Corippus and Ennius

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"Corippus in the sixth century could not possibly have known Ennius," pronounces Otto Skutsch in his recent edition (Oxford 1985) of the *Annals*¹ (p. 20), there implicitly decrying the "faint similarities" amassed by I. Cazzaniga.² Subsequently (p. 592), on some linguistic concordance between the pair (see later), he remarks that "If Corippus had Ennius in mind he knew him through Macrobius or a Virgil commentator.

For all his magisterial tone, Skutsch cannot be said to have settled this matter, which is indeed part of the larger and complex issue of the transmission and survival of early Latin texts in late antiquity. Moreover, Skutsch does not take account of all that has been written on the point, whilst other commentators on Ennius and Corippus have not always been aware of their mutual work. Hence further discussion will serve to draw together the threads, provide a convenient l'état de la question, and encourage colleagues in both fields to join in. It seems certain that the early fourth century grammarian Nonius Marcellus had a text of at least some of Ennius' tragedies, whilst Ausonius looks to have had access to Book 1 of the *Annals*, perhaps more.³ Other late scholars—Charisius, Diomedes, Macrobius, Servius, Priscian, and Isidore—often duplicate the same information and are always vulnerable to the charge of lifting their quotations from earlier compilations.⁴

Corippus is not the only late Latin epicist whose acquaintance with Ennius has been both postulated and questioned; Birt (p. cci in his edition) thought Claudian owed debts to both him and Lucilius, a notion questioned

¹ Fragments of the *Annals* will be referred to by the numberings of Skutsch, Vahlen (3rd ed., Leipzig 1928), and Warmington in vol. 1 of the Loeb *Remains of Old Latin* (2nd ed., London 1961), using the simple initials S, V, and W. Vahlen and Warmington provide fragments from Ennius' other works; the tragedies are edited with commentary by H. D. Jocelyn (Cambridge 1967).


³ See Skutsch 38 and Jocelyn 56 for discussion and bibliography.

⁴ Skutsch 38–44 provides a detailed assessment.
by Vahlen and more recently Alan Cameron. But we really have not one question but two: would Corippus, a poet operating in sixth century Africa and then Constantinople, know or care anything about Ennius? If so, where could he find a text?

Whether or not he had been a *grammaticus* and small-town teacher, Corippus was an educated man with educated tastes. His older coeval Priscian almost certainly came from Africa, whence he too had emigrated to Constantinople. They were perhaps too far apart in age to know each other, Priscian belonging more to the age of Anastasius whilst Corippus' two extant epics came out respectively c. 548/9 and 566/7, unless we can credit Priscian with the longevity of a Cassiodorus who in his *De orthographia*, written at the age of 93, confirms (*GL* 7. 207, 13) that Priscian was a teacher at Constantinople *nostro tempore*. But we do not need to follow Cazzaniga in postulating a connection between "Africitas" and archaic literary interests to accept that both men will have had much the same grounding in the same Roman authors. And Corippus could obviously have known Priscian's writings, if not the man himself.

The fact that Priscian's Ennian learning seems largely borrowed from predecessors need not stand as reproach or disqualification. If there were no complete texts to work from, what else could he do? And if there were, the fact that he has many quotations in common with others does not have to argue automatically for scholarly indolence or dishonesty. All modern studies on Elizabethan English no doubt share many identical references to Shakespeare. The *interests* of the late grammarians were genuine.

Likewise with Corippus. Not all educated men of his day cared about Ennius. For notable instance, his name is not dropped by John Lydus when discussing Roman comedy and satire at *De mag.* 40–1, where Titinius and Lucilius are invoked as the founders of stage comedy and satire in hexameter verse. The recurring debate over the genuineness of John's claims to Latin

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5 *Praef. cxix–cxxxii.*


8 Cf. the notice of him in *PLRE* 2 (Cambridge 1980) 905.


10 Not that there is any sign of Ennius or other early writers in that other product of late Vandal Africa, Luxorius; cf. the edition of M. Rosenblum (New York 1961) 52–64. But the subject matter of epigrams written in imitation of Martial was hardly amenable to Ennian echoes.

11 We should also remain alert to the evidence of papyri. As far as I know, Ennius has not (yet) turned up in late antiquity, but extracts from the *Andria* of Terence equipped with Greek glosses have; cf. Pack no. 2934, also R. Cavenaile, 'Papyrus littéraires latins et philologie,' *L'Ant. Class.* 50 (1981) 127.
expertise need not be gone into here; the names he chooses to drop furnish the pertinent clues to contemporary literary interests. Still, this neglect of Ennius may only mean neglect of his comedies and satires, the remains of which are in any case comparatively negligible.

_Epos latinum primus digne scripsit Ennius_, observed Diomedes (GL 1. 484), and throughout the imperial Roman period it was for the _Annals_ rather than his tragedies (much less his other miscellanea) that he was best known and most cited. Typical and familiar items of evidence are Suetonius, _Aug._ 67. 2; _Tib._ 21. 5; _HA_, _Hadr._ 16. 6. It was the _Annals_ that Aulus Gellius (18. 5. 1–4) heard an “Ennianista” reciting from in the theatre at Puteoli, and the _Annals_ that Gellius himself (20. 10. 1) could declaim from memory. It was the _Annalium Ennii elenchi_, a work Suetonius thought _praecipuum opusculum_, that the indigent author M. Pompilius Andronicus sold for 16,000 sesterces and that was put back into circulation by Orbilius (Suetonius, _De Gramm._ 8).

The first extant epic of the African Corippus was on an African theme, the exploits of a local hero, John Troglita, campaigning for Byzantium against the Berbers. Prominent literary influences are Virgil and Lucan, both utterly unsurprising. The abiding power of the _Aeneid_ need no comment, and Lucan retained readers until the end of antiquity; both, of course, featured African settings and action.

But there was one section of the _Annals_ of Ennius to which Corippus could logically have been drawn for further inspiration: Books 8 and 9, encompassing the war with Hannibal and Scipio in Africa. Apart from the provision of pertinent _exempla_, he might have hoped to get some ideas on how to force intractable African proper names into his hexameters! In point of fact, Corippus does not do much harking back to the Punic Wars; neither Scipio nor Hannibal feature in Partsch’s index of names. No doubt memories of their defeat comported residual resentment in the hearts and minds of Carthaginians (in whose city the Johannis was recited, before its _proceres_ even in the sixth century!

Cazzaniga’s attempts at tracing Ennian influence on the language of this poem were not always very successful. For instance, à propos, _Joh._ 4. 555–63, a passage to which he devotes three rambling pages, there is not much point in glossing the phrase _ferreus campus_ with the remark, “_ferreus imber_ è tipicamente enniano.” Corippus, indeed, has _ferreus imber/confliuit_ (_Joh._ 4. 746–47)—though Cazzaniga does not adduce this!—but he

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13 Jocelyn 55 makes this point in his account of the evanescence of texts of the tragedies; cf. Skutsch 44–46 for a repertoire of pertinent passages.

obviously got it not from Ennius\textsuperscript{15} but Virgil, \textit{Aen.} 12. 284, \textit{ferreus ingruit imber}, albeit he could have noticed the Ennian original in Macrobius' note (6. 1. 52) on the \textit{Aeneid} passage. Cazzaniga cannot avoid admitting that \textit{Joh.} 4. 562–63, \textit{horrescit ferreus hastis/campus resplendetque novis terroribus aer}, derives from Virgil, \textit{Aen.} 11. 601–02, \textit{ferreus hastis/horret ager campique armis sublimibus ardent}, but seeks to pull an Ennian chestnut out of the fire by insisting that Corippus' \textit{resplendei} is added from a knowledge of the well–known \textit{sparsis hastis longis campus splendet et horret}\.\textsuperscript{16} Now there is no reason to deny that Corippus knew this line, one of Ennius' most celebrated,\textsuperscript{17} but equally no grounds for calling the present verse a conscious echo. For one thing, Corippus is fonder of the verb \textit{resplendo} than the lone example given in Partsch's index suggests, employing it at (e.g.) \textit{Joh.} 8. 318 (actually adduced by Cazzaniga in another connection, p. 282) and \textit{Laud. Just.} 2. 387. For another, Corippus' \textit{resplendei} in the passage under discussion is governed by \textit{aer}, not \textit{campus!} And for yet another, there is Virgil, \textit{Aen.} 7. 526, \textit{horrescit strictis seges ensibus, aeraque fulgent}, not to mention \textit{Aen.} 12. 663–64, \textit{stant densae strictisque seges muronibus horrretferrea}, and \textit{Georg.} 2. 142, \textit{nece galeis densisque virum seges horruit hastis}. These last two passages show that it is needless for Cazzaniga to find archaic if not Ennian redolence in \textit{Joh.} 3. 558–59, \textit{Martis per latos acies densissima campos/imurorum in morem celantur corpora densis}. This is one place where I would be glad to think Cazzaniga was right, because the very pertinent Ennian line \textit{densantur campis horrentia tela viorum} is adduced by Priscian (\textit{GL} 3. 479, 4). Unfortunately, one need go no further than Lewis & Short to find an abundance of parallels, with even the prosaic Caesar yielding one in \textit{densissimis castris} at \textit{BG} 7. 46. 3. A further Virgilian debt passed over by Cazzaniga here is \textit{Joh.} 4. 561, \textit{galeae cristisque comisque micantes}, surely owed to \textit{Aen.} 3. 468, \textit{galeae cristasque comantis}.

Another Corippan sequence analyzed at length by Cazzaniga is \textit{Joh.} 2. 252–54, on the first line of which, \textit{ungula sidereos contristat pulvere campos}, we get one and one-half pages dedicated to the proposition that the novel expression \textit{sidereos campos} is modelled on such Ennian phrases as \textit{caerula prata}. Apart from the fact that the reading and sense of this fragment are doubtful,\textsuperscript{19} Cazzaniga manages not to notice the obvious point that Corippus also has the phrase \textit{siderei campi} at \textit{Joh.} 3. 215, and the adjective in several other passages and meanings. Any credit for \textit{sidereos campos}

\textsuperscript{15} S 266, V 284, W 281.
\textsuperscript{16} V 14 (in his \textit{Varia} section), W 6 (under the \textit{Scipio} rubric).
\textsuperscript{17} Thanks in part to Lucilius' ridicule of it, as reported by Servius on \textit{Aen.} 11. 601.
\textsuperscript{18} S 167, V 285, W 280.
\textsuperscript{19} S 127. V 143, W 149. / \textit{caerula prata} is cited by Festus as an Ennian joke. The first word is variously expanded by editors to read \textit{caeli, ponti, Neptuni, or campi}. 
should go to Corippus himself, 20 helped though he may have been to it by the Greek parallels assembled by Cazzaniga.

In all of this, I am not saying that Corippus never goes in for archaisms (quite the contrary), merely that one has to be more careful with the overall evidence than Cazzaniga and much less precipitate in jumping to Ennian conclusions. Two more examples will do. At Joh. 1. 538, if the text is right, Corippus has the unparalleled verb subitans, a frequentative form of subeo so rare that it eluded Lewis & Short altogether. Cazzaniga sees this as inspired by the archaic adiare of Ennius and Plautus, though he might have added the possible example of Columella 8. 3. 4 and should certainly have noticed the parallel from Cyprian, Ep. 60. 2, in Partsch's index! At Joh. 4. 45, Corippus has the archaic active tutamus instead of tutamur, not noticing that the poet also uses it at Laud. Just. 2. 256. There is certainly no need to specify Ennian influence here, above all since tutatur in a passive sense occurs in Fronto, Laudes neglegentiae (204, 10 Van Den Hout = 1. 46 Haines); the Oxford Latin Dictionary exemplifies 21 the active forms from such disparate quarters as Hyginus, Fab. 100. 1, and CIL 4456. Cazzaniga should also have acknowledged veneramus for veneramur at Laud. Just. 2. 258, a form needlessly emended to veneramur by Ruiz since the active form has both Apuleian and Virgilian (Aen. 3. 460, not 466 as Stache) pedigree; Averil Cameron 22 emends the deponent form veneramur at Laud. Just. 4. 174 on the basis of 2. 258, but Corippus perhaps deliberately allows the two forms to co-exist in his poem, as did Virgil.

Anyone looking for Ennian echoes in the Johannis with special reference to the African context might do better to consider such items as 1. 563–66, et quanti ex ipsis palmam sumpsere periclis! ut decet esse duces . . . sit labor ille animis, possibly tinged with awareness of Ennius' qualis consilis quantumque potesset in armis. 23 I only wonder about a connection because Enniius' line is in a marginal gloss on Hamilcar Rhodanus at Orosius 4. 6. 21 (there is another at 4. 14, 3, concerning Hannibal), suggesting that it was a popular tag in late antiquity and beyond, one that Corippus could have had in his literary consciousness. 24 It is also just conceivable that when Corippus wrote placata Charybdis at Joh. 1. 218, he was thinking of Juno coepit placata favere, 25 adduced by Servius in exegesis of Aen. 1. 281 where there is no direct linguistic concordance. There is also pecudum per prata balatus at Joh. 2. 174, possibly conditioned by Enniius' 25

20 Ennius never used the adjective sidereus, according to the word indexes of Skutsch and Vahlen.
23 S 213, V 222, W 271.
24 On these Ennian glosses in Orosius and cognate matters, see Skutsch 379–80 and Jocelyn 56.
25 S 288, V 291, W 293.
balantum pecudes;\textsuperscript{26} though both Lucretius 2. 369 and Juvenal 13. 233 are close enough to be the model.

One or two Ennian moments have been detected in the \textit{In Laudem Justin} by modern editors, albeit there is no consensus over what and where. Stache, avowedly basing himself on a parallel cited by the \textit{TLL}, thinks that 1. 200–01, alarumque dedere/plausibus adsiduis et acuta voce favorem might derive from the Ennian favent faucibus russis/cantu plausuque premunt alas;\textsuperscript{27} Cameron adduces neither Ennius nor any other author as possible model. But Ennius can be dismissed in terms of a complete text of this play.\textsuperscript{28} Corippus is describing how the cocks crowed (\textit{gallorum cantu}) in greeting Justin to the palace. Now the source of these Ennian verses is Cicero, \textit{De div.} 2. 26. 57, adduced by him to illustrate Democritus' explanation of \textit{cur ante lucem galli canant}. Need we look further than this?\textsuperscript{29}

At \textit{Laud. Just.} 3. 292–93, Corippus writes \textit{fremituque sonoro/cornipedum liquidos cava terruit ungula campos}, advanced by Stache as a possible redolence of Ennius' \textit{it eques et cava concuit ungula terram},\textsuperscript{30} cited by Macrobius 6. 1. 22 in illustration of \textit{Aen.} 8. 596, \textit{quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum}. As we have seen, Skutsch insists that Corippus knew this Ennian line (if at all) through Macrobius or a Virgil commentator. A perfectly reasonable conclusion. Yet Ennius had a particular affection for this effect, also writing \textit{totam quatit ungula terram}\textsuperscript{31} and \textit{consequitur; summo sonitu quatit ungula campum},\textsuperscript{32} both elsewhere adduced by Macrobius to illustrate the same line of Virgil. Corippus may well have noticed this predilection from the ancient commentators. But his line also smacks of \textit{Aen.} 6. 591, \textit{aere et cornipedum pulsu simularet equorum}, whilst not to be overlooked are Joh. 7. 442–45, \textit{duro sonat ungula cornulet latet aspersis campus coopertos harenis/cornipedum fodiens densis calcarius armos/hostis uterque volat}. Indeed, if we could ask Corippus which author he was consciously imitating in which passage, he might find it hard to answer at once.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that \textit{cava} is Petschenig's emendation of the manuscripts' \textit{cave} or \textit{ceu}, a detail minimised by Stache; Partsch indeed retained \textit{ceu} in his \textit{MGHAA} edition, which is why this particular example of \textit{cavus} is absent from his index. I certainly prefer \textit{cava}.

\textsuperscript{26} S 169, V 186, W 180.

\textsuperscript{27} V 219–21, W 226–28, Jocelyn 344.

\textsuperscript{28} Vahlen and Warmington assign this fragment to the \textit{Iphigenia}, whereas Jocelyn prints it amongst the \textit{Incerta} with no discussion.

\textsuperscript{29} Stache furthermore takes no account of the relative frequency of \textit{faveol/favor} connoting applause, clearly a favourite idiom of Corippus; cf. \textit{Laud. Just.} 2. 390; 4. 63, 70, 210; \textit{Joh.} 1. 580; 8. 232. It is also common in classical authors, as the dictionaries show.

\textsuperscript{30} S 431, V 439, W 429.

\textsuperscript{31} S 242, V 224, W 204.

\textsuperscript{32} S 263, V 277, W 283.
myself, but it has to be admitted that this putative Ennian echo has come out of a modern conjecture. Furthermore, Skutsch's eagle eye also fell on Ovid, *Ex Pont.* 4. 8. 80, ungula Gorgonei quam cava fecit equi, which might have to be reckoned with as a contributory source.

There remains the phrase vivumque per ora fatentur at Laud. *Just.* 3. 129, likened by Cameron and Stache both to Ennius, *volito vivos per ora virum,* and Virgil, *Georg.* 3. 9, *virum volitare per ora.* Neither scholar mentions *Aen.* 12. 235, *vivusque per ora feretur,* or 12. 328, *virum volitans.* This relative plethora of Virgilianisms probably swings the balance that way, though Corippus could have seen the Ennian tag (on the poet's own fame) in Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 1. 15. 34.

One passage not considered by any other commentator in connection with Ennius is Laud. *Just.* 4. 35–49, a description of the felling of various trees:

protinus omnigeni caeduntur robora ligni,
quaeque suis aptanda locis: durissima costas,
mollia dant tabulas. quadrata caesa bipenni
fraxinus, et crebris cadit ictibus ardua pinus,
tunc fagi dulces et suco taxus amaro,
ilieaeque trabes fortes et pallida buxus,
pulchra magis pallore suo. cecidere securi
antiquae quercus et amictae vitibus ulmi,
cedrus orens, solidum numquamque natabile robur,
aesculus, alnus, acer, terebinthus, populus, ornus.
in tenues tabulas abies montana secatur,
juniperi tiliaeque leves et odorata cupressus.
mille secant in frusta trabes: tonat aethera pulsans
malleus, et tractae strident scabredine serrae,
curvaque percusso longe sonat ascia ligno.

To be sure, Corippus' debts both to Virgil (*Aen.* 6. 179–82; 11. 135–38; *Georg.* 2. 437–53) and other authors are many and palpable, duly registered by Cameron and Stache. The poet also adds some distinctive touches of his own, notably the very rare words *natabilis* and *scabredo.* But we should also adduce, as did Macrobius 6. 2. 27, these lines of Ennius:

incidunt arbusta per alta, securibus caedunt,
percellunt magnas quercus, exciditur ilex,
fraxinus frangitur atque abies consternitur alta,
pinus proceras pervortunt: omne sonabat
arbustum fremitu silvai frondosai.

At first glance, the two passages may not seem to have much in common. They do, however, share the noun *abies,* not in any of the Virgil

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33 *Ep.* 18 V, *Ep.* 10 W.
passages. The proximity of *taxus amaro ... buxus* is somewhat reminiscent of the Ennian *amaro corpore buxum* and *buxus icta taxus tonsa*. Other Ennian features in this sequence include repetitions of the same word (caeduntur/caesi, ligni/ligno, trabes/trabes) and alliterations such as *strident scabredine serrae*. Given that the sequence is blatantly a collage from different authors, it is at least possible that Corippus includes some deliberate Ennian effects, his knowledge of Ennius probably coming from Macrobius and other ancient commentators.

Returning by way of finale to the introductory dogma of Skutsch, it can fairly be said that the question of Ennian influence on Corippus remains one open to further study, also that the question needs to be refined and bifurcated, as has here been done. For in this particular connection, it does not vitally matter whether complete texts of Ennius existed in the sixth century or not. If Corippus consciously shaped a phrase in Ennian style on the basis of finding one in Priscian, Servius, Macrobius, or wherever, then that constitutes a literary decision and taste prompted and nourished by Ennian influence.

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35 S 224, V 263, W 240.
36 V 13 (*Incerta*), W 29 (*Varia*).
37 See Skutsch 343 (on the Ennian tree fragment in question) for repetition of a word as a common feature.