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THE GIANTS IN THE POEM OF NAEVIUS

By EDUARD FRAENKEL

Inerant signa expressa,	quo modo Titani
bicorporales Gigantes	magnique Atlantes
Runcus ac Purpureus	filius Terras

When we examine recent discussions about this fragment from the first book of the *Bellum Poenicum* (19 Morel, 44–6 Warmington, 7 Marmorale), we find an agreement such as otherwise is rare in classical studies. In many countries many scholars, old and young, have adopted Hermann Fränkel's view (*Hermes* LXX, 1935, 59 ff.) that the passage was inspired by certain sculptures which Naevius had seen at the temple of Zeus Olympios at Agragas. But whereas Fränkel himself drew only cautious conclusions (he assigned the fragment to the story of Aeneas and considered more than one possible way in which it might be connected with that story), several among his followers jumped to the history of the year 262 B.C. and used the fragment as a cornerstone for the reconstruction of the main narrative of the *Bellum Poenicum*.¹ It would not be surprising if soon it came to be regarded as an established fact that Naevius in the first book of his epic dealt with the siege and capture of Agrigentum in 262 B.C. Therefore a note of caution may not be out of place although I have scarcely anything to say that has not been said before.

About one fundamental point the wording of the fragment leaves no doubt whatsoever. The work of art described by Naevius represented not merely those giants, but an action performed by them. That is shown by *quo modo*.² In the now lost continuation of the sentence the expression *quo modo* must have been followed by a finite verb.³ As regards the syntax of 'Inerant signa expressa, quo modo Titani bicorporales Gigantes', etc., it would be wrong to take *Titani*, *Gigantes*, *Atlantes*, etc., as being in apposition to *signa*; rather should we say that the whole secondary clause beginning with *quo modo* and culminating in a finite verb was explicatory of the phrase *inerant signa expressa*. Lest this construction might be thought too harsh, I will quote a close parallel, Terence, *Eun.*, 583 ff.

virgo in conclavi sedet
suspectans tabulam quandam pictam : ibi inerat pictura haec, Iovem
quo pacto Danae misisse aiunt quondam in gremium imbrem aureum.

Before we can attempt to say something about the kind of action likely to have been described in the *quo modo* clause, we must try to form a clear idea of the relation in which the subjects of this clause, *Titani*, *Gigantes*, *Atlantes*, *Runcus ac Purpureus*, and *filius Terras*, stand to one another. Here it would be fatal to overemphasize *Atlantes* at the expense of the rest. The conclusion of the preserved piece, 'Runcus ac Purpureus filius Terras,' makes it absolutely clear what is meant by the whole series. Even if we admit the possibility that *Runcus* has nothing to do with 'Ροῖκος or 'Ροῖτος (despite the fact that in Horace, *Odes* 3, 4, 54 f., *Porphyrio* is followed by *Rhoetus*), there remains *Purpureus*, undoubtedly identical with Πορφυρίων,⁴ one of the most famous *Gigantes*, γηγενεῖς, *filius Terras*. The subjects in the *quo modo* clause are not an unspecified number of giants, but only the two *Gigantes*, *Runcus* and *Purpureus*. As can be inferred from a manner of quoting which we more than once observe in Priscian,⁵ it is improbable that in the text of Naevius other subjects should have followed after *filius Terras*.

To give weight to his description and to convey an adequate idea of the enormous stature of *Runcus* and *Purpureus* Naevius is not content with calling them *bicorporales*

¹ See e.g. L. Strzelecki, 'De Naeviano belli Punici carmine,' *Rozprawy Wydz. filolog.* T. LXV, no. 2, 1935, 11, 'nihil obstat quominus hoc fragmentum e narratione de Agrigento obsessio haustum esse credamus'; E. V. Marmorale, *Naevius poeta*, 1st ed. (1945), p. 90 * f., 2nd ed. (1950), p. 32 f.; H. T. Rowell, *A. J. Philol.* 68, 1947, 35, 'we may therefore conclude that Naevius described the siege and fall of Agrigentum in Book I,' etc.; R. T. Bruère, *Class. Philol.* 47, 1952, 39, 'The fragment [*Inerant signa expressa* . . .] is assigned by Priscian to the first book

of the *Bellum Punicum* and indicates that the siege of Agrigentum in 262 B.C. was here included': P. Grimal, *REA* 53, 1951, 364, 'l'importance accordée par Naevius . . . à la description du temple de Zeus Olympien à Agrigente.'

² Not many Latinists will be prepared to accept Professor Warmington's translation of *quo modo Titani*, 'in the fashion of Titans.'

³ Morel is right in putting three dots after *filius Terras*.

⁴ See Bentley's note on Horace, *Odes* 2, 19, 23.

⁵ See Appendix.

Gigantes, but adds *Titani* and *magni Atlantes*. A similar accumulation of parallel members can be observed in other fragments of the *Bellum Poenicum*.⁶ It does not surprise us to find the names *Titani* and *Gigantes* employed indiscriminately to denote the same mythological creatures, for we are used to the identification, or confusion, of these two types of monsters, which, though not original, had probably become fairly common by the time of Naevius.⁷ But to see *Atlantes* thrown in is, at any rate at first, somewhat surprising. The plural of Atlas, as H. Fränkel remarks, occurs only in connexion with works of architecture, where it means 'colossal statues as supports for the entablature' (Liddell and Scott), ὁμοφόροι, male equivalents to Caryatids; ⁸ '*Atlantes* in the plural are unknown in mythology'.⁹ But in admitting the correctness of this statement must we forget that in the passage before us the name *Atlantes*, so far from being predominant, is subservient to 'Runcus ac Purpureus filii Terras' and on an equal footing with *Titani* and *Gigantes*, and must we connect these *Atlantes* with the famous 'Telamones' of the temple of Zeus Olympios at Acragas? ¹⁰ To do so might suggest that we are not sensitive enough to the muscular and sometimes hard style in this work which 'quasi Myronis opus delectat'. Surely it would be safer to admit that Naevius, bent upon extolling the magnitude of his giants by equating them with a variety of enormous figures, remembered the colossal Atlas and, with a bold stroke, added *magni Atlantes* to his list.

When we now return to the question what action of Porphyryon and his companion was described in the *quo modo* clause, the obvious answer is that it was the gigantomachy, the assault of these monsters against Zeus and his Olympian host. In this struggle Porphyryon, the βασιλεύς Γιγάντων (Pind., *Pyth.* 8, 17), took a leading part; the evidence, beginning with Ar. *Birds* 1252, is well-known. We hear of no other prominent action of Porphyryon.

The old interpretation ¹¹ of 'Inerant signa expressa' as describing a gigantomachy is considerably strengthened by the fact that the war of the Giants against the gods was a favourite theme in works of ancient decorative art, especially in reliefs.¹² No alternative subject could be suggested that would square equally well both with what is indicated by the words of Naevius and with the artistic tradition which forms the background of such an ἔκφρασις in poetry. But when we go on to inquire on what kind of object the gigantomachy described in Book I of the *Bellum Poenicum* was to be seen, we have to remind ourselves that on this point no certainty is possible. Paul Merula thought of decorations of the ships of Aeneas, and various other suggestions have been made.¹³ Far more ingenious than most of them is the idea, put forward by Theodor Bergk ¹⁴ and, independently, by

⁶ See H. Fränkel, p. 59 f.

⁷ Pfeiffer on Callim. fr. 119, 2 (vol. I, p. 134), after defending his poet against an ancient charge of confusing Giants and Titans, observes 'vera "confusio" solum apud scriptores Graecos posterioris aetatis et apud Latinos'.

⁸ cf. Puchstein, P-W II, 2107.

⁹ E. S(pangenberg), *Ennii Annalium fragmenta*, 1825, 195, observed, '*Atlantes* nonnisi in hoc Naevii versu occurrit. Idem videntur esse, qui Gigantes.'

¹⁰ These Telamones 'waren hauptsächlich nackte männliche Kolossalfiguren von 7.68 m. Höhe, die vor einer Wand stramm aufrecht stehend auf dem Kopfe eine Last trugen' (Koldewey und Puchstein, *Die griechischen Tempel in Unteritalien*, I, 158). Some pictures of the preserved pieces of the Telamones can be found in P. Marconi, *Agrigento* (1929), 62 and 169 ff., and, in a better reproduction, in the same writer's article in *Dedalo*, 12, 1932, 166-71. For the discussion on the place which the Telamones occupied at the temple see A. B. Cook, *Zeus* III, 2 (1940), 1171 f., and add Krischen, *Arch. Anz.* 1942, 2 ff.

¹¹ See Q. Enni . . . *fragmenta* . . . *conlecta* . . . ab Paulo G.F.P.N. Merula, Lugd. Bat. 1595, p. L, where the lines of our fragment are quoted, with the comment 'γιγαντομαχίαν . . . depingunt'.

¹² For a bibliography see e.g. Waser, P-W, Suppl.

III, 701 ff. There are two recent monographs by Francis Vian, *Répertoire de Gigantomachies figurées*, etc., Paris, 1951, and *La guerre des Géants*, 1952.

¹³ The article 'exrimo', *Thes. l. L.* v, 2, 1788, 22, merely reproduces Morel's note.

¹⁴ *Zeitschrift für die Alterthumswissenschaft* 9, 1842, 191. Bergk says in the text that the fragment of Naevius is 'the description of the gigantomachy and titanomachy in the temple of Jupiter at Agrigentum', and in a footnote he quotes Diodorus 13, 82, 4, τῶν δὲ στοῶν . . . τῷ κάλλει διαφερούσας, i.e. the passage describing the gigantomachy on the East pediment of the temple (Diodorus, it is true, does not speak of a pediment but says ἐν τῷ πρὸς ἕω μέρει; however, the fact that ἐν τῷ πρὸς δυσμίας the capture of Troy was represented seems to exclude the possibility of metopes being thought of). When Marmorale, *Naevius poeta*, 2nd ed., p. 30, says 'secondo il Bergk la descrizione doveva riguardare un tempio di Agrigento, ma non ne aveva dato una prova esplicita', it appears that he knows the reference to Bergk in Klusmann's edition (1843) of Naevius, p. 46, but has not read Bergk himself. No one familiar with the sad condition of most Italian libraries will blame him for that, but then he ought not to have criticized the great scholar.

Hermann Fränkel, that Naevius in this passage was describing part of the decorations of the temple of Zeus at Acragas. I admit the possibility of this hypothesis, but I would rather advocate a different solution, no novel one either. If we read in an ancient epic, an epic about a war, an elaborate description of a relief, it is *a priori* likely that the object to which the relief belongs should be a shield. A description of somebody's shield was in fact indispensable to any such epic, from Homer to Nonnos. To quote a particularly incongruous example: in the dreary composition of Silius Italicus we are not spared a detailed ἐκφράσις of Hannibal's shield (2, 395–450). It is, moreover, relevant to our problem that the noblest shield in the ancient world, the shield of the Pheidian Parthenos, was decorated on the inside with a gigantomachy.¹⁵ Therefore the guess that the passage 'Inerant signa expressa' comes from the description of a gigantomachy on a shield is as probable as can be expected in the circumstances. I do not know whether Niebuhr, *Röm. Gesch.* I, 2nd ed., 199, was the first to make this guess; ¹⁶ he has been followed by many scholars. His hypothesis is also recommended by the expression *inerant*, with which the passage emphatically begins. The words ἐν δὲ . . . ἔσαν or ἐν δ' ἦν (in succession to the Homeric ἐν δὲ . . . ποίησε or ἐν δ' ἐτίθει) are commonly used to open a new section in epic descriptions of shields, from the Hesiodic Ἀσπίς on (161, 169, etc.).¹⁷

Whichever interpretation of 'Inerant signa expressa' we accept, we shall have to regard the passage as a fine example of 'griechische Bildung in altrömischen Epen'. If Bergk and Hermann Fränkel are right, the fragment would tell us something about the impression which a monumental work of Greek sculpture had made on Naevius. If Niebuhr and his followers are right, the first writer of a Roman epic would have adopted a very old and very common device of Greek epic poetry.

There remains a last question. Supposing that the gigantomachy described by Naevius was the decoration of a shield, whose shield was it? Niebuhr suggested the shield of Aeneas. But since we have learnt from Strzelecki that, if we duly respect the book numbers in the quotations, the contents of Book I of the *Bellum Poenicum* appear to be far more complex than was formerly assumed, Aeneas can no longer be considered the only or the most probable candidate. So I must end with a *non liquet*.

APPENDIX

THE EXTENT OF SOME QUOTATIONS IN PRISCIAN

One might expect that Priscian, who in section 6 (beginning at *Gramm. Lat.* II, 198, 6) of the sixth book of his *Institutiones* is solely concerned with the gen. sing. in *-as*, should content himself with quoting 'Runcus ac Purpureus filii Terras'. But he does quote three full saturnians, beginning with 'Inerant signa expressa'. Why this apparent waste of paper? And if he quotes so much, why does he not continue until he reaches the finite verb in which the *quo modo* clause culminated?

The same two questions could be asked in regard to Priscian's quotation (*Gramm.* II, 352, 1) of Naevius *Bell. Poen.* fr. 12 Morel, where all that matters for the grammarian's purpose is the genitive *marum* so that it would have been sufficient to quote 'Neptunum regnatorem marum', and yet Priscian quotes:

Senex fretus pietatei deum adlocutus summi
deum regis fratrem Neptunum regnatorem
marum,

a rather long piece, but again without its finite verb. And if we look a little farther afield,

¹⁵ See now especially v. Salis, 'Die Gigantomachie am Schilde der Athena Parthenos,' *Jahrb. des Inst.* 55, 1940, 90 ff.

¹⁶ Klussmann and Vahlen in their editions of Naevius quote Niebuhr.

¹⁷ cf. e.g. Apoll. Rhod. I, 730 ἐν μὲν ἔσαν κτλ., 735 ἐν δ' ἔσαν κτλ., Quint. Smyrn. 6, 200 ἐν μὲν ἔσαν κτλ., 260 ἐν δ' ἄρ' ἔην κτλ. I had noticed these passages (it was easy enough) when I found in Maximilian Mayer's book, *Die Giganten und*

Titanen, 1887, 267 f., this remark: 'In dem Punier-Krieg des Naevius . . . wo die Worte vorkommen: *inerant signa . . . filii Terras*, wird man zunächst immer an einen Schild denken müssen, wie man sich denn auch sogleich an das ἐν δ' ἔσαν der herkömmlichen Schildbeschreibungen erinnert sieht.'—The expression is not, of course, confined to ἐκφράσεις of shields; see e.g. Moschus, *Europa* 44 ἐν μὲν ἔην κτλ., 50 ἐν δ' ἦν κτλ.

we find (*Gramm.* II, 253, 11), under the heading *impos*, this quotation from ' Accius in I didascalicon ' (fr. 9 Morel) :

falsidica audax
gnati mater pessimi, odibilis, natura impos,
excors, ecfera.

As this cataract of abuse, apart from the phrase *natura impos*, is irrelevant to the issue in hand, it seems that for some reason the excerpting grammarian did not wish to curtail the series of parallel nominal and adjectival items whereas he appears to have been less disturbed by the absence of a final verb. This is precisely what we noticed in the two passages previously quoted.

The point to which I want to call attention is not so much the occasional absence of the verb as the tendency to leave a combination of parallel nominal *membra* intact and complete. In Book XVIII, 304 (*Gramm.* III, 375, 14 ff.), Priscian, to illustrate a certain meaning of *gestare* and *gerere*, quotes Verg., *Aen.* I, 653 f.,

praeterea sceptrum Ilione quod gesserat olim,
maxima natarum Priami.

For the point under discussion it would make no difference if ' maxima natarum Priami ' were omitted. Another instance : Priscian's reason for quoting (*Gramm.* II, 486, 15) Ennius *Ann.* 321 f. V.² has nothing to do with the contents of the passage, his point is purely morphological (the perfect *tursi*), and yet he does not stop at the end of the hexameter, ' Cyclopis venter velut olim turserat alte,' but continues ' carnibus humanis distentus '. Another instance : *Gramm.* II, 81, 6 : the glyconic from Varro's *Menippeae* (437 Buech.), ' aeviternam hominum domum,' would suffice as evidence for the form *aeviternus*, but because *aeviternam domum* is in apposition to *tellurem*, Priscian quotes :

per
aeviternam hominum domum,
tellurem propero gradum.

At *Gramm.* II, 492, 1 the point at issue, ' polluceo polluxi,' would be made perfectly clear if the quotation from the *Colax* of Naevius began with *polluxi*. But Priscian actually quotes :

Qui decumas partes ? quantum alieni fuit,
polluxi tibi iam publicando epulo Herculis
decumas.

The reason for the inclusion of the first line is not far to seek : although the meaning of *decumas* at l. 3 has no bearing on the conjugation of *polluceo*, the excerptor wanted to clarify *decumas* and therefore added the *decumas partes* to which it refers.

The use of the nominative *acris* as masculine is discussed by Priscian at *Gramm.* II, 153, 11 and 230, 5. At both places he quotes from Book XII of the Annals of Ennius these lines (367-9 V.²) :

Omnes mortales victores cordibus vivis
laetantes, vino curatos somnus repente
in campo passim mollissimus perculit acris.

Here the second line is indispensable, since *somnus* is the noun to which *acris* belongs ; then, to make *laetantes* fully intelligible, the first line is included in the quotation, and consequently we find here again the completeness of the nominal *membra* which we noticed before ; in this case we also obtain a complete sentence.

Priscian does not, of course, always and consistently use this type of extensive quotation,¹⁸ but he uses it often. I have confined myself to a small selection of examples. It does not seem possible to determine whether this particular method of quoting is due to Priscian himself or to some of his sources.

¹⁸ He quotes the passage ' Inerant signa expressa ', etc., a second time (*Gramm.* II, 217, 10), as evidence for the form *Titanus*, and here he stops at the end of

l. 2, *Atlantes*. The omission of l. 3 may be intentional or may have occurred in the course of the transmission of Priscian's text.