THE DATING OF THE ILIAS LATINA

When I was writing the article in Der Neue Pauly on the Ilias Latina (as that poem has been called since Baehrens), the only conclusion which I could reach about its date was one of despair, since neither the attempt to date it by historical methods based on presumed allusions in 899-902, nor that employing a postulated identification of the author Italicus (his name revealed by the concluding acrostich), nor that depending on stylistic and metrical usage reaches any decisive result. I now wish to propose a new criterion, but first an old one.

As I remarked and others too have remarked, though without making much of it, a terminus post quem for the work is provided by some clear imitations of Seneca’s tragedies. It is worth while to look a little more closely at the examples remarked by M. Scaffai in his commentary\(^1\) on the Ilias Latina, and to do so under two lights. First, as a precaution we must establish that Italicus is imitating Seneca and not the other way round; secondly, we should investigate whether any pattern of imitation emerges.

It does emerge that in cases in which imitation, in either direction, is indubitable, such a relationship is essentially confined to two plays, the Troades (which at least has a thematic relationship with the Ilias) and the Oedipus (which has none). Here first the Troades:

Ilias 529 *hinc pugnat patriae columen Mavortius Hector*  
Troades 124 *columen patriae* (also referring to Hector).

Troades 117-129 shows much else that recalls the Ilias, but nothing that is as clear as this; see in particular 1053 (with Scaffai’s note) and 1057. From TLL I note also CLE 587.6 *magnum patriae columenque futurum* (a very incorrect epitaph from Dalmatia). There is nothing which suggests priority of either author.

Ilias 831 *mentitos vultus simulati pandit Achillis (sc. Apollo)*  
Troades 447 *vera ex Achille spolia simulato tulit (sc. Hector)*

Here too one could make an argument for imitation in either direction; however, vera in Seneca looks artificial, whereas the line in the Ilias follows well on 824 *ut quem mentitur verus credatur Achilles*.

Now the Oedipus:

Ilias 31 *Fatidici his sacras compellat vocibus aures*  
Oedipus 1042-3 *fatidice, te, te prae sidem veri deum / compello*.

In the Ilias Chryses is speaking; fatidici his is Higt’s inevitable emendation

\(^1\) Baebii Italici, *Ilias Latina*, a cura di M. Scaffai, Bologna 1982 (1997\(^7\)).
for the manuscript reading fatidicis. In the Oedipus Oedipus is speaking, and his phrase is based on Ovid Fasti 2.261-2 audes / fatidicum verbis fallere velle deum?, whereas that of Italicus recalls Verg. Aen. 4.304 tandem his Aenean compellat vocibus utro (cf. 6.499 notis compellat vocibus utro). The significant point is that in Seneca fatidice is a perfectly normal vocative adjective, whereas Italicus has developed it into a full-blown substantive, to which the plural used by Cicero de leg. 2.20 in the sense of harioli provides no parallel. In short he is doing what imitators do, blending two sources and forcing one of them.

Ilias 46-8
vulgus ruit undique Graium
vixque rogis superest tellus, vix ignibus aer,
derat ager tumulis

Oedipus 53 omnis aetas pariter et sexus ruit
68 dest terra tumulis, iam rogos silvae negant.

Here there is an obvious community of subject-matter; cf. also Ovid Met. 7.613 nec locus in tumulos, nec sufficit arbor in ignes (the plague sent by Juno on Aegina). Note that Italicus has been forced by his metre to adjust the tense of Seneca’s dest to an imperfect discordant with the rest of his context, whereas if, like Seneca, he had had the passage of Ovid in mind, he could have written dest ager in tumulos.

Ilias 1067 Pieridum comitata cohors (sc. me vatem)
Oedipus 432 te Bassaridum comitata cohors (sc. Dionyse)

Note how under constraint Italicus has unnaturally omitted the object present in Seneca.

One can see other similarities too between Italicus and Seneca, but nothing, I think, close enough to provide the basis of an argument. The above harvest is not abundant, but it looks as if Seneca imitated Italicus in Troades, whereas his Oedipus was imitated by Italicus; this would imply that they were contemporaries, and that the order of the compositions was Oedipus, Ilias, Troades.

Now for my new criterion. The anonymous Laus Pisonis 173-7 reads as follows:

sic movisse fides saevus narratur Achilles
quamvis mille rates Priameius ueret heros
et gravis obstreperet modulatis bucina nervis:
ilo dulce melos Neretus extudit heros
pollice, terribilis quo Pelias ibat in hostem.

Twice in these lines we find a formulaic phrase consisting of heros preceded by a patronymic adjective ending in -ius; there is a variation of such
formulae in which the adjective is not patronymic but ethnic, as e.g. *Troius heros* Verg. *Aen*. 6.451, but I am not here concerned with this variation. Formulae of this type are not found in Homer nor anywhere else, unless I have overlooked something, in Greek epic. They seem to have been introduced by Vergil, who has *Laomedontius heros* (= Aeneas) in *Aen*. 8.18, and to have been popularised by Ovid. The writer of the *Ilias Latina*, as well as the four instances on which I shall concentrate, has *Pelopeius heros* (131, 739; Agamemnon), *Thetideius heros* (690; Achilles), *Cythereius heros* (895; Aeneas). The other four instances to which I alluded are identical with those found in the *Laus Pisonis*, namely *Priameius heros* in 960 (where it means Paris) and 271 (Hector, as in the *Laus Pisonis*), *Nereius heros* (938, 975; Achilles).

The formulaic nature of such combinations is underlined by the fact that, as in all the instances quoted by me, *heros* almost invariably ends the line, and is usually, though not in the *Laus Pisonis*, immediately preceded by the adjective. Two other features also spring to the eye. First, the adjective often ends not just in -ius but in -eius. Secondly, it often refers not just to the father but in a recherché manner to the mother or grandfather (we may classify Vergil’s *Laomedontius heros* here, though Laomedon was not a direct ancestor of Aeneas). This is the case in a number of Ovidian instances; so *Autonoeius heros* (*Met*. 3.198; Actaeon), *Cythereius heros* (ibid. 13.625; Aeneas, as in *I. Lat.*), *Danaeius heros* (*Am*. 3.6.13; Perseus), *Philyreius heros* (*Met*. 2.676, *Fasti* 5.391; Chiron), all, one observes, with -eius. All these statements apply to all the instances in *I. Lat.* except for *Priameius heros*; in 176 the author of *Laus Pis.* could more straightforwardly have written *Peleius heros* (as in fact Statius did, *Ach*. 1.551), but found advantage in conforming to the pattern with *Nereius heros* because of Pelias in the next line, referring of course to Mount Pelion and not to Peleus.

So the author of the *Laus Pisonis* twice within the space of five lines uses in a simile incidentally referring to the Trojan war, in a way not conforming fully to the prevailing manner since his adjective does not immediately precede *heros*, phrases also found in a poem whose central subject is the Trojan war and which shows a fondness for using such phrases according to an established pattern. Which is more likely to be the imitator? One must surely answer ‘the writer of the *Laus Pisonis*’. He therefore postdates the *Ilias Latina*, and since he must have written before the condemnation of Piso in 65 A.D. as penalty for his failed conspiracy, that gives a *terminus ante quem* for the *Ilias Latina*. Many scholars have thought that they could see traits of Neronian times in the *Ilias*; these have not been strong enough to provide concrete evidence for dating, but if I am right we can now re-
evaluate them, and can definitely reject Lachmann’s contention\(^2\) that the historical allusion in 899-902 must pre-date the death of Tiberius. The case would be clinched if we could securely identify the work as a juvenile composition of the known Baebius Italicus, but that depends on finding Cuspinianus’ authority for the former name (see my *Neue Pauly* article).

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