

Lecture-seminar 8: Phaedrus and Tiberius: servility, power, humiliation**1. The Greek trickster in Book 3: Sinon and Telephus**

- Prol.3.vv.27-32

Sed iam, "**quodcumque fuerit**," ut dixit Sinon
ad regem cum Dardaniae perductus foret,
librum exarabo tertium Aesopi stilo,
honori et meritis dedicans illum tuis. 30
Quem si leges, laetabor; sin autem minus,
habebunt certe quo se oblectent posterii.

But whatever, **come of it what may** (as Sinon said when he was brought before the King of Dardania), I will now trace a third book with the pen of Æsop, and dedicate it to you, in acknowledgment of your honour and your goodness. If you read it, I shall rejoice; but if otherwise, at least posterity will have something with which to amuse themselves.

Cf. Virgil *Aeneid* (2.77f.), where the wretched Sinon addresses King Priam: '*cuncta equidem tibi, rex, fuerit quodcumque, fatebor / vera*', 'I shall confess to you the whole truth, O king, come what may'.

- Epilogue to Book 3. vv.29-35 (final lines)

sed difficulter continetur spiritus,
integritatis qui sinceræ conscius
a noxiorum premitur insolentiis.
qui sint, requiris? apparebunt tempore.
ego, quondam legi quam puer sententiam,
'palam muttire plebeio piaculum est', = Ennius, *Telephus* fr.340*
dum sanitas constabit, pulchre meminero. 35

...it is hard for a man to contain himself when he is aware of his own untainted integrity and is weighed down at the same time by the insults of those who seek to injure him.'Who are they?' you ask. They will be seen in time. As for me, as long as my wits remain unshaken, I shall keep well in mind a maxim that I once read as a boy: '**It is sacrilege for a man of low birth to mutter in public.**'

*In this fragment of Ennius' lost tragedy *Telephus*, the protagonist is dressed as a low-born fugitive, and addresses the Greek leaders at Argos.

2. The Prologue to Book 2

That which is Aesopic in kind is confined to instruction by examples; nor by Fables is anything else aimed at than that the errors of mortals may be corrected, and that one might sharpen one's wits by a close application of them. Whatever the playful invention, therefore, of the narrator, (*quicumque fuerit ergo narrandi iocus*) so long as it captures the ear, and answers its purpose (*servet propositum suum: servet = servire*), it is recommended by its merits, not by the author's name (*non auctoris nomine*). For my part, I will take care to follow (*servabo = servare*, not *servire*) the method of the famous old man; but if I should think fit to insert something of my own, so that variety of expression in details may please the taste, I trust, Reader, you will accept it in good part, provided that my brevity be a fair return for such a favour: yet if my praise of this brevity is too verbose, listen to the reason why you ought to say no to the greedy, and instead offer to the modest that which they have not asked for.

3. Fable 2.5: Caesar and His Slave (seminar discussion)

- **An exercise in 'bifocal hermeneutics':**

Describe this poem from the point of view of the slave, and of the emperor. Whose side are we on?

Prose translation:

There is a certain set of busybodies at Rome, hurriedly running to and fro, busily engaged in idleness, out of breath about nothing at all, with much ado doing nothing, a trouble to themselves, and most annoying to others. It is my object, by a true story, to reform this race, if indeed I can: it is worth your while to attend. Tiberius Caesar, when on his way to Naples, came to his country-seat at Misenum, which, placed by the hand of Lucullus on the summit of the heights, beholds the Sicilian sea in the distance, and that of Etruria close at hand. One of the highly girt slave boys, whose tunic of Pelusian linen was nicely smoothed from his shoulders downwards, with hanging fringes, while his master was walking through the pleasant shrubberies, began with bustling officiousness to sprinkle the parched ground with a wooden watering-pot; but he got laughed at.

From there, by short cuts well known to him, the slave boy runs before his master onto another path, again calming the dust. Caesar takes notice of the fellow, and understands what is going on. Just as the slave is supposing that there is some extraordinary good fortune in store for him: "Come here," says his master; on which the slave skips up to him, quickened by the joyous hope of a sure reward. Then, in a jesting tone, the mighty majesty of the Prince spoke thus: "You have not profited much; your labour is all in vain; manumission stands at a much higher price with me."

Verse translation:

There is in town a certain set
 Of mortals, ever in a sweat,
 Who idly bustling here and there,
 Have never any time to spare,
 While upon nothing they discuss
 With heat, and most outrageous fuss,
 Plague to themselves, and to the rest
 A most intolerable pest.
 I will correct this stupid clan
 Of busy-bodies, if I can,
 By a true story; lend an ear,
 'Tis worth a trifler's time to hear.
 Tiberius Caesar, in his way
 To Naples, on a certain day
 Came to his own Misenian seat,
 (Of old Lucullus's retreat,)
 Which from the mountain top surveys
 Two seas, by looking different ways.
 Here a shrewd slave began to cringe

With dapper coat and sash of fringe,
 And, as his master walk'd between
 The trees upon the tufted green,
 Finding the weather very hot,
 Officiates with his wat'ring-pot;
 And still attending through the glade,
 Is ostentatious of his aid.
 Caesar turns to another row,
 Where neither sun nor rain could go;
 He, for the nearest cut he knows,
 Is still before with pot and rose.
 Caesar observes him twist and shift,
 And understands the fellow's drift;
 "Here, you sir," says th' imperial lord
 The bustler, hoping a reward,
 Runs skipping up. The chief in jest
 Thus the poor jackanapes address'd
 "As here is no great matter done,
 Small is the premium you have won:
 The cuffs that make a servant free,
 Are for a better man than thee."

Latin text:

est ardalionum quaedam Romae natio,
 trepide concursans, occupata in otio,
 gratis anhelans, multa agendo nihil agens,
 sibi molesta et aliis odiosissima. 5
 hanc emendare, si tamen possum, volo
 vera fabella: pretium est operae attendere.
 Caesar Tiberius cum petens Neapolim
 in Misenensem villam venisset suam,
 quae monte summo posita Luculli manu 10
 prospectat Siculum et perspicit Tuscum mare:
 ex alticinctis unus atriensibus,
 cui tunica ab umeris linteo Pelusio
 erat dstricta, cirris dependentibus,
 perambulante laeta domino viridia, 15
 alveolo coepit ligneo conspargere
 humum aestuantem, come officium iactitans,
 sed deridetur. Inde notis flexibus
 praecurrit alium in xystum, sedans pulverem.
 agnoscit hominem Caesar remque intellegit. 20
 id ut putavit esse nescio quid boni:
 heus! inquit dominus. Ille enimvero assilit,
 donationis alacer certae gaudio.
 tum sic iocata est tanta maiestas ducis:
 non multum egisti et opera nequiquam perit: 25
 multo maioris alapae mecum veneunt.

Tiberius fact check:

- Lived 42BC-37CE (emperor from 14-37CE)
- Family tree: son of Tiberius Claudius Nero and Livia Drusilla. His mother Livia divorced Nero and married Octavian (i.e. future emperor Augustus; she was then known as Julia Augusta) in 39BC, making her son Tiberius a step-son of Octavian. Tiberius would later marry Julia the Elder, Augustus' daughter (this was his second wife: his first was Vipsania Agrippina). In 4CE, he was adopted by Augustus, becoming Tiberius Julius Caesar.
- Achievements: a great general, Tiberius led the conquests of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Raetia, and parts of Germany, preparing way for a new northern frontier.
- Tragedy and retreat: in 6BC, after successful military campaigns, Tiberius suddenly announced he was retiring to Rhodes (motivations are unclear). This didn't last long (in 4CE he was formally adopted by Augustus and returned to politics and military life), smoothly taking up power after Augustus' death in 14. However, after the death (probably murder) in 23CE of his son by his first marriage, Drusus, he withdrew, and in 26 he left Rome for the island of Capri, leaving the administration of the empire in the hands of Praetorian Prefects Sejanus and Macro. Sejanus, in particular, was apparently seen by Tiberius as his right hand man; he had statues of Sejanus erected throughout the city of Rome, and was increasingly visible. But Sejanus soon began a series of purge trials of Senators and Equestrians in Rome, the objective apparently being to erase those who were opposed to his power, while ingratiating himself with the Julians in the hope of becoming Tiberius' successor. Finally in 31, he plotted directly against the emperor, but was tried and executed. Still, according to Tacitus, the violence and injustice continued under Tiberius.
- Death: Tiberius died at Misenum in 37. He was 78 years old. His ashes were laid in the Mausoleum of Augustus. See following page for the site of the villa featured in Phaedrus 2.5, on the promontory of Misenum.

Suetonius, *Tiberius* 27-28

He so loathed flattery that he would not allow any senator to approach his litter, either to pay his respects or on business, and when an ex-consul in apologizing to him attempted to embrace his knees, he drew back in such haste that he fell over backward. In fact, if anyone in conversation or in a set speech spoke of him in too flattering terms, he did not hesitate to interrupt him, to take him to task, and to correct his language on the spot. Being once called "Lord," he warned the speaker not to address him again in an insulting fashion. When another spoke of his "sacred duties," and still another said that he appeared before the senate "by the emperor's authority," he forced them to change their language, substituting "advice" for "authority" and "laborious" for "sacred."

More than that, he was self-contained and patient in the face of abuse and slander, and of lampoons on himself and his family, often asserting that in a free country there should be free speech and free thought. When the senate on one occasion demanded that cognizance be taken of such offences and those guilty of them, he said: "We have not enough spare time to warrant involving ourselves in more affairs; if you open this loophole you will find no time for any other business; it will be an excuse for laying everybody's quarrels before you."

60:

A few days after he reached Capreae and was by himself, a fisherman appeared unexpectedly and offered him a huge mullet; whereupon in his alarm that the man had clambered up to him from the back of the island over rough and pathless rocks, he had the poor fellow's face scrubbed with the fish. And because in the midst of his torture the man thanked his stars that he had not given the emperor an enormous crab that he had caught, Tiberius had his face torn with the crab

also. He punished a soldier of the praetorian guard with death for having stolen a peacock from his preserves. When the litter in which he was making a trip was stopped by brambles, he had the man who went ahead to clear the way, a centurion of the first cohorts, stretched out on the ground and flogged half to death.

61.2-4:

It is a long story to run through his acts of cruelty in detail; it will be enough to mention the forms which they took, as samples of his barbarity. Not a day passed without an execution, not even those that were sacred and holy; for he put some to death even on New Year's day. Many were accused and condemned with their children and even by their children. The relatives of the victims were forbidden to mourn for them. Special rewards were voted the accusers and sometimes even the witnesses. The word of no informer was doubted. Every crime was treated as capital, even the utterance of a few simple words. A poet was charged with having slandered Agamemnon in a tragedy, and a writer of history of having called Brutus and Cassius the last of the Romans. The writers were at once put to death and their works destroyed, although they had been read with approval in public some years before in the presence of Augustus himself. Some of those who were consigned to prison were denied not only the consolation of reading, but even the privilege of conversing and talking together.

72:

Twice only during the whole period of his retirement did he try to return to Rome, once sailing in a trireme as far as the gardens near the artificial lake, after first posting a guard along the banks of the Tiber to keep off those who came out to meet him; and again coming up the Appian Way as far as the seventh milestone. But he returned after merely having a distant view of the city walls, without approaching them; the first time for some unknown reason, the second through alarm at a portent. He had among his pets a serpent, and when he was going to feed it from his own hand, as his custom was, and discovered that it had been devoured by ants, he was warned to beware of the power of the multitude. So he went back in haste to Campania, fell ill at Astura, but recovering somewhat kept on to Circeii. To avoid giving any suspicion of his weak condition, he not only attended the games of the soldiers, but even threw down darts from his high seat at a boar which was let into the arena. Immediately he was taken with a pain in the side, and then being exposed to a draught when he was overheated, his illness increased. For all that, he kept up for some time, although he continued his journey as far as Misenum and made no change in his usual habits, not even giving up his banquets and other pleasures, partly from lack of self-denial and partly to conceal his condition. Indeed, when the physician Charicles had taken his hand to kiss it as he left the dining-room, since he was going away on leave of absence, Tiberius, thinking that he was trying to feel his pulse, urged him to remain and take his place again, and prolonged the dinner to a late hour. Even then he did not give up his custom of standing in the middle of the dining-room with a lictor by his side and addressing all the guests by name as they said farewell.

73.1:

Meanwhile, having read in the proceedings of the senate that some of those under accusation, about whom he had written briefly, merely stating that they had been named by an informer, had been discharged without a hearing, he cried out in anger that he was held in contempt, and resolved to return to Capreae at any cost, since he would not risk any step except from his place of refuge. Detained, however, by bad weather and the increasing violence of his illness, he died a little later in the villa of Lucullus, in the seventy-eighth year of his age and the twenty-third of his reign, on the seventeenth day before the Kalends of April, in the consulship of Gnaeus Acerronius Proculus and Gaius Pontius Nigrinus.