

## (De)familiarizing Roman Literature

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### PART 1. *Latin Language and Latin Culture* or *Writing as Social Performance*

Epigraph:

Joseph Farrell LLLC p.7

'... Viewed from this perspective, the text of the *Aeneid* becomes not merely a narrative, but a kind of script for the establishment of Latin culture, a script that might support a limitless series of performances, each with its own variations, but all sharing certain crucial features. The series begins on the mythic level with the labors of the founder, Aeneas. It includes the political level and the establishment of a stable government by the *princeps*, Augustus. And, I suggest, it extends to the education of the neophyte who by acquiring the skills necessary to read the national epic gains full membership in Latin culture ...

The culture of latinity is not the same thing as a hermeneutics of reception, not a sum total of "influences", direct and indirect, upon modern encounters with the latinity of the past. It may indeed be related to this. But even more, it is the culture *embodied* by the language, to which all who study and value latinity belong.'

### BECOMING CICERO (i)

Petrarch. *Familiarium Rerum* 1, 1, 42

quibus [sc. epystolis] legendis delinitus pariter et offensus, temperare michi non potui quominus, ira dictante, *sibi tanquam coetaneo amico, familiaritate que michi cum illius ingenio est, quasi temporum oblitus, scriberem et quibus in eo dictis offenderer admonerem.*

In reading [Cicero's letters] I felt charmed and offended in equal measure. Indeed, beside myself, in a fit of anger I wrote to him *as if he were a friend and contemporary of mine, forgetting, as it were, the gap of time, with a familiaritas appropriate to my intimate acquaintance with his thought*; and I reminded him of those things he had written that had offended me. (tr. A.S. Bernardo, modified)

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Petrarch. *Familiarium Rerum* 24, 4, 1

Franciscus Ciceroni suo salutem. si te superior offendit epystola -- *verum est enim, ut ipse soles dicere, quod ait familiaris tuus in Andria:*

obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit --,  
accipe quod offensum animum ex parte mulceat ...

Francesco sends his greetings to his Cicero. I hope that my previous letter did not offend you; *for as you yourself are wont to say, it is true, as your familiaris says in the Andria:*

'Indulgence begets friends, truth only hatred'.  
Accept then what may somewhat soothe your wounded feelings ...

Cicero. *Laelius. De Amicitia* 89

*sed nescio quo modo verum est, quod in Andria familiaris meus dicit:*  
obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit.

*But somehow it is true, as my familiaris says in the Andria:*

'Indulgence begets friend, truth only hatred'

M.E. Cosenza's (1910) commentary ad loc.:

'Petrarch ... has either momentarily lost sight of the speaker, or, realizing full well that Laelius is Cicero's mouth-piece, has consciously identified the two. This would, of course, make Terence a friend of Cicero; the "familiaris meus" of the *De amicitia* and the "familiaris tuus" of Petrarch both, therefore, become equivalent to "familiaris Ciceronis".'

## BECOMING CICERO (ii)

Translator's preface to the 1923 Loeb Classical Library volume containing Cicero's dialogues *On Old Age*, *On Friendship* and *On Divination*.

### PREFACE

WHILE my uncle,<sup>1</sup> then in his eighty-first year, was confined to his room by a serious illness, he received a letter of consolation from a friend, who quoted from Shuckburgh's translation of the *De senectute*. This quotation, though short, brought solace and cheer to the invalid and made him eager to hear more of Cicero's views on old age, and, as a result, he asked me to bring him the essay in the Latin and read it to him. Twenty years had passed since I had read the tractate at the University of Virginia under my revered old professor, Dr. Wm. E. Peters, and hence my rendering at sight must have done violence to the original in many places; but just as 'honour peereth in the meanest habit,' so the light of Cicero's genius was not wholly obscured by the medium through which it passed. At any rate, when I had finished, my uncle begged me—more, I think, for my good than for his own pleasure—to write out a translation of the entire treatise. I pleaded that my Latin was too rusty and that my judicial duties did not leave me leisure for such a task. He replied that my Latin would brighten with use and that an hour or

<sup>1</sup> Gen. H. B. Armistead, of Charleston, Ark.; b. 1832 in Fauquier Co., Virginia; Secretary of State of Arkansas, 1892-1896.

half-hour spent upon it now and then would not be missed and would afford me needed recreation. In his earnestness he exacted a promise which his death a few months later made only the more sacred. And so, on the trains as I went about the circuit, in hotels at night after trying cases all day, and in odd moments at home, I strove to redeem that promise. After several revisions a translation was completed and put into type.

My version had passed from hand to hand for two or three years with no thought of publication, when my poet-friend Brookes More asked permission to show it to his brother, Dr. Paul Elmer More of Princeton University, who brought it to the attention of Dr. Edward Capps, the American Editor of the L.C.L. At Dr. Capps' suggestion it was sent to the Senior Editor in England. After another revision it was accepted by him for publication and an invitation given to translate also the *De amicitia* and the *De divinatione*. Four years have gone by since this work was begun. It has been carried on amid many interruptions. Ill-health and, more often, the prior claims of professional and official duties have made the task an arduous one; and yet, because of these studies in classical learning and my contact with great scholars, living and dead, no other period of my life has brought me so much pleasure of mind and soul: *qua voluptate nulla certe potest esse maior*.

WILLIAM ARMISTEAD FALCONER.

FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS, U.S.A.,  
March 15, 1922.

Cicero, Laelius, De Amicitia 1-4. Loeb tr. W.A. Falconer (excerpts):

'Quintus Mucius Scaevola, the augur, used to relate with an accurate memory and in a pleasing way many incidents about his father-in-law, Gaius Laelius, and, in every mention of him, did not hesitate to call him "the Wise". Now, I, upon assuming the *toga virilis*, had been introduced by my father to Scaevola with the understanding that, so far as I could and he would permit, I should never leave the old man's side. And so it came to pass that, in my desire to gain greater profit from his legal skill, I made it a practice to commit to memory many of his learned opinions and many, too, of his brief and pointed sayings. After his death I betook myself to the pontiff, Scaevola, who, both in intellect and in integrity, was, I venture to assert, quite the most distinguished man of our State.

'... And so, Scaevola ... proceeded to repeat to us a discussion on friendship, which Laelius had had with him and with another son-in-law, Gaius Fannius, son of Marcus, a few days after the death of Africanus. I committed the main points of that discussion to memory, and have set them out in the present book in my own way ...

'... For while you were pleading with me again and again to write something on friendship, the subject appealed to me as both worthy of general study, and also well-fitted to our intimacy. Therefore I have not been unwilling to benefit the public at your request.

'... Discourses of this kind seem in some way to acquire greater dignity when founded on the influence of men of ancient times, especially such as are renowned; and, hence, in reading my own work on *Old Age* I am at times so affected that I imagine Cato is the speaker and not myself.'

Cf. Tusculanae Disputationes 1. Loeb tr.

'On at last securing a complete or at any rate a considerable release from the toils of advocacy and from my senatorial duties, I have once more — chiefly, Brutus, on your encouragement — returned to those studies, which, though stored in memory, had been put aside through circumstances, and are now revived after a long interval of neglect.'

**PART 2. New Metamorphoses or Reading Ovid's Rapes**

Epigraphs:

Keats Ode on a Grecian Urn

'For ever wilt thou love and she be fair'

Stephen Hinds 'Landscape with Figures' in Cambridge Companion to Ovid

'It is not surprising that modern readings should oscillate between seeing the poem's violence as redeemed by its stylized beauty, especially as distilled in its landscapes, and seeing its beauty as fatally corrupted by its violence. A *Metamorphoses* whose violent myths unfolded in a dystopia might feel very different ...' (p.130)

'Despite some recent readings which would find the poem's beauty corrupted beyond redemption by its stories of injustice and violence, the aestheticizing valence in the landscapes of the *Metamorphoses* has proved largely irresistible, at once symptomatic and determinative of the consumption of all pleasure and pain enacted therein, for good or for ill

Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

(Marvell, *The Garden* 47-8)' (p.149)

John Henderson 'Ch-ch-ch-changes' in P. Hardie et al. (edd.) Ovidian Transformations

'Ovid's epic has always belonged not least to the wider constituency of poets and readers of poetry, right through the deepest troughs of his standing among classicists; and this audience has generally shown itself keen to share promising perspectives from Latin critics. So the two worlds overlap, and rebound. But there is no presumption that literary enthusiasts and poetniks will just roll over before the intellections of academic expertise ... So can the new *Metamorphoses* in Classics tap into the marketplace of NOW? Then HOW?' (p.302)

'NOW I am ready to pretend, ready to tell HOW ... to virtualize a *Metamorphoses*. [While we still had books, before they turned into (an)other new technics.]

Say we start here:

- \* where are sick and surreal stories on legs at home?
  - \* where does story still intersect with sociality?
  - \* where are the insistence and unfathomability of perishing on location?
- It just *has* to be a hospital (i.e. National Health) ...' (p.322)

**AFTER OVID**

'Maximum Carnage' in

Alex Shakar, *City in Love: The New York Metamorphoses* (1996)

Ovid *Met.* 12.146-535 [Nestor narrates Caeneus/Caenis, battle of Lapiths and Centaurs]

**MAXIMUM  
CARNAGE**

(EXCERPTS)

a.

A sentor is a mutant of craven science. The top half of a sentor is the top half of a man. The bottom half is a motorcycle.

Right now the sentors are attacking P.S. 96 in Flushing, Queens.

The only one who can stop them is Roxor.

There is a girl named roxanne. It sounds like Rocks Anne. My name is Roxor. Roxor spelled backwards is roxoR. It is the perfect name. The x is safe in the middle.

SENTOR  
NESTOR

Kenny with the big head is giving his superhero report. His superhero's name is Incman.

M. 12.159-60

b. The sentors are riding around the playground. They have beards and they shout war cries and fart black smoke. They have come to kidnap the girls. They need the girls for food. On their black leather seats, they will carry the girls back to their laboratory and pump out their girl blood. Girl blood fuels their engines. In the laboratory, the girls will be pumped. Puniped and pumped.

Roxanne

The class is looking with big eyes. roxanne takes her hand away, and it lies on the desk like a dead dog.

Roxanne, Ms. Manolo is saying with her square mouth. Can I see you outside?

They start to crackup as she walks down the aisle. The talk is in the green hallway, in front of the closed door. There are thin hair wires in the door window, and thin hair shadows on the floor squares.

Roxanne, please don't think I'm punishing you. But what you were doing is not appropriate behavior in a public place. Would you like someone to talk to about it?

roxanne shakes her head.

I think it might be a good idea. Why don't you talk to our counselor, Ms. Featherbest, okay? You like Ms. Featherbest, don't you? She's very nice.

Ms. Featherbest has very nice handwriting. Like this.

*Roxanne is a very bright 10 year-old, who suffers from low self-esteem, a disturbance of the aggressive drive, and a fixation at the anal-sadistic stage.*

The playground is filled with puddles of blood. I come, but not in time to save Kenny. His big head is a big flat tire tread of flesh and red hair. The sentor who ran over Kenny's head sees me and revs his engine and charges. He charges with a lance which is a pointy pole. I am not worried. When the lance hits me in the chest it doesn't even go through my skin. Nothing can go through my skin. The lance breaks in half. And the sentor says uh-oh. And I pick up the sharp half and push it into the sentor's curly chest. And it makes a squishy sound. And when I take it out again there is a red wound. And I do it again and I make a wound inside the wound.

M.12.187-93

c. Once I was a little boy. Some say once I was a little girl but that's a lie. One day, I was walking out on the shore of Flushing Bay, walking out on a dock of wood, tossing pieces of rock into the scummy water, and I slipped. No, I didn't slip. It wasn't my fault. The old rotting wood broke and I fell like falling through a trap door. I dropped like an anchor no like a rock into the scummy contaminated water, where there was a sunken submarine from the Brooklyn Navy Yard that sunk when the Brooklyn Navy was on a secret mission to Queens. And it was radioactive and so the water was contaminated with radioactive contamination. And when I came up out of the glowing gooey water, I was Roxor, the most powerful superhero in Queens, and the whole city too.

M.12.187  
M.12.185-008

Skin like armor. Skin like rock. Nothing goes through.

d. I pick up the points of the trident, and put them into the sentor's face. I put one of the points into his forehead and it sticks there. I put the other two points into his eyeholes. The point that went into the one eyehole falls out and the eyeball is stuck to it and comes out too. The point that went into the other eyehole stays in but the eyeball gets pushed out and slides down the sentor's face, down into his beard, and it hangs there like a piece of food.

M.12.188-00

I laugh. I pull out my sausage and splash the dead sentor with piss. I piss and laugh as the piss steams off the dead ugly face.

Holy shit, his soft voice says. What do you think you're doing? You can't use that. This is the Boys room. Can't you read?

Tony stands in the doorway. He is all bright in the bright white squares.

e. roxanne goes through the gate into the kiddy park. It is full of animals. There is a horse, and a whale, and a hippopotamus, and a giraffe. They are made out of the same thing as the playground which is concrete. Yesterday, there was a little book lying on the sidewalk. It had pictures. It said once upon a time, all the animals were happy, and there was a boy and a girl, and they all lived together and played in a land with trees and grass.



Then bad things happened. But one day it will be like that again.

f.

The comic book store has millions of comics. The best one is Violator. Violator grabs the little badguy and first he takes his head and pulls it halfway off his neckbone. Then he jumps on the badguy with feet that have claws, over and over until the badguy is a shriveled up pile of skin and blood. He does it again and again until he is very tired and sweaty and drooling.



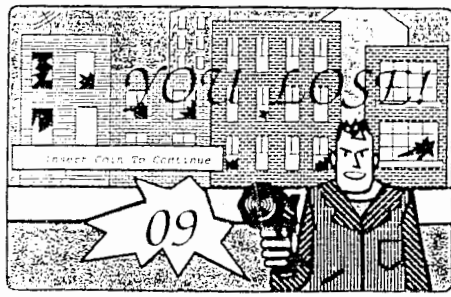
Uncle Edward has a blue anchor on his curly chest. Anchors sink but his doesn't. In the bathtub it bobs on the water.

M. 12. 195-207

f.

Everywhere in the playground there is carnage. There is blood and bodies and flames coming out of burning sensor engines. And Paul lies on the ground and his fat cheeks have been torn off and his skinny tongue is feeling around for them and he is crying. And the windy sky is red like a wound, and P.S. 96 is redder like a wound inside the wound. And there are broken windows, and there are booming noises from the guns because now the sensors have guns, and uh-oh.

M. 12. 493



That's not how you do it.

08

Let me show you.

07

The older boy presses up from behind, and his hand is reaching into his pocket and his knuckles are bony, and he puts a quarter in.

h.

Thank you, Marcus, that was very inventive. Now, Roxanne, come up and tell us about your superhero. Ms. Manolo sits straight on her seat, blinking and smiling like a commercial woman. The class is looking. Whispering.

my superhero is the greatest most powerful superhero in Queens and in the whole city

Yeah right

You hush, you've had your turn. Roxanne, louder please.

i.

Roxor! What a stupid name!

Superheroes don't change from girls to boys. You gotta have a girl superhero.

Quiet, children. It's her hero. It can be any way she wants. I know how to kill him!

Me too!

do not!

Children.

The bell rings.

j.

They are piling on, piling and piling on, shouting. We'll show you how to deal with Roxor.

There are pieces of light and playground between their arms and legs, but there is no breathing. A bony elbow. A knee. A sneaker. Hands and knuckles. They shout and crunch. They are too heavy. And the concrete is scrapey and hard and no breathing.

We got you now. We'll give it to you good.

Get the picture.

Come on Roxor, let's see your dick, let's see it.

Where is it? The picture. Come on.

Roxor's dead. Dead. Say it. Say it. Say it like you mean it.

Finish Him!

The pile stops moving.

**YOU LOSE!**

They laugh so much they never stop.

*Insert coin to continue.*

But then they stop.

09

Something rises up out of the carnage.

08

A picture and twisting words.

07

I rise into the wind and I fly.

06

And everyone looks up.

05

I circle in the circling wind.

04

I fly high above the playground.

03

So high the cement looks smooth like the sky.

02

So high the animals look like real.

01

So high that Brooklyn and Queens are the same thing.

00

M. 12. 506-9

M. 12. 522-6

sed noctem sermone trahunt, virtusque loquendi  
materia est ... (12.159-60)

(Nestor speaks)

“... at ipse olim patientem vulnera mille  
corpore non laeso Perrhaebum Caenea vidi,  
Caenea Perrhaebum, qui factis inclitus Othryn  
incoluit, quoque id mirum magis esset in illo,  
femina natus erat.” ... (12.171-5)

“... nec Caenis in ullos  
denupsit thalamos secretaque litora carpens  
aequorei vim passa dei est (ita fama ferebat),  
utque novae Veneris Neptunus gaudia cepit,  
‘sint tua vota licet’ dixit ‘secura repulsae:  
elige, quid voveas!’ (eadem hoc quoque fama ferebat)  
‘magnum’ Caenis ait ‘facit haec iniuria votum,  
tale pati iam posse nihil; da, femina ne sim:  
omnia praestiteris.’ graviore novissima dixit  
verba sono poteratque viri vox illa videri,  
sicut erat; nam iam voto deus aequoris alti  
adnuerat dederatque super, necc saucius ullis  
vulneribus fieri ferrove occumbere posset. (12.195-207)

figitur hinc duplici Gryneus in lumina ramo  
eruiturque oculos, quorum pars cornibus haeret,  
pars fluit in barbam concretaque sanguine pendet. (12.268-70)

plaga facit gemitus ut corpore marmoris icto,  
fractaque dissiluit percusso lammina callo.  
ut satis inlaesos miranti praebuit artus,  
‘nunc age’ ait Caeneus ‘nostro tua corpora ferro  
temptemus!’ capuloque tenuis demisit in armos  
ensem fatiferum caecumque in viscera movit  
versavitque manum vulnusque in vulnere fecit. (12.487-93)

‘... nos semimari superamur ab hoste!  
saxa trabesque super tososque involvite montes  
vivacemque animam missis elidite silvis!  
massa premat fauces, et erit pro vulnere pondus.’ (12.506-9)

exitus in dubio est: alii sub inania corpus  
Tartara detrusum silvarum mole ferebant;  
abnuat Ampycides medioque ex aggere fulvis  
videt avem pennis liquidas exire sub auras,  
quae mihi tum primum, tunc est conspecta supremum.” (12.522-6)