

25 Cf. Wiseman (2015) 46f.

times (instead of once), the date itself will not be any more precise than before. When he repeats the date, he first of all addresses three different contexts and perspectives: Roman history (*Claudio et Tuditano consulibus*), Roman Literature (*anno ipso ante, quam natus est Ennius*), and Roman myth (*post Romam conditam quartodecimo et quingentesimo*). The first and third attestations are certainly meant to inspire confidence. The crucial information, however, the main concern of the whole passage, is embedded in between: when Livius performed his drama (that is in 240 BC, as it is claimed by Cicero), Ennius, the famous author of the *Annales* and the author of at least 22 tragedies, 2 praetextae and 2 comedies – Ennius, who otherwise could be suspected of being the first Roman poet – had not even been born!

It is quite clear why Cicero emphasizes the relation to Ennius' year of birth and why he so urgently wants to dismiss the other source: In 197 (the year, which Accius claims to be the date of Livius's first performance), Ennius had already become a prominent playwright (he was more than forty years old at the time!). That said: Accius' chronology would *invert* the chronological – and presumably *symbolic* – order of the two poets: the Greek freedman²⁶ Livius and the Roman author Ennius. Moreover, it would date Livius's performance in a year when Plautus, the Roman playwright *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, was looking forward to celebrating his sixtieth birthday and looked back on more than fifteen years of staging his own comedies.²⁷

Yet, what's wrong with considering Ennius to be the first Roman poet? And, anyway, why not Plautus – a poet the Romans could really be proud of and who was best known for using Greek 'models'?²⁸ Why was *Livius*, a Greek freedman from Tarentum, accorded this honor? Unlike Ennius, who would be of great influence on later authors, Livius has never been praised as an author the Romans would appreciate as a model to be seriously imitated. The only merit, for which Livius was actually acknowledged – and the only merit ascribed to him at all – was that he was the first poet in Rome.²⁹

26 According to Jerome's *Chronica* Livius was a freedman, Hier. chron. a Abr. 1829/30 (= 188/187 BC) Helm (1956) 137: *Titus (sic!) Livius, tragoediarum scriptor clarus habetur. qui ob ingenii meritum a Livio Salinatore, cuius liberos erudiebat, libertate donatus est.*

27 The first comedy was presumably the *Asinaria* in 212 BC, see also n. 44.

28 On Plautus' techniques of anchoring see below, n. 44.

29 Cf. Quint. Inst. 10.2.7: *Turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequi quod imiteris. Nam rursus quid erat futurum si nemo plus effecisset eo quem sequebatur? Nihil in poetis supra Livium Andronicum, nihil in historiis supra pontificum annales haberemus.* "It is a disgrace too to be content merely to attain the effect you are imitating. Once again, what would have happened if no one had achieved more than the man he was following? We should have nothing in poetry better

Cicero himself compares Livius's *Odusia* with a statue of Daedalus (Cic. *Brut.* 71: *nam et Odysssia Latina est sic tamquam opus aliquod Daedali*) – and consequently not only with the first piece of art,³⁰ but also with a one-to-one-copy of a *living* original in stone³¹ – and finally discards Livius's dramatic works in six prosaic words: (*Livianae fabulae*) *non satis dignae quae iterum legantur* (Cic. *Brut.* 71), Livius' *fabulae* are “not worth to be read a second time”.³²

Apparently, Cicero's story was not that much about Livius or the year 240, but rather aimed at a *semanticization* of the whole event, that is to say: the combination of date, author and object. And when we look at the literary (and scholarly) account of the history of Roman literature, we actually see that Cicero's invitation to semanticize the event was gratefully accepted by later authors. The year 240 BC³³ provided perfect space for further interpretation and specification. In the second century AD, Aulus Gellius, the author of the *Noctes Atticae*, spells out what had already been inherent in Cicero's story. (Gell. 17.21.42f.):

pace cum Poenis facta consulibus <C> Claudio Centhone, Appii Caeci filio, et M. Sempronio Tuditano primus omnium L. Livius poeta fabulas docere Romae coepit post Sophoclis et Euripidis mortem annis plus fere centum et sexaginta, post Menandri annis circiter quinquaginta duobus.

when peace had been made with the Carthaginians and when the consuls were C. Claudius Centhon, son of Appius the Blind, and Marcus Sempronius Tuditanus, the poet Lucius Livius was the very first to put plays upon the stage at Rome, more than a hundred and sixty years

than Livius Andronicus, nothing in history better than the *Annals of the pontifices*.” (transl. Russell 2001, 325).

30 Daedalus (apparently, a speaking name, to be associated with the Greek word for wooden statues: δαίδαλα, cf. Paus. 9.3) was considered to be the first artist, the πρώτος εὐρέτης of art works, cf. Apollod. 3.14.8.

31 As sculptor, Daedalus was especially known for the liveliness of his statues, cf. Eur. frg. 372 Kannicht = Σ Eur. *Hec.* 838: τὰ Δαιδάλεια πάντα κινεῖσθαι δοκεῖ / βλέπτει <ν> τ' ἀγάλμαθ' ὧδ' ἀνὴρ κείνος σοφός (“It seems as if Daedalus' sculptures are moving and looking with their eyes. That skilful is this man”). The passage is the earliest *testimonium* and goes back on Euripides' *Eurystheus*, see further Philipp (1968) 28, 52. On the kinaesthetic aspects of Daedalus' statues see Baudy (2008). On the lifelike effect see Wessels (2014) 277–297. Whereas Daedalus is usually praised for his ability to imitate nature and to undermine the fact that his work is an artifact, i.e. has been made by an artist, Livius Andronicus is blamed by Cicero for imitating the original (here: the Homeric *Odyssey*) too closely, i.e. for a lack of creativity.

32 A similar assessment of Livius' poetic quality can be found e.g. in Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.61–75 (further *testimonia* on Livius Andronicus are given by Schauer in: TRF 1, 21–27).

33 Even though the dating has never stopped being an issue of scholarly debate – in antiquity as well as modern times –, Cicero's perspective was widely adopted by ancient scholars, and even today, in modern histories of Latin literature, it is broadly accepted. See above, p. 12.

after the death of Sophocles and Euripides and about fifty-two years after the death of Menander.

If we count correctly, *post Sophoclis et Euripidis mortem annis plus fere centum et sexaginta* is certainly quite imprecise, for it just means “somewhere after 246”, without specifying the number of years. However, Gellius translates the implied idea of Cicero’s dating into a clear and explicit story, which makes the *semantic relevance* of his dating all the more visible: for 240 BC was not only one year before Ennius was born; it was also the year right *after* the end of the First Punic War (264–241 BC), the first year of peace (*pace cum Poenis facta*), after the Romans had conquered major parts of *Magna Graecia* in Sicily. In this context (when drawing such a connection, Gellius is following Porcius Licinus),³⁴ 240 is also a symbol for Roman political superiority and for the paradoxical relation with the Greeks, who, though conquered, were still superior as to literary culture (a paradox best known from Horace’s Letter to Augustus, Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.156–157: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes / intulit agresti Latio*, “Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium”). That said, the year 240 is a symbol for a new era, the era of peace, or, to put it another way, the era of a vacuum, which calls for a new beginning.

In his account, Gellius emphasizes both the political context (*pace cum Poenis facta*) and the Romans’ reaction to it. Unlike Cicero, who restricted himself to *Livius primus fabulam docuit* (“Livius was the first one to stage a drama”), Gellius emphasizes the link between Roman and Greek culture (“Livius performed the *fabulae* hundred and sixty years after the death of Sophocles and Euripides, fifty-two years after Menander”). By relating Livius to Greek authors – not only to Attic

34 Porcius Licinus (2nd cent. BC) draws a connection with the introduction of poetry and the Second (!) Punic War (218–201 BC), cf. Gell. *NA* 17.21.45: *M. Varro in libro de poetis primo stipendia fecisse ait bello Poenico primo idque ipsum Naevium dicere in eo carmine, quod de eodem bello scripsit. Porcius autem Licinus serius poeticam Romae coepisse dicit in his versibus:*

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

(“Marcus Varro says in the first book of his work *On Poets* that Naevius served in the first Punic war and that the poet himself makes that statement in the poem which he wrote on that same war. But Porcius Licinius says in the following verses that Rome was later in taking up the poetic art:

‘In the second Punic war with winged flight
The Muse to Romulus’ warrior nation came.’”). See further Mattingly (1993) 166–168.

Tragedy, but also to Hellenistic Comedy³⁵ –, Gellius implies that there is a continuous line between the two cultures and that Roman Drama is in the tradition of Greek Tragedy and Comedy.

Yet, what is all the more ignored, blanked out and glossed over, is the *indigenus, Italic* tradition: Phlyax, Mimus, Atellana, all the improvisational dramatic forms present in South Italy from the fourth century BC on and still extremely popular at the time when Livius performed the first *fabula*.³⁶ The entire tradition of Italic theater is dismissed – cut off! – in order to exhibit the proposed line of tradition starting from Sophocles, Euripides, Menander, and finally leading to Livius.

In a similar way, the *object* of Livius' production (in Cicero: mere "*fabula*") has been spelled out step by step in order to stress the link between Roman and Greek. It remains unclear, even today, what Livius actually had performed (and what he actually should be praised for): did he write one *fabula* [that's what Cicero implies] or more than one [as e.g. Gellius claims]? Was it

- a comedy (as we learn from a *scholion* on Horace's *Epist.* 2.1.62: *Livius antiquissimus poeta fuit Andronicus, qui primus comoedias scripsit* and as it will be repeated by Diomedes Grammaticus [GL I, 489, 6–8 Keil], see below)?
- a comedy and a tragedy (as we find it in Cassiodorus: Cass. chron. II, p. 609, 316 a.u.c. Mommsen 1861: *C. Manlius et Q. Valerius [239 BC] his cons. ludis Romanis primum tragoedia et comoedia a Lucio Livio ad scaenam data*)?
- or even a comedy, a tragedy and a *fabula togata*, as we read in Donatus (Don. *de com.* 5.4 Wessner 1902: *comoediam apud Graecos dubium est quis primus invenerit, apud Romanos certum: et comoediam et tragoediam et togatam primum Livius Andronicus repperit*)?

And, after all, in what respect had Livius been innovative?

- Was he the first one to write a Roman drama (*fabula*), or the first one to provide *dramatic plots*, a dramatic *fabula* that, unlike *preliterate-improvized* performances, exhibits an *argumentum*, which is what the *other* Livius, Titus Livius, ascribes to Livius Andronicus when saying that *Livius ausus est primum argumento fabulam serere* (Liv. 7.2.8³⁷)?

³⁵ Gellius, remarkably enough, is 'unprecisely precise' here, when saying "around fifty-two years after Menander".

³⁶ From the very beginning until imperial times Atellana was popular. Even Plautine comedy could not do without using crucial elements of improvisational drama in order to meet the expectations of the contemporary audience. Cf. Höttemann (1993) 89–112; Benz/Stärk/Vogt-Spira (1995); Petrides (2014) 424–444.

³⁷ See above, pp. 11–12.

- Or did he just *translate* a Greek drama into Latin (as he translated a Greek epic, Homer's *Odyssey*), as claimed by Diomedes Grammaticus in the fourth century AD (Diom. Gramm. GL I, 489, 6–8 Keil: *ab iis [sc. Graecis] Romani fabulas transtulerunt, et constat apud illos [sc. Romanos] primum Latino sermone comoediam Livium Andronicum scripsisse*)?

Finally, if we look at Livius' name, we can observe that here, too, there is some development: whereas earlier sources just call him 'Livius', *later* sources, such as Gellius and Festus (second cent. AD), for the most part add the *cognomen* (or even *agnomen*?) *Andronicus* – a name which not only indicates a Greek origin (ἄνῆρ) and possibly a former status as a slave (ἀνδράποδον), but also addresses Livius' translation of the *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 1.1: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε),³⁸ and, in the combination of all *three* names – Lucius Livius Andronicus – exhibits the story of a successful mediation between Greece and Rome: Livius was of Greek origin, however integrated into Roman culture.

If we put the *testimonia* in chronological order (from Accius until ancient scholarship in the fourth cent. AD), it becomes clear that the *event*, the *kind of production* and the characteristics of the *author* have step by step been specified and enforced, in order to promote a story³⁹ with highly programmatic impact – a story that, almost pictorially, combines its three basic elements (date, author, and production) towards a vision of Roman literature which aims at *being Greek* and *dismissing Italic culture*, a vision which is still discernible in modern scholarship, as can be shown in Eduard Norden's statement:

Da das besondere Kriterium der römischen Literatur ihr Verhältnis zur griechischen ist, so fassen wir die der Aufnahme dieser Literatur *vorausgehende* Epoche als vorliterarisch auf.⁴⁰

Based on these findings, three major points emerge:

1. If later sources were right and Livius actually *translated* a Greek tragedy or comedy into Latin,⁴¹ we may, of course, assume that the (re-)production of Greek

³⁸ I owe this suggestion to Stephen Hinds (17 Dec. 2015).

³⁹ On the problem of writing a history of literature see Feeney (2005) 226–240 (review of the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*. Bd.1: Die archaische Literatur. Von den Anfängen bis zu sullas Tod. Die vorliterarische Periode und die Zeit von 240 bis 78 v. Chr., ed. W. Suerbaum et al. [= *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft VIII.1*] München 2002) and, of course, Jauß (1970).

⁴⁰ Norden ⁶(1961) 3.

⁴¹ Cf. n. 3.

elements was meant to provide a ‘common ground’⁴² or basis, which was employed to make the innovation⁴³ of Roman literature accessible and attractive to its contemporary addressees, that is, to a Roman society primarily familiar with Greek literary culture. However, the story of Livius’ production turns out to be a story that – starting with a dating – has subsequently been *shaped* and *coined* by later authors, in order to motivate two specific ideas concerning Roman Literature: a) the suppression of the indigenous, Italic tradition, such as improvisational theater, and b) the ‘Greekness’ not only of Roman *Drama*, but, in general, of Roman *Literature*.

That said, it becomes clear why an author such as Plautus, who consistently maintained crucial elements of improvisational theater, – who, moreover, wrote a play called *Poenulus* – would have been *ineligible* as a protagonist of a story,⁴⁴ which first of all aims at promoting and establishing Roman Philhellenism.

2. Apparently, the technique which has been applied when developing the story of Livius comes closest to what is done within the narrative of aetiology.⁴⁵

42 For the term “common ground” see Verhagen (2005).

43 It is important to make a distinction between ‘innovation’ and ‘new’. Innovations are related to a reflection on the past, whereas the ‘new’ includes the ‘unexpected’ (τὸ θαυμαστόν or τὸ παράδοξον).

44 Cf. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.270–274: “See how Plautus plays the part of the youthful lover, how he plays that of the close father, or of the tricky pander; what a Dossennus he is among his greedy parasites” (*Aspice, Plautus / quo pacto partis tutetur amantis ephēbi, / ut patris attentī, lenonis ut insidiosi, / quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis, / quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita socco*). Plautus’ techniques of anchoring his comedies in a Greek tradition (see De March 2015) show that Plautus actually was in need of framing indigenous elements by naming a Greek authority. Apparently, he started applying this technique from the very beginning of his poetic production. The *Asinaria*, written around 212 BC and presumably Plautus’ first (or one of his first) comedies, claims to be the translation of a comedy *Onagros* (or *Onagos*), written by a “Demophilos”, cf. Plaut. *As.* 11: *Demophilus scripsit, Maccus vortit barbāre*, Plaut. *As.* 11). However, neither the author nor the title of this comedy has ever been testified by other sources. Apart from that, Demophilos is a speaking name. This evidence may suggest the suspicion that Plautus (here presented by his *nomen* Maccus, which at the same time is one of the stock characters of the indigenous Atellana, a “clown”) does not refer to a real translation of a real comedy of a real author, but rather aims at presenting a technique of ‘double-anchoring’, i.e. at anchoring Atellan elements in a Greek ‘tradition’ and vice versa, in order to address different groups of recipients (i.e. those who are looking for Greekness and those who still appreciate indigenous popular drama). Apparently, using Greek models was not necessarily appreciated. Horace’s contemptuous remark on Plautus’ reception of Atellan elements (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.270–274, see above, p. 7) implies that even at the time of Horace it hadn’t become *communis opinio* to appreciate ‘Greekness’ and that it was still necessary to work on the dismissal of indigenous elements.

45 As to aetiology as a technique of anchoring see the contribution from Harder (2015).

In order to legitimize a current impact, program or prospectus, the aetiological story does not *build* on past events; it rather casts an *anchor* into the past. Aetiology aims at transforming discontinuity into a model of continuity and constructs an anchor to start with, a fixed point which contains the crucial potential to be developed in the future and marks the current program as a logical consequence of the (constructed) past.

3. Finally, the technique of anchoring innovation is a technique that can be found throughout Roman Literature. For example, we may think of Horace, who concludes the third book of his *Odes* by praising himself as being the first one to have brought Aeolic Lyric to Rome: *princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos* (Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.13–14). Unlike in modern culture,⁴⁶ where innovation is identified with something ‘attractive’, poetic innovation, in Roman antiquity, was appreciated for being linked to the past.⁴⁷ That said, we may even argue that the story of Livius does not only anchor the Greekness of Roman Literature, but also the technique of anchoring applied by later authors, such as Horace: When Horace anchors his poetic innovations in Greek literature, his technique is now legitimized by a long tradition; for – according to what has been shaped to be the ‘history of Roman literature’ – the first one who has done so was Livius Andronicus. Livius and the techniques assigned to him have *taught* the Romans how to promote a story of innovation. Or to use the words of Cicero (while turning *around*, of course, what Cicero *originally* meant): *Livius primus fabulam docuit* – The case of Livius has demonstrated what story we have to tell in order to promote an innovation *successfully*: Until now, there is little doubt that Roman literature – specifically at its very beginning – greatly imitated Greek models.

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⁴⁶ Cf. Moog-Grünewald (2002), first of all Moog-Grünewald’s “Vorbemerkung”, vii–xxv, and Rüdiger Bubner “Wie alt ist das Neue”, 1–12.

⁴⁷ The possible reasons herefore are many and varied. One of them may be a different understanding of curiosity (*curiositas*), another reason is certainly the historically specific notion of originality (versus copies) as a value.

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