

W. JEFFREY TATUM

P. CLODIUS PULCHER AND TARRACINA

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 83 (1990) 299–304

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

P. Clodius Pulcher and Tarracina

Publi progenies Appi cognomine Pulchri
occubuit letum

H. Solin has recently proposed that this verse inscription—a graffito from Tarracina—refers to the death of P. Clodius Pulcher (tr. pl. 58 B.C.; *ZPE* 43 [1981] 357-61, esp. 357-59). It is unnecessary to rehearse here Solin's detailed description of this tantalizing find. Nor do I wish to challenge his identification of the verse's Publius: given the graffito's *termini* (80-30 B.C.), Clodius is surely the most likely candidate. What cannot go uncontested, however, are Solin's interpretation of the text and his explanation of its origin, conclusions which ultimately rest upon his assumption that "nichts von Beziehungen des Pulcher zu Terracina bekannt (ist)" (p. 358). It is here, as I hope to show, that Solin has gone astray. But first it will be useful to review briefly Solin's views.

According to Solin, the young patrician Publius Claudius, having been adopted into a plebeian family in 59 B.C., took that opportunity to change his name "in die plebejische Form Clodius" (*ibid.*). As tribune in the following year, he successfully pursued a *popularis* line, but his violent exploitation of the *plebs urbana* ultimately, if indirectly, brought about his own destruction. Solin, sensitive to Clodius' relationship with the commons and to his rejection of his original status, interprets our inscription in the light of these particular facets of Clodius' career; consequently, he suspects irony and detects in the verse an aristocratic reaction to Clodius' politics: "Dieser Nachkomme des großen Appius Claudius Caecus hat uns den Rücken gekehrt und seine Klasse verraten, dabei ist ihm aber übel gegangen" (*ibid.*) Irony, reasons Solin, psychologically makes better sense than a straightforward reading inasmuch as a devotee of Clodius would have no compelling reason to emphasize his hero's lineage.

Interpretations of isolated graffiti must necessarily be tentative, of course, but there are definite problems with Solin's hypothesis. Let us begin with a minor one. Solin's suggestion that the Appius Claudius mentioned in the inscription is Caecus (cos. 307 B.C.), though certainly plausible, is far from inevitable. After all, since *progenies* can mean simply "son," (Solin, *loc. cit.* 457) nothing prevents our taking the Appius as Clodius' own father, the consul of 79 B.C. And there were many consular Appii Claudii between Caecus and Clodius' father. Perhaps the ambiguity is meant to stress the continuing attainments of the family whose *Appietas* was so notorious in the late first century B.C.¹ This point, one must observe, actu-

¹ One must also admit the possibility that Appius' precise identity was indicated in a subsequent line of the poem.

ally bolsters rather than weakens Solin's general conclusions. However, a more serious objection can be raised against Solin's understanding of the implications of the name *Clodius*. The distinction between *Claudius* and *Clodius* has nothing to do with patrician or plebeian status, as the plebeian Claudii Marcelli attest. And T. W. Hillard has demonstrated in detail that whatever significance attaches to the form *Clodius*, it is not political.² Clodius' adoption — or, more correctly, his adrogation — which was purely *pro forma* so as to enable him to be elected tribune, did not entail a genuine rejection of his patrician heritage;³ in fact, Clodius' persistent observation of the Claudian *sacra* incurred complaints from Cicero.⁴ Appius Claudius Pulcher (cos. 54 B.C.) never abandoned his brother, despite the latter's adrogation into the *gens Fonteia*. Nor did Clodius' son become a Fonteius, as technically he should have done.⁵ In short, nothing in Clodius' nomenclature or his change of status implies a significant break with his patrician heritage. Indeed, to a great extent Clodius' *transitio ad plebem* was motivated by his perception that his *dignitas* had recently been wounded (viz. by the *Bona Dea* scandal), a perception exaggerated by his inherited *claritas*.⁶ Which brings us to a final, and more general, criticism. Solin's overall view of Clodius as an unrelenting *popularis* runs counter to most contemporary discussion of Clodian politics;⁷ even H. Benner, who is primarily interested in Clodius' relationship with the lower strata of Roman society, recognizes the traditional aristocratic aspects of his behavior (Benner, *op. cit.* [n. 7] 115ff.). Nor is it much of a surprise that Clodius did not surrender his dignity to acquire *popularitas*: as is well-known, nobility — and all that attends the concept — was important for popular success in Rome, not the least because the social superiority of a benefactor enhanced the perceived value of his *beneficia* (and consequently the depth of gratitude they inspired).⁸

None of the aforementioned absolutely excludes an ironic reading of the Tarracinian grafito. However, a case for such a reading remains to be made. I should like to try a different

² T. W. Hillard, *The Claudii Pulchri 76-48 B.C. Studies in their Political Cohesion* (Diss. Macquarie University, 1976), 425-34.

³ The most important sources for Clodius' *adrogatio* are: Cic. *Dom.* 34-42; *Sest.* 15-16; *Prov. Cons.* 45-46; Appian *B. Civ.* 2. 14; Plut. *Caes.* 14. 9; Dio 38. 12. 1-2; 39. 11. 2; 39. 21. 4.

⁴ *Dom.* 35. A. Watson, *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman Republic* (Oxford, 1967), 87-88, must be correct that technically an *adrogatus* forfeited membership in his original *gens* completely. In practice, however, the Roman attitude was quite loose during the late republic; cf. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Two Studies in Roman Nomenclature* (State College, Pa., 1976), 87-92.

⁵ Clodius' children: T. P. Wiseman, "Pulcher Claudius," *HSCP* 74 (1970) 207-21. Shackleton Bailey's speculation, *op. cit.* [n. 4] 109, that Clodius' son "may have been born before the adoption" will not explain his nomenclature; *adrogatio* transferred all a man's property and descendants into the *potestas* of his adoptive father, cf. J. A. Crook, *The Law and Life of Rome* (London 1967) 112 and Watson, *op. cit.* [n. 4] 86. Thus Clodius' son ought to have been a Fonteius, as the son of P. Cornelius Dolabella (cos. suff. 44 B.C.), who was adopted by a Cornelius Lentulus, was called Lentulus; cf. Shackleton Bailey, p. 90.

⁶ W. J. Tatum, "The *Lex Clodia de Censoria Notione*," *CP* 85 (1990), forthcoming; W. K. Lacey, "Clodius and Cicero. A Question of Dignitas," *Antichthon* 8 (1974) 91.

⁷ E.g., Tatum, *op. cit.*; H. Benner, *Die Politik des Clodius* (Stuttgart, 1988); E. S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), 255-57.

⁸ R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1982), 38.

tack: our inscription is not a trace of some ironic anti-Clodian poem, but is instead an extract — no doubt the opening — from a sincerely phrased elogium to Clodius. The solemn meter and archaic diction, as well as the immediate introduction of Clodius' heritage, are all appropriate to the genre.⁹ That an admirer of Clodius would have no reason to ignore his Claudian background is, I hope, sufficiently established. What must be considered, if my proposal is to count for something even slightly more than mere speculation, is how a line from such an elogium could come to be scratched into a Tarracinian wall. In other words, is there a demonstrable connection between Clodius and Tarracina? I believe that there is and that the important point of contact is Sex. Cloelius, *familiarissimus Clodii*.¹⁰

A few words about Cloelius are in order in view of the various controversies dogging his identification. To begin with, I must insist that Shackleton Bailey's philological proof that the man in question is Sex. Cloelius and not Clodius is incontrovertible.¹¹ Certain of his historical arguments, I concede, are of a weaker calibre; however, once the *nomen* is agreed upon — as by now it ought to be — it becomes somewhat easier to sort out other difficulties. Whereas Cloelius' manifold services to Clodius are well-known, the origin of their relationship is not, though it appears very likely that Cloelius was Clodius' *scriba tribunicius*.¹² It is sometimes maintained, on the basis of Cicero, *In Pisonem* 8, that Cloelius was a freedman.¹³ In that passage, Cicero, who is assailing Calpurnius Piso (cos. 58 B.C.) for having allowed the *ludi Compitalicii* to be performed (in violation of a *senatus consultum* of 64 B.C.),¹⁴ contrasts Piso's passivity with the bold resolution of Metellus Celer (cos. 60 B.C.): Celer, consul-elect and so *privatus*, overawed a tribune who intended to celebrate the forbidden *ludi*; Piso, by contrast, though he was actually consul, ignominiously "*Sex. Cloelius, qui numquam antea praetextatus fuisset, ludos facere et praetextatum volitare passus est, hominem impurum.*"

⁹ H. Häusle, *Das Denkmal als Garant des Nachruhms* (Munich 1980) 19-22, 105-108 (with further references).

¹⁰ Asc. 7C. A brief sketch of Cloelius, with further references, is provided by Benner, *op. cit.* (n. 7) 156-58.

¹¹ "Sex. Clodius - Sex. Cloelius," *CQ* 10 (1960) 41-43. I am not convinced by the refutation attempted by J.-M. Flambard, "Nouvel examen d'un dossier prosopographique, le cas de Sex. Clodius/Cloelius," *MEFRA* 90 (1978) 238-39.

¹² That Cloelius was a *scriba* is attested (Asc. 33C). In Jan. 58 B.C. Cloelius conducted the *ludi Compitalicii* (on Clodius' behalf) as *magister scribarum*; see A. W. Lintott, "P. Clodius Pulcher - Felix Catilina?" *G&R* 14 (1967) 163. He assisted Clodius in drafting tribunician legislation and in administering the *curatio rei frumentariae*; cf. Benner, *op. cit.* [n. 7] 100, 157. All of which suggests that he was Clodius' *scriba tribunicius*, whose assistance and judicial expertise the tribune would naturally expect; cf. N. Purcell, "The *Apparitores*. A Study in Social Mobility," *PBSR* 51 (1983) 129-131. Intercourse through Clodius' tribunate appears to mark the beginning of their relationship; there is absolutely no reason to see any reference to Cloelius in Cicero's *de signifero Athenione* (Cic. *Att.* 2. 12. 2, dated 19 April 59 B.C.), *pace* Shackleton Bailey, *Philologus* 108 (1964) 109-110 and *idem*, *Cicero's "Letters to Atticus"* I (Cambridge 1965) 376. Flambard, *loc. cit.* [n. 11] 239-41, may well be correct that Cicero refers to a Clodius Athenio; in any case, it is irrelevant to any discussion of Cloelius.

¹³ So Benner, *op. cit.* [n. 7] 156, arguing in support of Flambard, *loc. cit.* (n. 11).

¹⁴ Sources for the affair: Cic. *Post Red. Sen.* 33; *Dom.* 54; *Pis.* 8; *Sest.* 34, 55; Asc. 7C.

Implicit in Cicero's assertion that Cloelius had never before worn the *toga praetexta* is the aspersions that Cloelius was not *ingenuus*.¹⁵ However, in such a context Cicero's reliability falls far short of indisputable. The rhetorical effect of the passage relies on exaggerating the gap between Piso and Cloelius so that the consul's inactivity appears utterly reprehensible when compared to Celer's willingness to oppose a tribune.¹⁶ By portraying Cloelius as a *libertinus*, a ploy quite relevant to a complaint about the restoration of the *ludi Compitalicii*,¹⁷ Cicero created a very wide gap indeed. That the suggestion of freedman status was convenient for Cicero does not imply automatically that he invented it. Nonetheless, such slander is characteristic of Ciceronian — and Roman — invective,¹⁸ and Cicero's remarkably hyperbolic ridicule of Piso's origins elsewhere in the oration does not encourage credulity (Nisbet, *op. cit.* [n. 15] 192-197). Now while it is certainly not impossible that Cloelius was in fact a freedman, the *In Pisonem* passage is a slender reed on which to lean. After all, nowhere else in Cicero's many attacks on Cloelius, some of which are extremely acerbic, does the imputation of libertine status appear.¹⁹

Cloelius was a scribe, and what we know of the patterns of scribal employment should lead us to doubt Cicero's oblique remark. Some scribes, to be sure, were *libertini*, but most seem to have been free born, often Italian men of means who were not quite prominent enough to penetrate the elite circles of Rome without the support of patrons (Purcell, *loc. cit.* [n. 12] 154f., 162). Despite their substance and (often) their culture, *scribae* — especially the most successful of them — were potentially subject to the contempt and abuse of senators and others in Rome who detested or resented social climbers.²⁰ This prejudice is what allowed Cicero to belittle Cloelius, even to the point of challenging his status. But as even Cicero must concede, Cloelius did in fact wear the *toga praetexta* while presiding (as *magister scribarum*) at a public ceremony, a datum which, contrary to the orator's insinuation, ought to suggest that Cloelius, like most scribes, was entitled to do so.

There are not many attested Sex. Cloelii. Shackleton Bailey has suggested that Cloelius was a member of the *tribus Collina*, a conclusion he draws from two funerary inscriptions that mention as a member of that urban tribe a certain Sex. Cloelius Sex. f. Niger, a *melanepho-*

¹⁵ R. G. M. Nisbet, *M. Tulli Ciceronis in L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio* (Oxford 1966) 66.

¹⁶ This is why Cicero omits any reference to the attempted obstruction of L. Ninnius Quadratus (tr. pl. 58 B.C.); cf. Asc. 7C.

¹⁷ J.-M. Flambard, "Clodius, les collègues, le plèbe et les esclaves. Recherches sur la politique populaire au milieu du 1er siècle," *MEFRA* 89 (1977) 115-56.

¹⁸ See, e.g., R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 149-51.

¹⁹ E.g. Cic., *Dom.* 47, 83, 129; *Har. Resp.* 11; *Sest.* 133. The argument from silence (as well as other arguments against Cloelius' freedman status) can be found in Shackleton Bailey, "Mumpsimus-Sumpsimus," *Ciceroniana I* (1973) 23-29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 136 (with sources). The circumstances of the republic's best known *scriba* are discussed by D. Armstrong, "*Horatius Eques et Scriba*, Satires 1. 6 and 2. 7," *TAPA* 116 (1986) 255-88. Significantly, Horace was extremely self-conscious in the representation of his wealth and rank — and aware of his vulnerability to criticism (*Sat.* 1. 6. 20-37).

rus.²¹ Yet, in addition to the difficulties posed by the cognomen Niger (and the sacerdotal title *melanephorus*), these inscriptions, like the epigraphical record of the other Sex. Cloelii listed in the TLL *Onomasticon*, are imperial (Flambard, "Nouv. Ex." [n. 11] 244f.) and could even refer to freedmen (or descendents of freedmen) of the very man in question. Tarracina, in my view, offers a plausible origin for our Cloelius, for it is clear that the Cloelii were prominent there during the first century B.C.²² A certain T. Cloulius (= Cloelius) was *monetalis* around 110 B.C. (and, it has been suggested, *popularis* in sentiment);²³ another T. Cloulius, possibly the moneyer's son, was quaestor *circa* 95 B.C.; he was also a legate of Marius in 83 B.C.²⁴ Other Cloelii appear on the fringe of such attainments: T. Cloelius, *homo non obscurus*, provided a Ciceronian *exemplum*;²⁵ C. Cloilius was a banker of the early first century B.C.²⁶ What emerges is an ambitious Italian family of local prominence striving to make its way to the Capitol. Its greatest success, a Roman senator, joined the wrong side of the civil war, and it may be that his unfortunate choice blighted the family's subsequent prospects. The Tarracinian Cloelii provide an appropriate background for a Roman scribe of the mid-first century B.C., whether Cloelius was from a slightly humbler stem than the T. Cloelii or, since the possibility cannot be evaded completely, descended from a Cloelian freedman (in which case we might assume that Cloelius' tribe was the *Collina*).²⁷

Cloelius' position as scribe brought him wealth, influence and, if his career followed the pattern so well attested for other *scribae*, especial importance in his home town (Parcel, *ibid.* [n. 27] 165-167). Cloelius attained to an extraordinary stature from his association with Clodius, a tie strong enough and clearly valuable enough to allow him to exceed the merely temporal loyalty expected of scribes (*ibid.* 139). For Cloelius, as was noted above, was Clodius' intimate, and he persevered in his loyalty even after his friend's death. He led the demonstrations that culminated in the cremation of Clodius' corpse and the incineration of the Curia Hostilia, events which resulted in his conviction *de vi* (Cic. *Mil.* 33, 90; Asc. 33, 55C). It is testimony to Cloelius' clout that he was recalled in 44 B.C. by no less a figure than the consul Marc Antony.²⁸ The events attending the death of Clodius must have been of keen interest to the people of Tarracina, not only because of Clodius' friendship with the locally influential Cloelius but because of their ultimate effect on Cloelius' own situation. In other words, from

²¹ *CIL* VI. 24627, 24628. See Shackleton Bailey, "Mumpsimus-Sumspimus," (n. 19) 26.

²² The patrician Cloelii Siculi are clearly irrelevant to Cloelius' origins.

²³ T. R. S. Broughton, *MRR* 3. 58. *Popularis*: T. P. Wiseman, "T. Cloelius of Tarracina," *CR* 17 (1967) 263.

²⁴ *MRR* 3. 58. His relationship to the moneyer: Wiseman, *loc. cit.*, [n.23] 263. Marian legate: Plut. *Pomp.* 7. 1.

²⁵ Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 64. Cf. C. Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine (312-43 av. J.-C.)*, II (Paris 1974) 838f.; Wiseman, *loc. cit.*, [n. 23] 263.

²⁶ *ILLRP* 991; cf. Wiseman, *loc. cit.* [n. 23] 263.

²⁷ Purcell, *loc. cit.* [n. 12] 161-65. The recruitment of scribes from outside Rome: *ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁸ Cic. *Att.* 14. 13. 6; 14. 13A. 2; 14. 13B. 3; 14. 14. 2; 14. 19. 2.

Clodius' murder in 52 B.C. until Cloelius' restoration in 44 B.C., there was every likelihood that at least some people in Tarracina would be sensitive to the memory of Clodius and his death — if only for the sake of Cloelius. Thus we have a fitting — and intelligible — context for our random discovery.

If the preceding arguments can be accepted, then it may be possible to surmise the actual provenance of the inscribed verse. Versifying—especially funerary versifying—was, it seems, a frequent task of *scribae*.²⁹ Is it possible that Cloelius himself composed an elogium for his departed friend? The Temple of Bellona in Rome, which Clodius' father had transformed into something of a family museum for the Claudii Pulchri, would have provided an eminently suitable site for displaying such a poem.³⁰ Or Cloelius may have erected a memorial advertising his association with his famous patron (and thus his own success) in Tarracina (cf. Saller, *op. cit.* [n.8] 200). In any case, an *elogium Clodii Pulchri*, whether or not it was composed in Rome, would have found a receptive audience in Tarracina as late as 44 B.C.— or even later, if Cloelius returned home in triumph after Antony's recall.

The Florida State University

W. Jeffrey Tatum

²⁹ N. Horsfall, "The Collegium Poetarum," *BICS* 23 (1976) 91.

³⁰ T. P. Wiseman, *Catullus and his World, A Reappraisal* (Cambridge 1985) 21.