Classical Literature and Society

THE ROMAN BOOK

Rex Winsbury

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CLASSICAL LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

The Roman Book

Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome

Rex Winsbury

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Editor's Foreword

The aim of this series is to consider Greek and Roman literature primarily in relation to genre and theme. Its authors hope to break new ground in doing so but with no intention of dismissing current interpretation where this is sound; they will be more concerned to engage closely with text, subtext and context. The series therefore adopts a homologous approach in looking at classical writers, one of whose major achievements was the fashioning of distinct modes of thought and utterance in poetry and prose. This led them to create a number of literary genres evolving their own particular forms, conventions and rules – genres which live on today in contemporary culture.

Although studied within a literary tradition, these writers are also considered within their social and historical context, and the themes they explore are often both highly specific to that context and yet universal and everlasting. The ideas they conceive and formulate and the issues they debate find expression in a particular language, Latin or Greek, and belong to their particular era in the classical past. But they are also fully translatable into a form that is accessible as well as intelligible to those living in later centuries, in their own vernacular. Hence all quoted passages are rendered into clear, modern English.

These are books, then, which are equally for readers with or without knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages and with or without an acquaintance with the civilisation of the ancient world. They have plenty to offer the classical scholar, and are ideally suited to students reading for a degree in classical subjects. Yet they will interest too those studying European and contemporary literature, history and culture who wish to discover the roots and springs of our classical inheritance.

The series owes a special indebtedness and thanks to Pat Easterling, who from the start was a constant source of advice and encouragement. Others whose help has been invaluable are Robin Osborne who, if ever we were at a loss to think of an author for a particular topic, almost always came up with a suitable name or two and was never stinting of his time or opinion, and Tony Woodman, now at Virginia. The unfailing assistance of the late John W. Roberts, editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, is also gratefully acknowledged. Deborah Blake, Duckworth's indefatigable Editorial Director, has throughout offered full support, boundless enthusiasm and wise advice.

Finally, I pay tribute to the inspirational genius which Michael Gun-

ningham, *fons et origo* of the series and an editor of consummate skill and phenomenal energy, brought to the enterprise. His imprint is everywhere: *sine quo, non*.

David Taylor

Preface

Having spent the majority of my working career in the UK publishing industry (newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books), I became drawn to the idea of trying to apply this direct experience of contemporary publishing to books and book publishing in the era of classical Rome and its two centuries of greatest literary productivity. How did they do it? Even allowing for my long-neglected classical education at Oxford University, it proved a more daunting task than I had ever expected to sort out reality from illusion.

I am deeply indebted to the staff and facilities of Birkbeck College, London, for enabling me to tackle this task, originally undertaken as a PhD thesis, but in particular, to Professor Catharine Edwards, whose creative advice and just criticisms kept the adrenalin flowing. I am also most grateful to Professor Greg Woolf and to Professor William Fitzgerald for their acute questions and thoughtful suggestions, and to Dr Martin Hall for his subtle reading of my text. I am also much indebted to the staff and facilities of the library of the Institute of Classical Studies in London.

R.W.

Graffiti and other sayings

Amat qui scribet, pedicatur qui leget.
Qui obscultat prurit, paticus est qui praeterit.
Ursi me comedant et ego verpa qui lego

The writer's the lover, the reader gets shafted.
If you mock this, you're turned on: if you rub it out, you're stuffed.
Damn me [lit: the bears can eat me] if I'm not a prick for reading this.

Admiror, O paries, te non cecidisse ruinis
Qui tot scriptorum taedia sustineas

I admire you, O wall, for not falling into ruins
When you have to carry so many tedious writings.[1]

Prometheus: 'I invented the combining of letters to be an instrument of memory for everything.'[2]

Tu causa es, lector amice
It's all your fault, dear reader.[3]

[1]Two graffiti found at Pompeii. The first one is repeated at *CIL* 4.2360 and 4008, and elsewhere; the second one at *CIL* 4.2461, 2487 and 1904. Exact wording differs between instances. My tentative translation. The correct reading of the second word of line 2 of the first graffito is problematic. *CIL* suggests it means *insultat* – 'mocks'. To make sense, I think it must have a sexual meaning, perhaps a connection to *osculum* – a kiss. Line 3 may have a pun on *verpa/verba*, given that the whole graffito is a bluntly (homo)sexual (if satirical) metaphor for the writer-reader relationship. In the second graffito, *taedia* is sometimes rendered 'disgusting', but I suggest that this betrays an agenda, and prefer 'tedious'. For sexual metaphors for the writer-reader relation in the classical world, see J. Svenbro, *Phrasiklea: an Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (Cornell, 1993). The punctuation given is modern. The original graffiti contain only interpuncts, dots between (not all) words. For the significance of this, see Chapter 3 on punctuation (lack of).

[2]Aeschylus *Prometheus Unbound* 460.

[3]Martial 5.16.2.

Introduction

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1

Myths and anachronisms: the need for a new look at Roman publishing

What exactly was a 'book' in the glory days of Latin literature? We may think we know the answer to that deceptively simple question. But perhaps we do not. The roll-call of famous Roman authors runs from Cicero to Ovid to Virgil: from Catullus to Julius Caesar to Tacitus and many more: poets and historians, letter writers and philosophers, dramatists and orators, generals and (sometimes) slaves. The language they fashioned lies at or near the heart of several of today's global languages, such as Spanish, French, Portuguese, English and of course Italian. The literature they created, or that fraction of it that survived the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, has for centuries exercised a profound influence on European and Western culture. The alphabet that the Romans developed became the foundation for writing systems all over the globe, and its use continues to spread with the march of the computer and the use of English as the computer's main (though not exclusive) *lingua franca*. One author writes:

> of all the human devices described in the pages of history, no conception can be compared, even remotely, with the Roman alphabet. Its influence on the path of history is beyond description. To consider its advance across the length of 20 centuries is to study the course of a great river … few nations can be found in the twentieth century in which the Roman alphabet is not seen along the streets and sidewalks.[1]

The use of the Roman calendar to measure time also continues to spread across our world. In those ways, the expansion of the Roman Empire continues to this day, as unstoppable as it ever was in the days of Rome's military might two millennia ago.

And yet the question remains – what exactly was a 'book' in those extraordinary days of classical Rome? Why did a Roman book look as it did at that time? How were books made and written, by whom, and why? How were they circulated, used and absorbed by their readers and users? Indeed, who exactly were the 'writers' and the 'readers' of those times? How did books function in an era of low rates of literacy? What was the place of books in Rome's acutely class-conscious society, and in Rome's uneasy political autocracy? What role did books play in the Roman Empire at large and in its astonishing (but not infinite) powers of survival? What

role did they play in the gathering religious battle between 'pagan' and Christian?

Classical Rome may be defined for this purpose as that period of political tumult and social change lasting between (roughly) 80 BCE to 170 CE which saw the end of the older republican oligarchic system of government at Rome and the transition to, and bedding down of, the autocratic imperial regime that then survived, more or less, until the fifth century CE and beyond. The focus of this investigation is deliberately (but not exclusively) on the Latin-speaking (and writing) western half of the empire during the period of its greatest literary productivity, from about the time when Catullus and Sallust were writing around the middle of the first century BCE to roughly the time of Aulius Gellius and Fronto (lived *c.* 100-166 CE) and the latter's correspondence with Marcus Aurelius (emperor 161-180 CE). In that hey-day of Latin literature, lasting about 200 years, when most of the authors who created the canon of Latin literature were composing, what was it like to be an author?

Even at first glance, the circumstances and means by which Roman authors wrote and distributed their works must have been profoundly different from today, their methods and material and manpower profoundly alien to today's organised and mainly commercialised publishing industry based upon high technology and mass, even global, distribution and readerships. But those deep differences between publishing then and publishing now have often been misunderstood and misrepresented in many (though not all) of the standard commentaries on Roman books and book publishing published over the past century or more.[2] The vivid realities of this aspect of Roman life and manners have been muted and obscured by generations of scholars who have mis-read the (admittedly very scrappy) evidence.[3] Indeed, the history of this particular segment of historiography is riddled with anachronisms, and is an object lesson for all historians of any period or region about how the insistent present can condition perceptions of the distant past, and about how conventional wisdom, once established, can be perpetuated from one book to another, one scholar to another, one generation to another, over many decades – however misguided.

So what did the Romans do when they did what we today would call 'publishing'? In this study, I argue that in a profoundly but not exclusively oral society like Rome a text functioned quite differently from today's texts: that Roman literary activity cannot be understood without first understanding the pivotal and unique importance of slaves and slavery as the 'enabling infrastructure' of Roman literature and creativity: and that Roman books, once properly described, take their rightful place at the centre of the Roman political and social system (not always to the advantage of their authors) and throw new light upon the age-old question about the relation between elite and popular culture and between the nobs and the plebs of Rome.

I discuss and reassess the materials used by Roman writers, the procedures by which they created works, the means by which such works were publicised and distributed, and the reception and use of such works by Roman readers and other 'users' – in short, those physical items and practical steps by which the Romans accomplished that cycle of events that today would be characterised as the writer-publisher-printer-distributor-bookseller-reader chain of interlocking processes, loosely referred to as 'the publishing business'. In that, I include the role of bookshops and libraries. I then reassess the broader cultural and social context within which Roman book publishing took place, and seek to explain how books could be *both* iconic items of elite self-definition (and at times pawns in elite political power struggles), *and* mass-appeal items of popular entertainment and cultural connection across classes through the agency of the Roman theatre. Such a broad survey has not been carried out in recent times, and is needed in order to re-position the Roman book in its full and rightful context.

The gender gap

One regrettable gap, however, is that all but two of the Roman writers we know of in this period were male. The two exceptions were both called Sulpicia, the first of whom wrote the only surviving poems by a woman from the classical era, preserved in the Tibullus collection dating to about 40-20 BCE, the other of whom wrote love poems to her husband in the time of Domitian.[4] There is better evidence that some women were fully literate and were or could be readers of books and users of writing. The proof of this is, for example, the frescoes from Pompeii depicting women holding pens and notebooks – see the illustrations to this book – and Martial's teasing discussions in his epigrams about when his writings were or were not suitable for respectable women to read. But overall it is likely that only a very small minority of women were able to read and write.[5] So there is no gender dimension to this survey, except in the context of the Roman theatre and in the general likelihood that among the user/readers of Roman books there were some women.

The differences then and now

Sadly, no complete Roman book scrolls have survived, although many thousands of fragments have been found and published. So the starting point for this reassessment must be that, even *prima facie*, and despite the limited evidence, the conditions governing 'publishing' in Rome times were radically different from the conditions of today. The more obvious differences are:

1. There was no printing industry in Europe in those times, no method of mechanical reproduction of texts. Printing came to Western Europe in

the fifteenth century CE, a thousand years or more after the end of the Roman period we are discussing.

2. Paper as we now know it was not yet invented or at any rate not yet used in Europe. It too lay many hundreds of years into the future, with origins in China, arriving in Europe via the Muslim Arabs in the thirteenth century.[6]

3. The literacy rate was low – how low is a much-discussed question and subject to matters of definition of literacy, but the immediate 'market' for written products was thereby severely restricted.[7]

4. The modern book, defined as the codex format in which pages are joined together along the left hand edge of the closed book and then turned over from right to left to enable continuous reading of texts on both sides of the page, did not come into common use until towards the end of the Roman imperial period. This late adoption of the codex format is germane to our investigation, but mainly for the questions that it raises about the format (the scroll or book roll, in Latin the *volumen*) used in the earlier period defined above.

5. Punctuation, though not unknown, was unusual, inconsistent, and by today's standards rudimentary.[8] Also, from early in the second century CE, Roman texts, like Greek texts, were normally (as far as surviving manuscripts can tell us) written without breaks or gaps between the words. Texts were just a river of letters. Systems of complex punctuation, such as we now use, came much later, in the first instance as an aid to proper exposition of Christian holy texts and then as an aid – one might say, an indispensable and taken-for-granted aid – to reading today.

6. Given the characteristics of the Roman book roll made from papyrus, which was the dominant medium for written texts in the Mediterranean world at that time, there were no page numbers, index, or footnotes. Finding things inside a text must have been difficult, nor would it have been easy for an author to tell a reader where to locate a fact or reference. And there were no pictures (because hard and tedious to copy by hand) except perhaps in certain works for popular reading, and in certain special copies of major writers.[9]

7. Romans did not have reading glasses as an aid to failing eyesight.[10] One must presume that for older persons, even if they knew how to read, reading may have been physically difficult, and if that is true, writing must also have been difficult for them. Who exactly the 'readers' and 'writers' were in that age becomes a key question in this study, for this among many other reasons, both physical (lack of reading glasses, poor light from oil lamps) and social (slaves as instrumental extensions of self).

8. There was no copyright law, no way of establishing intellectual property rights, and no way (except perhaps by public exposure of an offender for all to mock) of preventing piracy and plagiarism. In the absence of any legal framework, a Roman author had little or no control over how many copies of his work were made, or by whom, or over the

quality of those copies. Thus it came about that there were often many variants in circulation of a given work, and it was increasingly difficult to establish what the original text, the autograph, actually said. What was the authentic text? That became a major preoccupation (then and now) of grammarians and antiquarians, and sometimes of the author himself.[11]

9. Little money, if any, came the author's way as direct payment for his efforts: although some have thought the contrary, there is no firm evidence of fees being paid for 'rights' of reproduction or distribution.

All in all, it is evident from the start that the classical Roman 'book' must have been a very different animal from the book as we know it today, or even from the book as known and used in medieval times. Being an author and being a reader must also have been very different – a world away from today's mass production of books and other printed products for mass readerships. That being so, specific questions about Roman books and book publishing must be re-assessed, such as:

(1) Was the scroll or book-roll, the standard Roman book format, inherently inferior to the codex format which later displaced it and which has been the normal book format ever since?

(2) Was papyrus, the standard material of the scroll, inherently inferior to parchment or paper?

(3) Why did the Romans largely ignore or reject punctuation?

(4) Who were the scribes and what did they do?

(5) What constituted 'publication', and how and where did reader/users get copies?

(6) What was the interplay between Roman high culture, expressed above all in and by books, and Roman popular culture, expressed above all in the theatre and on the street corner?

It will quickly be seen that, in my view, the Roman scroll and its material, papyrus, and the way text was presented on the scroll, have in the past been unfairly denigrated as inferior to the codex format and to vellum or paper, inferior to modern forms of text presentation, and as at best a product of unthinking Roman conservatism or cultural snobbery. I shall argue that, on the contrary, a proper appreciation of the Roman scroll is crucial to any understanding of Roman high culture, and indirectly of Roman popular culture as well.

Misreading the evidence

The problem to be confronted is that many prominent scholars of the nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first centuries fell into the trap of reading into the surviving evidence about 'publishing' in Rome things that modern publishing practices might lead the unwary to regard as reason-

able, but which were simply not there. There was developed, originally but not only by German scholars, a comprehensively worked-out picture of how 'publishing' was alleged to take place in classical Rome. It became the accepted wisdom or reference point for many if not most commentators of that and following generations. The influence of that misconceived reconstruction of this aspect of Roman life and literature has cast a long shadow that still persists among some writers today. This traditional picture has come under criticism, and valuable if partial suggestions have been made about its replacement, and are fully acknowledged in this study. But no comprehensive reappraisal of the literary evidence for Rome's publishing scene has been made, and that is what I try to accomplish.

The anti-hero of this story is the German scholar Theodor Birt, whose 1882 book *Das Buchwesen in der Antike* (The Nature of the Book in the Ancient World) is, according to James Zetzel, 'one of the extreme expressions of anachronistic thought'[12] – a blunt verdict with which I agree, even though there were in fact several generations of scholars around and after that time, notably but not only in Germany, who thought in similar terms.[13] In a nutshell, these scholars thought that they could espy, in and behind the terminology which the Romans themselves used to refer to their 'publishing' activities, a process or set of processes closely akin to what happens today in modern publishing. This anachronistic picture is not a mere historiographical curiosity. Despite its age, Birt's book still remains a standard work, and some at least of its assumptions still prevail. For convenience, I refer to the picture of Roman publishing built up by Birt and those who have over a long period of time followed his lead as 'the Birt scenario', which remains influential to this day.

In fairness to those authors, it must be said that the time at which Birt and others wrote, the late nineteenth century, was itself a time of great ferment and technological change in the printing and publishing industry in Europe and America, a process in which Germany played a leading part. Mechanical setting of type was revolutionised and printing presses made much faster, paving the way for mass distribution of newspapers and books. Germany became, and remains, a centre of expertise in printing processes. So it is at least explicable how scholars of that time, German scholars in particular, came to have contemporary publishing practices in the forefront of their minds. There may also have been a broader cultural reason – that in the age of German Romanticism it may have added prestige to contemporary practices to be seen to be the same as those of the glorious past of Rome.

The Birt scenario

The following is a consolidated but, I hope, fair summary of the 'Birt scenario'. In classical Rome there was (according to this scenario) a publishing industry not dissimilar to today's publishing industry, appeal

to which can help to clarify and explain what the Romans did. Thus the terminology characteristic of modern publishing can be properly used to describe Roman publishing and to translate relevant Roman terminology and texts. In the Roman publishing industry there were (allegedly) 'publishers' such as Cicero's friend Atticus active in the commercial production and distribution of books. Booksellers, of which there were many in Rome[14] and in the major Italian and provincial cities,[15] might also act as publishers,[16] and develop special relations of exclusivity and payment terms with particular authors.[17] The 'lump sum' paid to authors by publisher-booksellers for the 'right' to copy and distribute became a salient item of this re-creation of Roman publishing.[18]

To get round the obvious problem that the Romans did not have mechanical means of mass-producing copies of books (i.e. printing) there were said to be teams of skilled literate slaves who copied out large numbers of copies of a new work to meet reader demand. They acted as virtual factories, copying down the new text as dictated to them by a single reader, one reader to a roomful of copyists, as happened in the monasteries of the middle ages.[19] Or was it, in an age when people generally did not read silently but out loud, all done by 'self-dictation' by a slave-scribe reading aloud to himself while copying? There was much debate on this question of procedure. Within this factory process, there were, it was said, proofreaders to check on the accuracy of texts, both those submitted to the publisher by the author and those produced by the copyists.[20] These copyists may have been paid, either by piecework or by timework.[21] These Roman copying factories were said to be analogous to the *scriptoria* that developed in the medieval monasteries to reproduce religious and other texts[22] and were made necessary by the great public demand from readers for quick copies of new works.

Based on a reference made by the elder Pliny,[23] some scholars also believed that there were papyrus factories in Rome itself to help meet this demand. (In fact, as tests have shown,[24] the papyrus pith dries out too quickly to be transported from Egypt as far as Rome and still be usable). Behind this picture of 'insistent demand' requiring mass-production, lay a rosy if largely unspoken mental picture of Rome at its apogee as a place where literature flourished and books and bookshops were to be found everywhere that mattered across the empire[25] – a literary quasi-paradise inhabited by a highly literate society in which most people, or at least most citizens, could and did read. As we shall see, it was not like that at all.

The problem of terminology

Understandably, translators of and commentators on 'the classics' have tended to use the publishing vocabulary of today in an effort to make the ancient world intelligible to modern audiences, without in many cases making it clear that these modern terms are at best an approximation, at

worst a distortion, of what happened at Rome. Along with the 'Birt Scenario', ideally the whole apparatus of words associated with the modern publishing business ought to be jettisoned when discussing classical Rome, because that terminology brings with it an interlocking set of assumptions, presumptions and expectations, sometimes unacknowledged, that are not true of the ancient world.

There is, however, a real dilemma, in that it is very hard to neutralise the vocabulary used to discuss 'books' at Rome without becoming virtually unintelligible. In trying to re-describe Roman 'books' and 'publishing' in a way that is both more consistent with the evidence and more exciting as a challenge to the historical imagination, one is caught between Scylla and Charybdis – the Scylla of anachronism and the Charybdis of incomprehensibility. It is virtually impossible not to use modern terminology in trying to reconstruct what actually went on, and by whom. While this is a tribute to the sheer durability of the Latin language and its modern derivatives that make up most of the language of contemporary publishing (author, composition, dictation, editor, edition, publication, distribution, library, etc.) it adds to the problem of understanding already created by the sparsity and random nature of the evidence. It means that these terms, where used, must be understood in the strictly Roman senses set out in these chapters.

'Literature' may be an especially dangerous word since it brings with it a large modern penumbra of associations about what 'literature' is – the presumption that it consists of a set of written books, its social and cultural status, its expectations about creative traditions, goals and standards, its role in defining a language or a political entity like a nation state, its association with intellectual achievement and 'civilisation', its assumption of a unified cultural phenomenon called 'literature' – associations that may or may not apply to classical Rome, where a different set of associations may have been at work.[26] It is therefore important to work out what the Romans meant by the terminology that they actually *did* use when talking about the creation and distribution of their works. Indeed, examination of the Latin terminology becomes an integral part of trying to discern an alternative and more authentic model of how and why texts were created, and how they were used and distributed, and why and where.

A key concept which will inform this investigation and, it is hoped, unite all the related elements, is that there was a subtle and complex relationship and interplay in the Roman world between the written and the spoken, an interplay that was akin to, but not the same as, the similar cultural relationship which existed in classical Greece, but which is alien to the modern use of the book. It is in the verbal interplay and oral presentation that underpinned both the creation of a text and its subsequent 'reading', and in the creative interaction this set off between written text and spoken word, that the true functionality of the Roman 'book' can be best understood. This oral context is not too difficult to

visualise for poetry. There has always been and still is, though less so, a close connection between poetry and public poetry reading, between poetry and the stage, between poetry and song. Plays by definition are texts made as mechanisms for creating sounds – the actors' voices. But it is not so obviously appropriate (to us, anyway) when the texts under discussion are those lengthy prose texts of the great classical historians such as Livy or Tacitus. One aim of this investigation is to assert the relevance of this oral context to these chunky prose texts also.

Recitatio and *Romanitas*[27]

Books at Rome had a variety of functions, as cultural and social status signifiers and markers of elite aspirations, as potential memorials to a man's existence in a society with little belief in an after-life, as items in a private or state library, as prestige artefacts, as gifts in a gift-exchange culture. But this investigation will in particular place the *recitatio*, the semi-public reading of a new literary work, at the epicentre of the Roman version of 'publishing', while acknowledging that both in composition and in distribution of literary works there was a characteristically Roman iteration between written and spoken. It then moves on to a discussion of why many Roman authors had to tread softly round the personality of the Roman emperor, and how Roman 'books' trickled down to the man (and woman?) in the street via the theatre, with implications for our notions of Roman identity and debates about *Romanitas* – being Roman. In broad terms, the plan of this book is, in the first section, to establish and discuss the manufacture, format and aesthetics of a Roman 'book', and their merits and demerits. The second section discusses the myths and realities around 'publishers', bookshops and libraries at Rome. The third section takes a close look at the terms used by the Romans themselves to describe their activities, to see how this terminology paints a truer picture of what they did, including their reliance on slaves. The fourth section widens the perspective in order to place the Roman 'book' within the context of a primarily oral society. The fifth takes a darker tone and explores the many hazards that Roman 'books' and authors had to endure and survive (or not). The final section paints the social and cultural landscape into which Roman 'books' fitted, and which is itself illuminated by a better understanding of Roman 'publishing'. The objective is to construct a new picture of both the practicalities and the sociology of Roman publishing that is as rounded as the limited evidence allows. This will help to explain why and what the Romans did when they did what we today would call 'publishing', in accordance with their own, very different, scale of literary, social and political values and traditions – and in accordance with the raw materials, people skills and means of distribution available to them.

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What was the Roman book?

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2

Format wars: scroll v. codex, papyrus v. parchment, pagan v. Christian

As a physical object, the Roman 'book' was a papyrus scroll, referred to in Latin as a *volumen*. The scroll, or book-roll, was the bulk-standard medium for writing all over the ancient Mediterranean world, inside or outside the Roman territories, and therefore of prime cultural and practical importance in all societies of that richly endowed area.[1] Papyrus had provided a writing material dating back to the earliest millennia of Egyptian history. Indeed, in Egypt papyrus was in continuous use for about 4,000 years, from *c.* 3000 BCE to *c.* 1000 CE: regular manufacture ceased around the end of the eleventh century.[2] Only towards the end of the Western Roman Empire was the scroll format itself substantially displaced by the codex format that is the basis of the modern book. The Romans did use other writing vehicles for certain purposes, such as linen,[3] ivory,[4] waxed tablets or notebooks using a sharp-ended stylus to incise letters into the wax,[5] and post-card sized slivers of wood.[6] But for all the period we are interested in, roughly the 200 years during which Rome produced its most admired literature, papyrus 'paper' and the scroll made from it remained the dominant carrier for texts of any length or cultural pretension, as well as for administration, law, and the processes of government. Papyrus was therefore *a* or *the* fundamental instrument for learning and literature, perhaps indeed of civilisation itself. The elder Pliny, having described the process of papyrus manufacture, declared that

> in the use of this material [papyrus] the culture and history of mankind are pre-eminently embodied.[7]

Nor did the use of papyrus die out quickly once the codex made of parchment became the norm. As late as the sixth century, the emperor Justinian's law codes were distributed on papyrus as well as on parchment,[8] and there is an example of the 'hybrid' papyrus codex carrying works by St Augustine that dates to the seventh or eighth centuries.[9] Indeed, papyrus continued in use for centuries after the decline of the Western Roman Empire.[10] The word 'papyrus' is of course the root of the modern English word 'paper' and its equivalents in some other languages.[11]

But in discussion of the Roman equivalent of a 'book', especially as a vehicle for literary or learned texts, there has been a frequent if not always

explicit assumption that the later codex book format, with vellum or (today) paper as its main material, is *and in principle always was* intrinsically superior to the papyrus scroll. The scroll could after all be bulky (the diameter of a wine-bottle for a standard 10-metre roll[12]), fragile, difficult to handle, hard to search for facts or references, and even more so because of the absence of systematic punctuation or (in the later part of the period) even breaks between words. There were no pages in a scroll, no page numbers, and no chapter headings or other reader aids that we nowadays take for granted. There was therefore no way of referencing or cross-referencing the contents of a Roman book.

So the question has been posed – why did the Romans retain for so long a book format that seems to many today to be so comparatively impractical? Were the Romans just obtuse, or at best retrogressively conservative, in retaining for centuries the allegedly 'impractical' papyrus scroll as their standard carrier of literary and many non-literary writings? Why did the Romans of the time not adopt the codex format, on papyrus or on another medium, when (as the evidence seems to show) they knew perfectly well that there were alternatives to both the physical medium, papyrus, and to the format, the scroll?

The reason is, I maintain, that papyrus was not in fact inherently and markedly inferior to parchment, or indeed to paper, as a vehicle for texts used in large quantities, and that the scroll was not inherently and markedly inferior to the codex as a format for 'books'. If the Romans were well aware, at least from the end of the first century CE, of the codex format as an alternative to the scroll, and of parchment as an alternative material to papyrus, but chose to retain the papyrus scroll, it was because by cultural choice they liked and valued the scroll just as it was – so much so that they did not even feel the need to develop the papyrus scroll to the full potential of which it was capable. To understand this, and to begin to rebuild an authentic picture of the Roman book world, we need to go back to basics, starting with the physical properties of the scroll.

The scroll as cultural artefact

The Roman scroll or book-roll[13] was made from glued-together sheets of papyrus made from the papyrus water-plant that grew only in Egypt. It was rolled up at both ends onto two wooden rods or rollers, thus requiring both hands to unroll, read it, and (with the left hand) re-roll the part already perused or not wanted. There were knobs at the two ends of the rod by which to roll/unroll the scroll, which were often colourful, as befits a prestige object.[14] There was a blank sheet of papyrus at the beginning and end of the best-made scrolls, to help preserve them from wear and tear.[15] The final sheet could also carry an end-title of the book,[16] while the author himself might start his text with words that acted as a front title page, so that readers at both ends of the scroll knew what they were

reading. The better or presentation copies were kept inside elegant cylindrical wrappers or covers[17] made of leather or cloth, possibly in purple,[18] with a colourful identity label or title-tag attached,[19] and put on shelves or in leather book boxes a bit like capacious umbrella stands.[20]

Scrolls could be long – but how long? The longest surviving (Egyptian) scroll is over 43 metres in length.[21] The general opinion has been that the typical Roman scroll was about 10 metres long. However, Johnson's work on the Oxyrhynchus fragments suggests that the 'normative range' may have been more like 3 to 15 metres.[22] This has occasioned much argument[23] about the elder Pliny's statement[24] that there were never more than 20 papyrus sheets to a *scapus*. What was a *scapus*? Some have interpreted it as meaning the scroll itself, and then pointed out that Pliny apparently did not know what he was talking about,[25] since 20 papyrus sheets of average size would make a roll of only some 5 metres in length, which seems to be contradicted by the evidence. Was Pliny too credulous of his sources, or did he fail to observe the characteristics of the very medium to which he committed the huge number of books[26] that he churned out so diligently, including the very one that tells us about papyrus? Or did he just mean 'most commonly available size' of roll as placed on the market?[27]

The simplest translation of *scapus* is 'stalk',[28] and since Pliny is talking about the production process, it is perfectly possible that he is saying that one papyrus stalk cannot yield more than, or usually yields, 20 usable sheets. I see no reason why Pliny should not be giving us accurate detail about the manufacture and sale of papyrus 'paper'. It was a simple standard unit of the primary stage of manufacture,[29] which could translate during secondary manufacture by the purchaser into any numbers of individual sheets or lengths of rolls, by cutting up or pasting together.

The manufacture of papyrus

It is the elder Pliny in his *Natural History* who gives us the classic account of the making of papyrus paper in his day.[30] To summarise Pliny – the stalk, or pith, of the tall papyrus plant[31] was separated into long thin flat strips.[32] These strips of fibre were made into large sheets of 'paper' by laying one set of strips left-to-right on top of another set of fibres running top-to-bottom, then sticking them together to make a solid sheet. Pliny says that Nile water was itself gummy enough to stick the fibres together as the sheets were put through some sort of press: others doubt this, and argue that some sort of gum must have been used.[33]

These large primary sheets could then be cut into individual sheets of a usable and regular size and either left as separate sheets, or stuck together end-to-end to form a scroll or roll. The inner surface was smoothed by rubbing with a pumice stone or, says Pliny, by beating with a mallet. Pliny also tells us that, just as there are different grades of paper today, there were different grades of papyrus paper, with different 'brand

names', depending on which of the papyrus fibres were used – outer or inner, coarser or finer. The coarsest grade might also be used as wrapping paper by shopkeepers. But the better stuff, with ends neatly squared off, was valued for 'fineness, firmness, whiteness and smoothness'[34] and provided a carrier of greater or lesser prestige both for any writings with literary and social ambitions, and for the routine administration and public and private record keeping of the empire.

The qualities of papyrus

Papyrus 'paper' made in this way has been criticised for its vulnerability. It was, say its critics, inherently fragile.[35] It could discolour, be torn, be subject to damp, mould and worm,[36] be eaten by mice or other rodents, get burnt in a fire. A Roman library, without fire alarms or sprinklers, must have been a major fire hazard. Libraries were indeed regularly, and tragically, burnt down. But all the same comments can be made equally forcefully about modern paper, which is reliant on wood pulp, or in some cases certain types of grass, with a chemical admixture, and can easily be torn, discoloured, used as nesting material by mice, rotted by damp, burnt in fires. Modern paper's compensating advantages are cheapness, ubiquity, flexibility, clarity of text presentation – and the ease with which (perhaps to the detriment of the environment) it can be discarded. Can the same be said about Roman papyrus 'paper'? I suggest that it can. Papyrus 'paper' had just the same advantages of ubiquity, clarity and (for those who mattered) cheapness, and vulnerability to fire, damp and mice could up to a point be countered by careful storage and by treating the papyrus with cedar oil.[37] But the main point is that this vulnerability, while real, is no more to be considered a fatal objection to papyrus that it is to modern paper.

The papyrus accepted Roman ink (made from blocks of soot or lampblack mixed with gum, or gall nuts and iron vitriol, then moistened with water[38]) perfectly well, and the physical 'marks on paper' made by the *calamus* or reed pen, i.e. letters and numbers, have survived the centuries without much fading provided only that the scroll itself has survived.[39] Nor is it necessarily true that papyrus 'paper' naturally degraded and self-destructed. The papyrus 'paper' itself can, in the right conditions, survive for enormous periods of time, as witnessed both by Roman writers,[40] and by the (few) surviving papyrus writings dating back to the third century, and by the everyday documents discarded into the rubbish dumps of Roman Egypt,[41] where the extreme dryness of the climate has preserved them for many centuries for the curious gaze of posterity. It may be true that parchment of good quality is the finest writing material ever devised.[42] But papyrus paper, like modern paper, was a mass medium by contemporary Roman standards, something that lent itself to common use for a wide variety of applications, in different grades of quality. Parchment was not that, either in Roman times or thereafter.

The overall picture that presents itself is therefore one of the great utility of papyrus 'paper' (as indeed of papyrus in other uses), lasting over a long period of history, akin to the utility of modern paper, with no inherent presumption that it was an inferior medium at the technical level. In my judgement, there is nothing about the properties of papyrus that makes it obviously undesirable as a medium for writing, even if you accept modern paper as the comparator. Significantly, while complaints about the quality of copying are frequent among Roman authors, complaints about the quality or price of papyrus 'paper' are non-existent.

> It seems fair to conclude that the papyrus produced in the ancient factories had, and retained for years and years, the following qualities: it was white (or slightly coloured), flexible, and durable, and its surface was shiny and smooth. It was not for lack of these qualities that papyrus gave way to parchment and paper, but because these other materials were better able, with the passage of time, to meet the needs and conditions of different times and places for written and eventually the printed word.[43]

I return to the 'needs and conditions of different times and places' later in this chapter.

The cost and economics of papyrus

Established Egyptian, Greek, and Roman trade routes would have carried made-up papyrus from Egypt to wherever there was a demand, especially when the Roman imperial regime, by controlling piracy,[44] had made the Mediterranean safer for long-distance sea transport than it had been before or was ever to be for centuries thereafter. Merchant ships could have carried not only wine, corn and olive oil, slaves and horses, for which there is abundant evidence from sunken ships as well as the written record, but also papyrus rolls, which would have rotted and so left no trace in shipwrecks. So there can be little doubt that, given its centuries of use in the Graeco-Roman world, papyrus was as ubiquitous as would-be writers on it. Its flexibility is demonstrated by the varieties of uses to which papyrus 'paper' was put – not just literary and learned works of all kinds, but practical documents of all kinds, particularly relating to imperial administration and taxation.

Did this mean that papyrus was cheap – or expensive? Or did (as some argue[45]) the increasing efficiency of production drive down the price over time? 'Cheapness' is a relative and subjective term whose meaning depends on relative and comparative costs and prices, disposable incomes, and the price of alternative goods. We have scant evidence about any of these aspects for the Roman Empire. For the price of parchment, we have a figure in Diocletian's famous edict on prices of 301 CE.[46] But unfortunately the equivalent entry for papyrus is virtually lost. Even then, these

figures would have been after the massive inflation that is thought to have hit the Roman world in the later third century, and so give little indication of prices before that. Lewis says,[47] in a summary of what evidence there is for Egypt, that

> during most of classical antiquity, a roll of papyrus cost the equivalent of one or two days' wages, and it could run as high as what the labourer would earn in 5 or 6 days … The Egyptian peasant who paid 200 drachmas for a simple abode was surely not buying papyrus rolls at 2 or 3 or 4 drachmas apiece … But to the villager who paid 3 or 4 or 6 thousand drachmas in costs for his house, such papyrus prices could hardly have loomed large.

For even richer people, such papyrus costs would have been mere petty cash. Much the same picture could have held true for Rome and elsewhere, but still gives little idea of exactly where in the social pyramid affordability set in, and so how big the 'customer base' was. There is some, though scant and disputable, evidence about the shop price of 'books' (i.e. scrolls) for sale in Rome, but this again tells us little or nothing about the price at which the scribe or copyist/bookseller in Rome bought in his materials. But it seems safe, if speculative, to say that papyrus 'paper' would not have been ubiquitous for so long if it had been unaffordable to the people who needed to use it, even if the local market price in, say, Rome or Marseilles (Massilia) could have been itself a limitation on the number of those users. Moreover, given the immense comparative wealth both of the upper classes of the Roman Empire – the sort of people who wrote and read things – and of the emperor and his imperial administration – the sort of people who kept records – it would be surprising if the price of papyrus 'paper' was anything other than a trivial item, not least because the imperial regime was in a position to manipulate that price if they chose to do so, through command of the source of supply. In any case, the main cost of a literary papyrus probably lay in the cost of paying a good scribe to write the text, rather than in the cost of the material itself, at least as and when such scribes ceased to be slaves and became a paid profession. Such professional scribes were paid by the quality of their output. Diocletian's Edict on Prices also deals with scribes' wages[48]. It says:

> To a scribe for best writing, 100 lines, 25 denarii
> For a second quality writing, 100 lines, 20 denarii
> To a notary, for writing a petition or legal document, 100 lines, 10 denarii

For such high cost writing, space was liberally used to aid presentation,[49] also suggesting that the cost of the papyrus material was not an issue for those (presumably better-off) people who commissioned such copies.

Comparative cost of vellum

It is also relevant to this discussion of papyrus that the vellum/parchment which eventually displaced papyrus paper could not have been cheap to make. Discussion of the cost of production of vellum is bedevilled by confusion between leather and vellum. Both are animal skins, but real vellum requires much more treatment in cleaning, tanning, stretching and smoothing.[50] However, it has been calculated that a spring lamb, reckoned to provide the best quality skin for vellum, would yield a writing surface of only 30 x 60 centimetres, although older animals would produce much larger, but poorer quality, sheets. Nevertheless, a long roll or big codex would require the slaughter of many animals – hardly cheap. Even if these lambs were to be slaughtered anyway for food, the cost of treating the skins would have kept the cost of vellum high. So it is not obvious that papyrus 'paper' could be replaced as a mass medium by vellum purely on cost grounds.

But was the overall cost of the scroll itself too high by comparison? Cavallo argues that books in codex format were easier to make, so this shortened the production process and encouraging book circulation. The fact that the page could be written on both sides meant that putting out a given text in codex form made a big saving of space, he argues, thus lowering per copy costs in comparison with the scroll.[51] But to the contrary, parchment books in the codex format were produced on a much smaller scale than the scroll, so per-copy costs (even if that concept is valid for Rome) would have been higher. The papyrus scroll was also very easy, and so cheap, to make. Having purchased or received some basic 20-sheet rolls, the scribe only needed as equipment only a pen, ink, sponge,[52] knife and glue – and he was in business.[53] A basic scroll would also have been easier to lengthen or shorten than a papyrus codex, with its requirement for binding at the spine. So it is hard to believe that comparative costs were a serious factor in the eventual displacement of papyrus scroll by parchment codex. We have to look elsewhere for the reasons.

The scroll versus the codex

Since the codex 'won', and history is written by (and, in this case, on) the winner, it is not difficult to list certain things which you can indeed do with the codex which you could not, allegedly, do with the scroll. It is important, in this context, to separate the advantages of the codex as first used in the later Roman Empire, from those further advantages conferred upon the codex many centuries later by mechanical methods of printing. Moreover, it is easy to impute to the codex advantages – and to the scroll the corresponding disadvantages – which probably had little to do with technical formats and everything to do with cultural choices by writers, scribes and others about preferred methods of written presentation.

Take, as an example, page numbers. No modern book is without page numbers, and the codex book format lends itself to clear page numbering. The objectives are ease of reference and consistency of presentation between any two copies of the same book. The scroll did not have pages, and therefore no page numbering as such. This may partly explain why Roman historians and other writers did so little research (by our standards) – it was devilishly difficult to find anything. But this picture is not complete. In the age of manual copying, before mechanical reproduction, it was just as easy to have two copies of a work in codex format that differed in their page lengths and therefore page distribution, as it was to have two scrolls of the same work that differed from each other, and for the same reasons. The crucial difference must have come with the cultural and religious *need* to have consistent presentation of text, so that the copyist-scribes, like the Christian monks in the medieval monastic scriptoria, made it their business to end each page at the same place.

It is not at all obvious that the scroll could not have delivered the same effect, if it had become a requirement of textual convention, by consistently numbering the columns on the scroll (of which there is some evidence[54]) and by making sure that the text on each column of each scroll ended in the same place as the one you were copying from – something which is if anything easier on a scroll because a scroll, unlike a book, can be extended in small steps by sticking a new sheet of papyrus onto the end of the scroll – or, of course, snipping off a bit at the end that you do not need.[55] Thus page numbering is not, as some claim, a unique and pivotal advantage of the codex, and therefore neither is its absence a necessary disadvantage of the scroll. Column numbering could have achieved similar aims – even if in practice it was not often done.

Saving of space is another supposed advantage of the codex. After all, in a book, you write on both sides of the paper, unlike the scroll, where you normally wrote on one side only, the 'recto', the side with the better writing surface. But it is not the case that you got two-for-one – twice the text for a given surface area. With the codex, the often generous margins that are needed top and bottom, left and right of the page swallow up a large proportion of the theoretically available extra space. And once again, did saving space matter, when the scroll could be so easily extended in small or large steps? Saving of space may have been a factor, but hardly a pivotal one.

A third advantage claimed for the early codex used by Christians, and therefore claimed as a reason for the 'victory' of the codex, is that it could be smaller and so easier to hide from the 'religious police' of Rome i.e. your nosy 'pagan' neighbours or adherents of a rival faith. You tucked it away, invisibly, into the folds of your toga or work clothes. But scrolls did not have to be the large objects depicted in Roman visual representations of the school-room or of poets reading (though they could be). They could also be as small as you cared to make them,[56] small enough to slip into a modern pocket – or into the folds of a toga.

I am driven to suggest that the claimed technical advantages of the codex over the scroll were at best relative rather than absolute, and that the eventual switch from one to the other was driven primarily by factors quite different to technical and functional characteristics – in other words, by cultural factors and cultural choice. The converse of that is that Roman retention of the scroll for as long as they did was also due to cultural choice. Contrary to what might be assumed, there was no inherent or necessary link between papyrus 'paper' and the scroll format in which it was normally used. In practice, of course, there was a strong link between the two, in that for centuries the two usually went hand-in-hand. But not always. The Romans knew about the codex book format by at least the middle of the period under review, but apparently chose not to use it as standard. Similarly, just as they knew about wood, linen, ivory and wax tablets as carriers of text, they knew about parchment – but apparently chose not to use it as standard. The evidence for both these assertions lies in the many mentions of *membrana*, i.e. parchment, in Martial's poems and epigrams, and the way in which he describes its use.[57]

The evidence of Martial

It must be said that this evidence is not as solid as one might wish, and there has been much controversy about these references in Martial, but this has been more about the implication that the parchment codex format was in use in Martial's time for literary books than about the availability of parchment as such or the use of the codex format as such. After all, Suetonius gives us the curious detail that the last will and testament of the emperor Augustus was written on three scrolls and two codexes, and implies that these two codexes detailed all his substantial donations to family, servants, friends and the people of Rome.[58] So they cannot have been just a few wax-covered wooden tablets tied together, but rather substantial documents made of some material not specified.

The question then is whether the evidence of Martial is sufficient to bring together parchment and the codex format, and to disprove the traditional view that the parchment codex only became a serious alternative to the papyrus scroll two or even three centuries after. The key reference is a single one, and is in Martial 1.2.3, where he refers to this particular collection of his verses and epigrams as being not just on parchment (*membrana*) but also in a format not suitable for traditional book-boxes used to hold scrolls (*scrinia*) but suitable for holding in one hand (*manus una capit*). This suggests that Martial's Book 1, at least, was being presented to the reader on parchment rather than on papyrus, and not on a scroll, which requires two hands to use, but as a codex-style book that can be held in one hand.[59] The one piece of external evidence that is quoted in support of this interpretation is the fragment of parchment, written on both sides, known as the *De Bellis Macedonicis*, and now dated

to around 100 CE.[60] However, the dating of this fragment must be regarded as a best guess, and itself partly depends on interpretation of Martial.[61] Thus this single statement by Martial remains the only serious witness to this aspect of the history of the Roman book.

But what sort of codex book was Martial referring to? Kenyon argues[62] that Martial's repeated references to parchment cannot be used as evidence that parchment codices were in common use. His interpretation is that these were not ordinary copies, but miniatures of some sort, either extracts or epitomes. He points out, correctly, that Martial 14.186 is entitled *Virgil on Parchment*, and that Martial 14.188 is entitled *Cicero on Parchment*, while 14.190 is entitled *Livy on Parchment*. Even if one accepts that these objects may have had a codex format, they cannot, by the wildest stretch of the imagination, have included in one hand-held volume all of Virgil, let alone all of Cicero or all of Livy. Therefore they must have been miniatures, extracts or précis. Moreover, the very fact that parchment is mentioned at all, suggests Kenyon, means that these examples were unusual. In other words, these were not real books at all. Allen and colleagues[63] however take a different view, and argue that this 'edition' of Martial 'should be a landmark in the history of publication and of text criticism' because it marks the first entry of the codex parchment book onto the stage of the history of the book. Perhaps fortunately, both points of view support the main argument of this investigation. The papyrus scroll was and remained the dominant form, and the codex format was indeed unusual at that time. On the other hand, Martial's words do surely indicate clearly that Roman authors, copyists and booksellers of his time knew about the codex format using parchment, but only in unusual circumstances chose to use it. Even if these particular examples were shortened or miniature versions of some sort, it is hard to believe that this general style of book, the codex, could not have been extended into a larger format and into more frequent use – if the Romans had wanted to. It was a matter of cultural choice not to do so, and to retain the papyrus scroll as the dominant mode. Yet that very fact makes Martial's reference a 'landmark in the history of publication', just because it represents at least one moment in Roman history, perhaps the first such moment that we know about when that cultural choice was being made.

As if to confirm this argument, there are also early examples of a Roman-era codex made, not of parchment, but of papyrus.[64] The papyrus codex was not, as some scholars have written, a 'bastard form' or 'surrogate' for a 'proper' parchment or vellum codex. Rather

> the papyrus roll, the papyrus codex, the parchment roll and the parchment codex were all perfectly adequate and acceptable forms of book.[65]

The codex concept was there from at least Martial's time, alongside the scroll, and could have been enlarged and generalised much sooner than

actually happened, whether using papyrus or parchment. In short, cultural choices were being made between forms of book that were, in principle, all 'adequate and acceptable'.

The codex and the victory of Christianity

Understanding why the codex was not generalised earlier is made the more difficult because the eventual switch to the codex format was so closely tied up with the spread and ultimate 'victory' of the Christian religion in the later centuries of the Roman Empire. But the result was, and is, that the codex book format became identified with Christianity, whereas the scroll became identified with paganism. The victory of the codex, and the victory of Christianity, became one and the same. So any practical arguments about the relative technical merits of the two formats have been almost hopelessly entangled with the religious dimension. The codex 'piggy-backed' to success on Christianity, and its success arose from the need to 'mobilise God' in a particular way using particular texts. Thus the final choice between papyrus and parchment, scroll and codex, was largely a religious i.e. cultural one rather than a technical choice – as had been the retention of the papyrus scroll previously in the 'pagan' period.

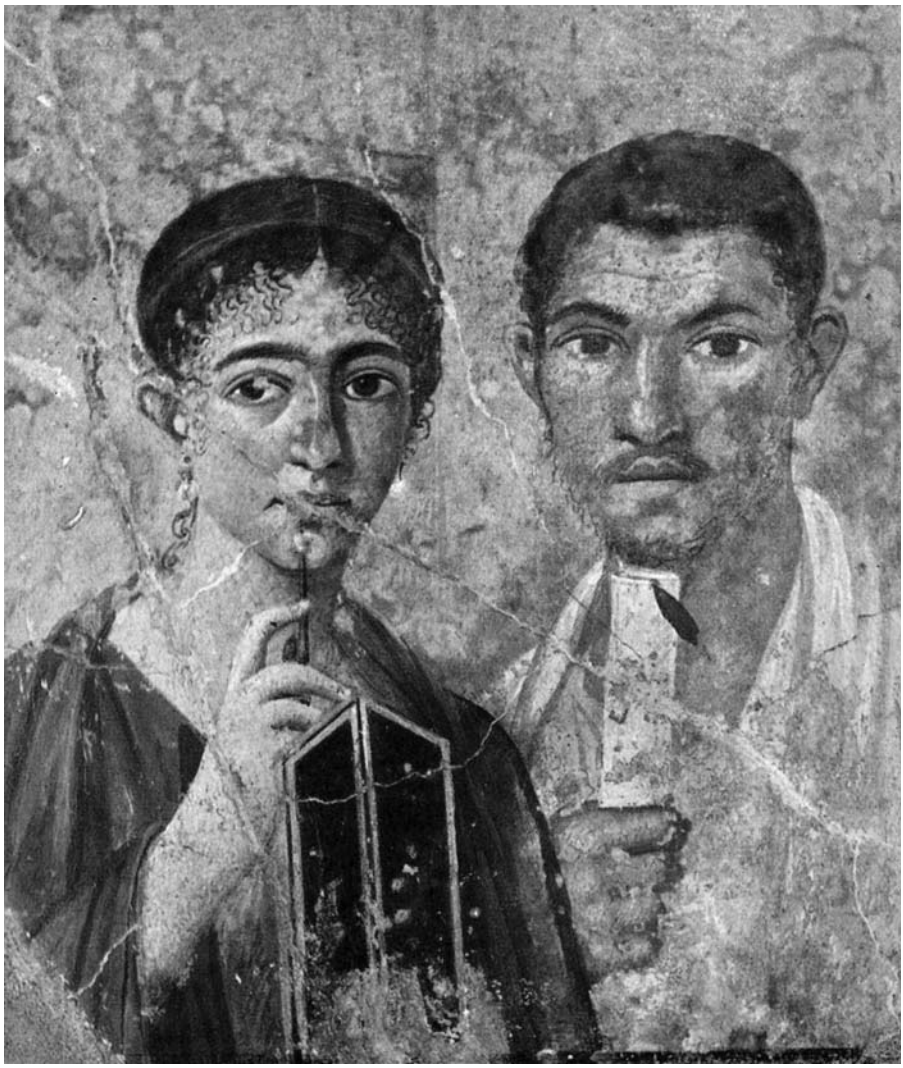
Parchment vellum is not, nor was meant to be, nor ever could have been, an everyday writing material such as papyrus was for the upper classes and the imperial civil service of Rome. But during the general contraction of reading and writing in the later empire and its successor states, it was the Christian church which became the main user of books and texts, and the requirements of the church for durable, easy and exact reference to the sacred words and texts confirmed the new format of choice – the vellum codex. Moreover, the church became wealthy enough, and (relatively speaking) secure and stable enough to afford the high price of good-quality vellum. In other words, vellum would only have supplanted papyrus, and the codex the scroll, only in a period when demand for 'books' became limited, specialised, and largely confined to an organisation that by then could afford them – the Christian church. The book became the Book. Christianity was and is a religion of the Book, as is Islam. Roman religion was not. The wonderful Church bibles and other illuminated books produced by the great monastery scriptoria of the later Middle Ages bear witness to the profoundly important place that such high quality vellum books had in the propagation and maintenance of the Christian faith. But it needed an institution like the Church, with its comparative wealth and high patronage, and comparatively small demand for copies, to justify such an elaborate and probably expensive material that would be written upon by highly skilled and unusually dedicated men, the monk-scribes of the monastery scriptoria. Once a precise set of texts or body of literature gained sacred Christian canonical status, then these texts had to be contained within one sacred book – 'the good book' – in a format that could

be repeated with exactitude from edition to edition and place to place. The codex was, one might say, an inspired choice for this purpose.

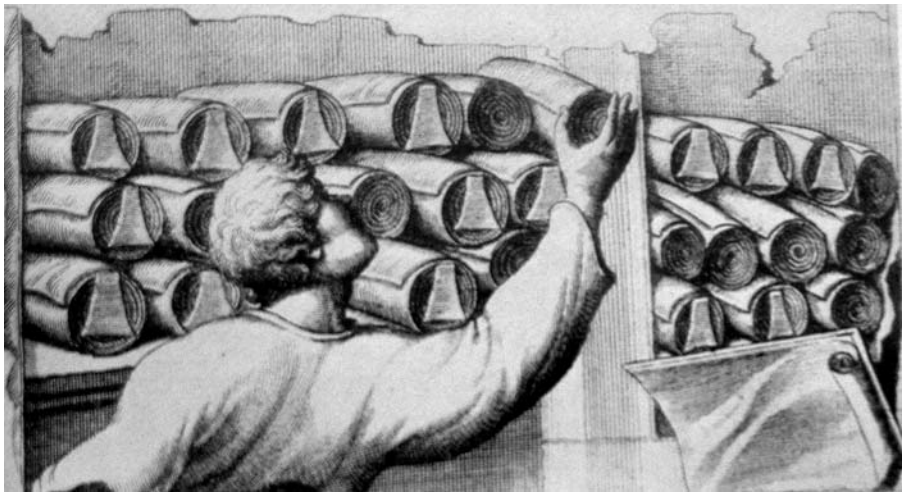
There can be no final proof of how exactly the Christian adherence to the codex arose. But the purpose and significance of a sacred religious text changed the requirements of that text in terms of its presentation to the reader and user, so that both the formation of the text and of the book itself had to change to meet 'the needs and conditions of different times and places'. This is not to suggest that papyrus or the scroll could have survived indefinitely as the mass medium for texts. Even if religious, political, social and economic factors had not told against it, the advent of mechanical printing, based on the single sheet, would probably have done so sooner or later.

What, however, this discussion does show is that the papyrus scroll was far from being a historical anachronism in its own time. It was capable of further development and more elaborate use than the Romans (as far as we know) actually put it to. If the Romans chose not to pursue those potential developments and uses, it was again by choice, a social and cultural choice. Just because the codex triumphed when and how it did, it should not be assumed that this triumph was inevitable because of the technical shortcomings of papyrus or of the papyrus scroll – or god-given. On the contrary, the scroll was, in its way and in its time, a sophisticated, professional product with its own high aesthetics and cultural values.

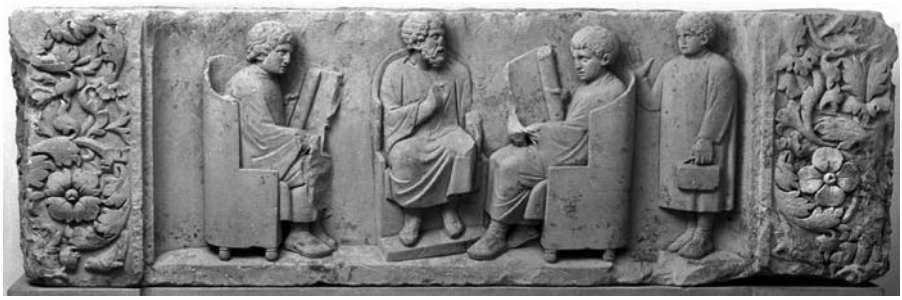
1. Mosaic of the Roman poet Virgil flanked by two Muses, Clio, Muse of History, and Melpomene, Muse of Tragedy. Virgil is holding a Roman 'book', i.e. a papyrus scroll. Note the interesting association of poetry and history (see Chapter 10). Mosaic now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis, but originally from Sousse, and dated to the third century CE.



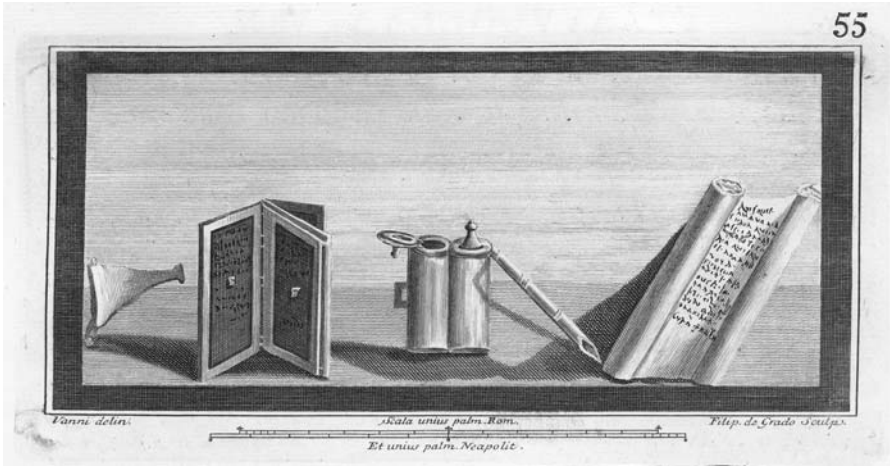
2. Fresco from Pompeii showing a man holding a scroll (book roll) with a title tag and his wife holding a pen and a jointed wooden writing tablet, often referred to as 'Paquius Proculus and his Wife'. Now in Naples Archeological Museum.



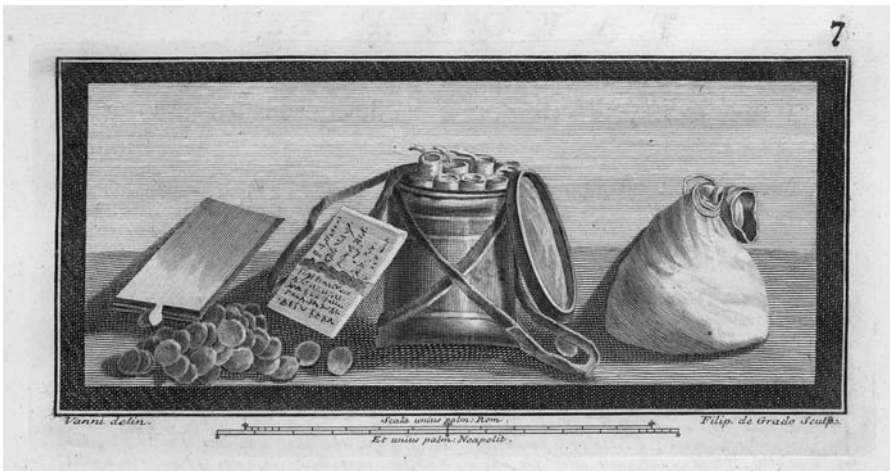
3. Man (perhaps a slave-secretary or *librarius* – see chapter on slavery) reaching for a scroll from a shelf piled three rows high with scrolls, almost all with title tags showing. Engraving of a now lost Roman relief from Neumagen, Germany, said to have been found some time before 1670.

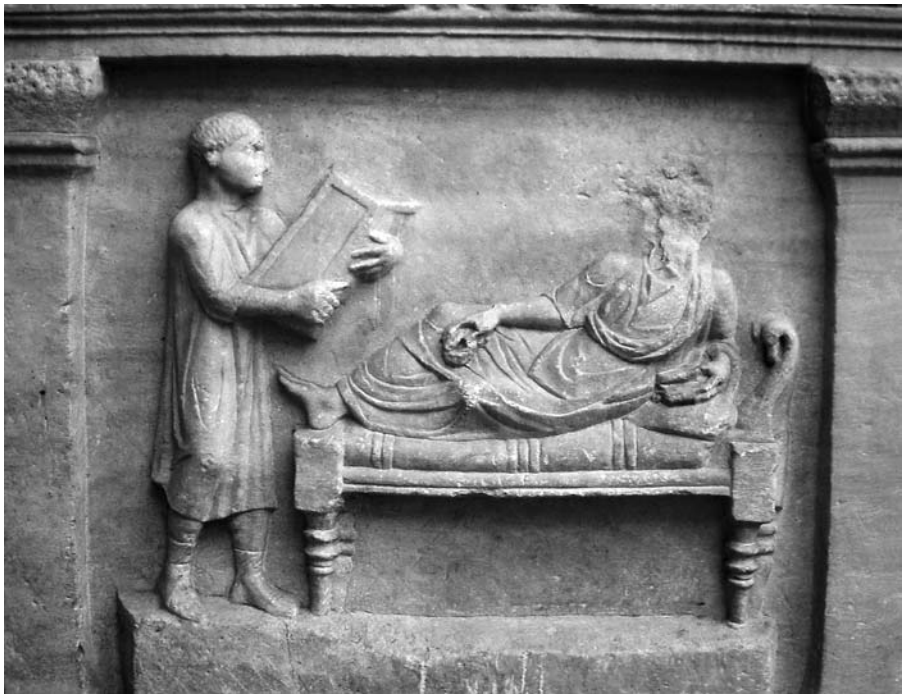


4. Late for school? Roman relief showing (most probably) a bearded teacher lecturing two students, all three seated and the students with opened scrolls, with one student arriving with school bag. In learning to read, 'let the student understand the text', said Quintilian. Now in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier.



5 & 6. Two depictions of Roman writing materials. Above (left to right): a title tag for a scroll, a jointed wooden notebook, inkpots, a pen and a scroll. Below: to the left, a wooden notebook with handles to open it, and in the centre, a leather book-box with a lid and straps for storing and carrying scrolls, each with a title tag. The round balls may be inkblack, next to them is a whiteboard for writing on, and on the right, possibly a carrier bag for writing materials. Both are engravings of wall paintings seen at Herculaneum and reproduced in *Delle Antichità de Ercolano*, vol. 2 (Naples, 1759).

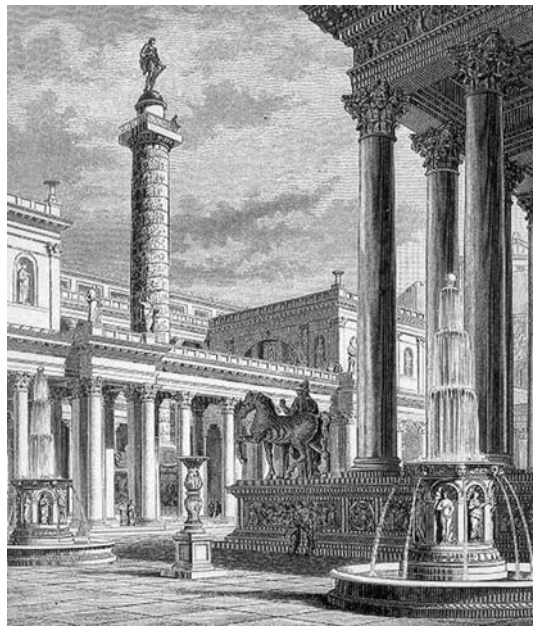




7. Detail of the sarcophagus of the lawyer Valerius Petronianus, dated to around 315-320 CE, showing the lawyer reclining on his couch and (probably) a slave-secretary bringing him his writing tablets. Now in the Milan Archaeological Museum.

8. Strolling players and popular entertainers – street musicians and masked mime actors entertaining the Roman crowd. What did they mime? Mosaic from Pompeii, now in the Naples Archaeological Museum.

9. Imaginative reconstruction of Trajan's Forum and Library at Rome, with Trajan's Column and statue rising between the two halves of the library, with the Basilica Ulpia in the background. From Joseph Kürschner (ed.), *Pierers Konversationslexicon* (1861).



10. A view of the ruins of Hadrian's library in Athens, with the Tsidarakis mosque in the background. An imperial statement?

11. The so-called ‘Sappho fresco’ from Pompeii showing a young woman sucking her pen and holding a multi-leaved writing tablet apparently bound at the spine, codex-style. Elite or popular culture? Now in the Naples Archaeological Museum.

3

Don't mess up the aesthetics: marching columns and rivers of letters

There is general agreement that around the early part of the second century CE, perhaps under the emperor Hadrian, an extraordinary change took place in the written presentation of Latin texts. Before that time, spaces between words were at least marked by mid-line dots referred to as 'interpuncts'. This could be seen as a rudimentary punctuation system at work, or at least as a useful aid to readers. But at that time the Romans abandoned spaces between words, and texts became simply an undifferentiated 'river of letters' presented in a style known as *scripta* (or *scriptura*) *continua*. This change has baffled analysts. One tried to defend it as being simply a move to a 'neutral text'.[1] Others have been much more critical, calling it

> one of the most astonishing cultural regressions of ancient history … an amazing and deplorable regression [for] no reason other than an inept desire to imitate even the worst characteristic of Greek books.[2]

Another points out that students of the history of writing have long been puzzled by this change, and have condemned the dominance of *scriptura continua* in antiquity as a 'retrograde development in human history'.[3] The upshot was that:

> the whole battery of aids to reading and comprehension which the reader of today takes for granted – the separation of words, systematic provision of accents, and breathings, punctuation and paragraphing, chapter headings, list of contents, footnotes, indexes, bibliographies etc. – simply did not exist in the ancient world.[4]

The aesthetics of the Roman book

Contrary to these opinions, I argue that the Roman habit of *scriptura continua* was far from 'neutral' or 'retrograde', but was a deliberate social and cultural choice. Moreover, the Romans themselves plainly did not see it as a 'retrograde development', never referred to it as such, and did not see it as an 'inept' imitation of Greek practice. Rather, what we perceive as their negative attitude towards punctuation must be seen in the context of their otherwise strict and positive conventions about good presentation

of text on the scroll. Absence of punctuation within the body of the text and the cessation of breaks between words were not therefore signs of a sloppy or careless attitude towards graphical and lexical rules, nor a gesture of contempt towards the status of reading and writing in Roman society. On the contrary, in the Roman context, these choices were part of a consistent and developing view about the aesthetics of best-quality book production.[5] In short, spaces between words were discarded as superfluous to Roman needs, and punctuation as we today understand it was simply not how the Romans went about 'parsing' the text.

Additionally, the *scriptura continua* style of writing emphasised and consolidated the skilled and elitist status of reading, or rather of being read to, and (paradoxically perhaps) it also consolidated the position of the professional reader or *lector*, often of slave or freedman status, men whom the rich employed to do their reading for them as one sign of their wealth, status and privilege. Thus Roman punctuation, or lack of it, becomes one of the key witnesses to both the aesthetics and the sociology of books and reading in the classical period.

The text on a well-written scroll was presented in a systematic manner, with regularly shaped columns marching neatly along the length of the *volumen*, perhaps leaning slightly to the right at a consistent angle, lines neatly justified right and left, so that the blocks of text formed a consistent graphic image or pattern on the papyrus surface. This was a carefully executed pattern by scribes of high professional skill. It therefore seems plausible, if unprovable, to suggest that those marks that were used on at least some Roman manuscripts, such as the *paragraphus* discussed below, were relegated to the margin, or to an inferior place between lines, because otherwise those marks would have messed up the orderly presentation of the text itself. Perhaps the aesthetic value of the Roman 'book' lay precisely in this orderly presentation of columns 'on the page', rather than in readability in our modern sense, so that anything that compromised these tall regular columns was to be avoided, according to Roman tenets of aesthetic display.

Texts were normally written only on the inner or 'recto' side of the roll, that is, the side where the fibres run left to right along the length of the scroll, with the writing. But there are examples of the other 'verso' side (where the fibres run top to bottom) being used for a run-on of the recto text or for a later, quite different, writing application. Scrolls were used for other than literary applications; perhaps, indeed, the majority of scrolls were put to practical applications such as accounts or inventories – we can't know – and sometimes scrolls had, say, an inventory on one side and a later literary text on the other. The text of a literary or learned work was elegantly written out in neat left- and right-justified columns marching along the scroll in blocks of text that looked good in terms of graphic presentation. But the scroll, and therefore its readers, would have had no sense of the 'page', or the 'spread' of two pages, as units of presentation, as

happens with the contemporary book. The column was the key building block. The aesthetics of the scroll were therefore quite different from those of the codex format.

The effect of blocks of text marching from end to end of the scroll was often further enhanced by the columns being set at a rakish angle, leaning, as it were, slightly forward, instead of being stiffly upright. That this was a deliberate design feature is shown by the scribal dots by which (in the examples examined by Johnson) the scribes marked out the column position before writing.[6] Also, in a well-executed scroll, the column width seems to have been measured out and marked before writing, perhaps by using a notched stick as a measuring tool. There is a traditional assumption that a tall roll or column was considered more elegant than a short one, but Johnson disputes this, and also disputes any firm relation between presentation and genre i.e. history or philosophy or other type of text.[7]

A Roman-era book was therefore by no means a 'haphazard affair', but had 'a consistent look and feel' that reflected not only scribal professionalism but also what the reader expected to find on and in the scroll. Johnson's examination of the Oxyrhynchus scrolls tends to show not only that there were a considerable number of scribes in the area, but also that individual scribes (where identifiable) had regular habits of presentation, within certain parameters, with 'unexpected uniformity' of column and inter-column spaces, careful choice of the right grade of papyrus paper for the purpose, regularity of top and bottom margins. The scribe aimed at a 'clean, unencumbered text'.[8]

How a scribe wrote, his (or her – female scribes are attested) writing position, may have influenced the column-by-column style of text presentation. There are few if any contemporary reproductions or depictions of Roman copyists. But the position adopted by a copyist was probably not sitting at a desk or table, but sitting on the floor cross-legged, with his tunic stretched between his legs as a sort of substitute for a writing surface, while the left hand held the unwritten scroll and the right hand wrote: either that, or one knee is raised in front of the copyist to provide the sloping surface on which to rest the portion of the scroll to be written on. This picture derives from depictions in Egypt, 'but there is evidence to show that professional scribes of the classical period wrote in the same (to us) most awkward position'.[9]

If there were no tables in Rome's libraries, as is suggested later, then maybe scribes had no tables either. The narrow but precise column of text may therefore have been simply what a scribe in that writing position could actually achieve. This then was the context within which spacing between words was also discarded, as either superfluous or even detrimental to best practice, Roman-style, and in which punctuation was not developed. It messed up the aesthetics.

Punctuation since Rome

It is against this background of Rome's aesthetic ideas about what a book should look like – different from our own but quite specific – that we must return to the question of their lack of punctuation and (in later years) even spaces between words. The development of aids to reading in the form of systematic schemes of punctuation, to include the use of blank spaces, is regarded as one of the great gifts to Western European culture of the post-Roman medieval monastic scribes and scholars, whose ideas and systems were then further consolidated into general use by the development of mechanical mass-production printing methods in the fifteenth and later centuries, methods which demanded well-understood and commonly agreed conventions of presenting text on the page. The main objective was to get the interpretation of the sacred books both right and consistent, so that the approved Christian message was given correctly to the church assembly. Given the imperative need for correct and consistent interpretation of sacred texts that dealt with ultimate matters of faith and personal salvation or damnation, the codex probably lent itself more easily to this type of systematic presentation.

Today, it is very difficult to type an English sentence (or any other European language) into a computer word processor without putting in at least spaces between the words, if not also punctuation. All one's training is to put them in automatically. If you do not, the computer program objects. Unpunctuated and unspaced text looks like a nonsense rhyme, only worse.[10] So punctuation, taken to include the use of commas, semicolons, colons, full stops, paragraphing, as well as blank spaces (between words, at the end of lines that end the paragraph, at the beginning of paragraphs when indented, between paragraphs, between chapters) is today an integral part of the understanding of a text, a key interface between writer and reader, almost itself part of the alphabet, a guide provided by the originators of a text to the users of a text about how best to find one's way around the meaning and balance of the words on the (paper or computer) page – or at least, the meaning as envisaged by the author or editor. This set of conventions is now regarded as an integral part of literacy, even if attention to the precise rules governing the use of particular punctuation marks may vary. Punctuation is one way in which the modern author/writer seeks to control the experience of the reader.

But the Romans had a different view of what should be left to the skill of the reader. If any one factor more than any other explains the need for skilled professional (but slave) readers, as discussed more fully in a later chapter, then this apparently deliberate neglect of aids to reading provides it. The absence of these aids, however necessary they may seem to us, did not apparently worry the Romans one bit – no Roman author ever even hints at such a worry.[11] As Saenger points out:

> the ancient world did not possess the desire, characteristic of the modern age, to make reading easier and swifter because the advantages that modern readers perceive as accruing from ease of reading were seldom viewed as advantages by the ancients.[12]

What happened before the 'retrograde' step?

What exactly the Romans did before the dropping of breaks between words at around the time of the emperor Hadrian is a matter of some controversy. It is an argument complicated by the difficulty, at least until recently, of getting direct access to the few original manuscripts that have survived from classical Roman times, and to the original inscriptions of the classical period on the actual stone or other material on which the Latin words and letters were carved – as opposed, that is, to the versions of these texts offered by scholarly editors who have, in many cases, already imposed some degree of modern presentation upon the original text.

There is little dispute that the Greek writing style of the time, and well before it, was already in the form of the simple 'river of letters'. If indeed the Romans 'regressed', the Greeks had done so long before them, and Rome was simply catching up. Nor was the 'regression' just the result of ignorance of alternative styles of text presentation. As Saenger points out:

> the survival of numerous bilingual fragments written on papyrus suggests that the Romans, Greeks and Jews in late antiquity were aware of each other's differing graphic traditions regarding word separation.[13]

What is remarkable, given the overwhelming influence of Greek culture upon Roman, is not that the Romans switched to the Greek style of text presentation, but that they took so long to do so. Evidence is plentiful that the Romans retained word separation long after the Greeks abandoned it. Good examples are graffiti found on the walls of Pompeii and therefore dating to 79 CE or just before,[14] where one finds so-called election slogans with interpuncts and (to take just one further example) the famous couplet:[15]

> *admirorte·paries·noncecidisse*
> *quitot·scriptorum·taedia·sustineas*
> I admire you, wall, for not falling down when you have to carry so much boring writing

The fact that the interpuncts do not occur everywhere where we might expect to see them, for example between *admiror* and *te*, may be partly the result of its being a quickly written graffito by a possibly less than fully literate person – but partly perhaps because even at that time the Romans did not necessarily write or pronounce word divisions in all the places where modern English or other modern European usage might indicate. It

is thought, for example, that certain combinations of noun and preposition and certain other word combinations were treated as a single unit of text or speech, rather as is done in modern Russian and German in certain defined grammatical situations.[16]

In addition to the plentiful examples of breaks between words found on inscriptions carved on stone, which otherwise might just indicate conventions in stone carving, further evidence is provided by the papyrus fragment of the elegiacs written by Cornelius Gallus[17] and found in Egypt, probably dating to his lifetime when he was governor of Egypt. This fragment (if genuine) affords a glimpse of what 'best practice' may have been like at that time in laying out a poem on the papyrus page.[18] Its neat and regular presentation is a tribute to the scribal art of the time. If this skill was evident in Egypt, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the same basic craft standards would have applied to trained professional scribes (slave or free) everywhere. If the Roman book was, in its best examples, a cultural icon, then these craft standards demanded more than just knowing how to put stylus to papyrus, but also how to apply aesthetic and artistic criteria to enhance presentation.

The fragment uses spacing and indentation of the pentameters, and the interpunct is systematically used, as in the first complete full line, line 2.

Fata·mihi·Caesar·tum·erunt·mea·dulcia·quom·tu
Caesar, fate was kind to me when you …

This systematic use of word division by means of the interpunct is almost certainly what Seneca meant when he wrote[19]

nos etiam cum scribimus interpungere assuevimus
we are used to putting in interpuncts when we write.

Some have taken this to refer to punctuation generally, but it makes better sense if taken as referring simply to word division.[20] But if, as Seneca says, they were in his day quite used to separating words, it follows that the stylistic decision to abandon division between words must have been taken quite consciously.

The Oliver/Wingo argument

There are however those who argue that, before the critical Hadrianic date, the Romans also had, in addition to simple word division, an elaborate formal system of punctuation, that is, a set of marks used within and around the text to perform much the same functions as punctuation does today, but using different marks. Beginning from Suetonius' remark that systematic editing of literary texts began at Rome in 169 BCE under the influence of Crates Mallotes,[21] Oliver then concludes, on the basis of three

early 'meagre and mutilated' fragments of Latin books dating to the time of Augustus or the first century BCE,[22] that:

> these by the unanimity of their testimony suffice to show that Latin literary texts were written with careful and elaborate punctuation.[23]

He then details this supposed punctuation. This detail was further elaborated by E. Otha Wingo,[24] whose book identifies a set of 21 different marks (if a blank space is included) by which, in his view, the Romans of the classical era 'punctuated' their texts. Wingo's main concern seems to be to establish that in the 'golden age' of Roman literature, the likes of Virgil, Horace and Livy, in order to create their literary masterpieces, did use the full armoury of punctuation. Otherwise (it is implied but not stated), how could they have done it? Wingo argues that during the great age of Latin literature, formal Latin, in contrast to contemporary Greek, was not only separated into words by the use of interpuncts, but was also divided into sentences and clauses by special punctuation signs. He therefore concludes that:

> we are entitled to assume that our texts of such authors as Cicero, Sallust, and Livy, Lucretius, Virgil and Ovid were ultimately derived from copies that were punctuated for sense.[25]

Wingo bases his positive view about Roman punctuation upon a detailed but second-hand examination of Augustus' *Res Gestae*, the emperor's own formal testimony to his period of rule as inscribed on stone in partial fragments found in three places in modern Turkey, Ankara, Antioch and Apollonia, in Latin and in Greek. But there are forceful arguments against Wingo's proposition. One is that his elaborate so-called punctuation system does not turn up anywhere other than in the *Res Gestae*, nor is it referred to by any Roman writer. For example, Aulus Gellius, despite his great antiquarian concern to establish what Virgil and other authors of that era actually wrote in their original texts, never once talks about punctuation.[26] Secondly, his supposed punctuation system is internally very complex, and even Wingo has to admit that there are apparently three or even six different values for any given mark. It is hard to believe that this was a recognised system of punctuation at work. Thirdly, Johnson, in his examination of the Oxyrhynchus fragments, found no similar system of marks.[27] A recent edition of the *Res Gestae* published in France does not discuss punctuation at all, although it does point out, interestingly, that the Greek version has no spaces between words whereas the Latin version does.[28] It must be assumed therefore that 'golden age' Latin writers, listeners and readers found nothing at all strange in the writing and understanding of texts written down with word breaks but with little or nothing else. For Virgil and his famous contem-

poraries it must have been the normal thing, not calling for comment or action.

We are therefore left with a general picture of absence of punctuation, and abandonment at a certain time of even inter-word spacing and dots. The Roman papyri reproduced by Cugusi in his study of Latin letter-writing (*epistolae*) corroborate this picture.[29] Five letters datable to the period between Augustus and 84 CE clearly use inter-word spaces and dots.[30] Then it appears to get more erratic: letters written between about 100 CE and the mid-second century seem to have spaces and dots in some cases and not in others, or to be internally inconsistent.[31] Thereafter, the letters no longer have these attributes at all.[32] As another illustrative example, a fragment of Cicero's famous speech against Verres, said to be 'the doyen of Latin papyri found in Egypt' and dated to 20 BCE, uses systematic interpuncts (and so word spacing).[33] But in the fragment of the epitome of Livy held in the British Library, and datable to the third or fourth century CE, the mid-line dot is placed after abbreviations – but not otherwise used.[34] The basic picture is, by these limited samples, confirmed.

The use of the *paragraphus*, the *diplê*, dots and *coronis*

This does not however entirely dispose of the question of those additional marks which were placed on scrolls by scribes, by teachers, by grammarians or by readers. When modern commentators refer to 'Roman punctuation', it is to these marks that they refer, and in particular to the *paragraphus*. The *paragraphus* was a short horizontal mark put into the margin or in between two lines of text at the far left end, to denote some shift of subject or a change of speaker, for example in drama.[35] Such a mark is found frequently, but far from universally, and can have several different significations. It is presumed that, in those manuscripts where it is found, it is the work of the scribe who wrote out the text. But it can hardly have been of much use in the actual deciphering of the text, since it did not accurately mark divisions between sentences or within them, or indicate the relationship between different parts of the text.

In addition, there may be dots at various points, but these may often be the work of the reader rather than the scribe, and there is evidence that when scribes copied a work, they did not copy all the dots they found on it, perhaps for that very reason.[36] A marginal dot was sometimes added by scribes to mark every tenth line i.e. was a scribal rather than a reader aid.[37]Another mark, the *diplê,* like a right-angled bracket, when put into the margin apparently to indicate a noteworthy line, is almost certainly a reader's addition to aid his or her understanding or reading, and so not to be labelled 'punctuation'. The *coronis* (used in the *Res Gestae*) took various graphic forms, but was a flourish of the pen or chisel to indicate the end of a chapter, or its equivalent.

The *paragraphus*, and perhaps some of the other marks, may then be regarded as a form of proto-punctuation, but not punctuation in the full and proper sense. Nevertheless, the idea of using marks to supplement the letters was clearly there. What is surely significant for this investigation is that the Romans apparently saw no need to elaborate and systematise such marks in or by the text so as to become 'punctuation' in the modern sense, and did not do so. So the use of the *paragraphus* and the dots merely accentuates the lack of proper punctuation in Roman texts. They demonstrate that the Romans were perfectly familiar with the basic idea of adding marks to the text for some purpose or another (even if they had not been aware of punctuation used in other, neighbouring languages), but simply had no motive for developing that idea, maybe even a cultural prejudice against it.

Let them understand

How then did Roman readers (whoever they were) find their way round or through a text? Quintilian is at pains to stress that the fundamental problem for a student in grasping how to perform reading or recitation and interpretation of poetry is not so much learning how to decipher the text, but learning to understand it – *intellegat* ('let him understand') – and from that understanding would come the correct phrasing when reading.[38] Saenger suggests that:

> the onerous tasks of keeping the eyes ahead of the voice while accurately reading unseparated script, so familiar to the ancient Greeks and Romans, can be described as a kind of elaborate search pattern.[39]

Modern languages, or at least modern European languages, rely heavily upon word order to create meaning and sense, as did medieval Latin. But classical Latin, particularly but not only poetry, had no such premium on word order, and that is why reading it was 'a kind of elaborate search pattern'. Classical Latin relied on complex grammar and inflexion of nouns, verbs and adjectives to indicate the connections between words and so the meaning and sense. Words were not necessarily – and especially not in poetry – grouped by grammatical affinity. Word order was governed more by the sound of the words when strung together to create the fine-sounding prose periods and poetic verses in which the trained ear of the educated Roman took such delight – a delight in hearing. Did it sound right? The sound of books is something to which we shall return.

This complex grammatical structure, not reliant on word order, meant that the full meaning of a portion of text might not become clear until some time after a particular word had passed in front of the reader's eye – i.e. there was a period of unresolved ambiguity that persists until possibly the end of the thought sequence had been reached. Saenger[40] argues that:

> in the periodic sentences of antiquity, which were often logically imperfect in their syntax, long portions of text had to be read and retained in memory without being fully understood before ambiguity in construction could be resolved and meaning rendered apparent … in ancient Latin, permutations of sequence only rarely had an impact on sense, but they were fundamental elements of mellifluous style.

Hence the great reliance in Roman times on the *praelectio*, a private pre-reading of a text so as to grasp its sense and syllables, its word and period divisions, much used in the school classroom and before any public reading took place.[41] It may also be that the semi-public readings (*recitationes*) given by authors,[42] or by others during the author's lifetime, such as the actors who recited passages of Virgil in the theatre, perhaps with him present in the audience,[43] set up an aural memory of the intended phrasing of the text among contemporaries that could have lasted into the next generation or two, and could have been noted down by contemporary teachers and grammarians in Rome. After that, perhaps a reader could rely on his understanding of the text and of what were still the current language and language forms and rhythms of the day.

Different times, different texts

What this discussion of word division, punctuation, word order, and the formatting of text on the book-roll clearly brings out is that reading, even for that minority that could do it, was in Roman times a profoundly different skill compared to reading today, with different parameters and problems: both much more difficult, and a fundamentally different experience. It is not enough to dismiss the Roman reference for *scriptura continua* as simply 'cultural snobbery'[44] – it was that, but it was also an active decision that they positively did not need the spaces between words, given who did the reading, and where and how, and what a prestige artefact or cultural icon like a 'book' should look like. Attitudes to punctuation, the river of letters, word order, the scroll rather than the codex, papyrus rather than parchment, the definition of scribal skill – all these form one unified picture. The aesthetics of the Roman book and attitudes to how text should be presented become a sign of, and a graphic metaphor for, the style of hierarchical social organisation dominant over the Roman period, based on status markers at the top and skilled slaves at the bottom rung of the class system. If reading was difficult, almost esoteric, the Romans who mattered liked it that way.

4

Did the medium shape the message? Deciphering the author's intent

One persistent line of enquiry has sought to show that the form and size of the Roman scroll somehow influenced or governed the content, the literary or other work written on it. This needs to be considered, but only briefly, since it is a literary cul-de-sac. Dilke wrote:

> long works were invariably divided into books, which to a large extent were related to the length of the rolls.[1]

Theodor Birt in his most influential book[2] compiled huge tables of the relative and absolute lengths of most of Greek and Latin literature in order to classify it by bulk (number of lines, words), implying that this was a significant fact about each work. The most recent discussion that I have found that tests the same hypothesis is a paper published in 1980[3] – a century after Birt's book appeared. Birt had concluded that*:*

> for different literary genres it was customary or obligatory to have different book formats or sizes [and that] individual books or scrolls of scholarly works in prose were thus consistently kept in larger formats, those of poetic works were consistently in smaller ones.[4]

The evidence of Isidore

Apart from his own massive tables, Birt cited as his evidence a statement by Isidore of Seville, writing in the early part of the seventh century CE (i.e. five or more centuries after our period of investigation) to the effect that 'certain categories of books were made (*conficiebantur*) in fixed sizes (*moduli*). Poems and epistles were in a smaller format (*forma*), but histories were written (*scribebantur*) in a larger size'.[5] Isidore appears to use *forma* and *modulus* interchangeably, and how you translate these Latin words depends largely on what you suppose he meant. But he does not say anything about the 'size' and 'format' of the works being connected to the size or capacity of the scroll. His comment could as easily be a comment on authorial conventions. His Latin word *conficiebantur* could as easily mean 'put together' in the manner of an author putting together a work, as opposed to 'made' in the physical sense of a scroll being made, and this interpretation is

supported by his use of *scribebantur* ('books … were written'). Birt, in other words, leans too heavily on a single (and very late) quotation that may or (more likely) may not mean what he supposed.

Capacity of the scroll

In the 1950s there was another, more thoughtful attempt to show that at least the average size of Roman scrolls may have held some significance for the works written on them. Kenyon[6] compared the sizes of many of those specimens of scrolls that have survived, and while fully admitting that wide variation does exist, he nevertheless concluded that a roll of 30-35 feet in length (he was writing pre-metric) was normal, with a median range of 25-45 lines to a column, a median column width of 2-4 inches including the margin between columns, and a median letter count of 18-25 per line. On this basis, Kenyon went on to remark that:

> a roll of about 32-35 feet would hold, in a medium-sized hand, one of the longer books of the New Testament (Matthew, Luke, or Acts) or a book of Thucydides.[7]

and noted that Thucydides Book 2 is almost the same length as Matthew, that is, 18,000 words. Kenyon was therefore implying some link between form and content, scroll and text. In similar vein, Roberts and Skeat remarked that the 10,000-line poem by Suffenus, mentioned by Catullus[8], 'would have filled 3 papyrus rolls of normal size'.[9]

The fatal flaws

Wisely, these authors left it at that. For there are two main objections to this line of enquiry, either of them fatal. The first objection is that the scroll itself, whatever its averages, could vary greatly both in width and in length (see Kenyon's own valuable calculations), thus creating an immensely wide variation in the total surface area available for writing on. The widest known scroll is four times the width of the narrowest known. The size of the letters and the columns could also vary. Then again, as we have seen, if a scroll was still too short to take the text you wanted to put on it, you could just glue another sheet or sheets of papyrus onto the end of it – after all, the scroll was a set of sheets stuck together in the first place, so the process could go on ad infinitum, or almost. Or of course you could chop bits off the end of the scroll if it was too long. So there was great variability in the possible size and capacity of the text vehicle, and the Roman habit of writing (by hand, of course) in a 'river of letters', without punctuation or (from about the time of Hadrian) gaps between words, made the variability from one scroll to another, or between one scribe and another, even more marked, even for the same work. Modern concepts like

word counts look anachronistic, and the vehicle looks far too variable to govern its contents.

Whose structuring?

The second objection is that we have only scattered evidence about how Roman authors themselves sought to structure their work – about their intended 'architecture' of it. Much of the apparent structuring that we see in modern editions of Roman books is or may be the work of later Roman grammarians and/or Renaissance or modern editors. In many cases we cannot be sure what the author's original intentions were, while in other cases we do have some degree of certainty, perhaps a high degree, from internal evidence.

Take the case of Tacitus. The section or paragraph numbering, and the sub-section numbering within those units of text that we see in modern editions are no older than the seventeenth century.[10] It seems unlikely that the titles *Annals* and *Histories* go back to Tacitus, or indeed to antiquity. They were almost certainly grafted on by medieval editors.[11] Jerome refers[12] to the thirty books of Tacitus' lives of the Caesars down to Domitian, and this is generally assumed to mean that he had, or knew about, a consolidated edition of Tacitus in which what we know as the *Histories* and the *Annals* were put together and numbered sequentially from 1 to 30 – presumably 12 for what we know as the *Histories* and 18 for the *Annals*, unless you believe, as some do, that the division was 14+16. This numbering from 1 to 30 also turns up in one of the early medieval manuscripts of Tacitus.[13] At least it shows that the division of Tacitus into 30 books (not all of which have survived) does probably go back to antiquity, and not to some medieval scribe. One scholar indeed thinks[14] that this consolidated edition goes back to the third century, perhaps indeed to the edition that the emperor Tacitus,[15] who claimed a bloodline going back to the historian, is said to have commissioned to save his forebear from oblivion. But this is speculative and does not prove (or disprove) that Tacitus himself envisaged his work in the form of the 'books' that we now have.

The example of Tacitus shows how important it is not to be mesmerised by the appearance of Latin texts in today's editions. On the other hand, division into books – but Roman-style 'books'[16] – does certainly go back to antiquity, at least in some cases. Suetonius tells us[17] that C. Octavius Lampadio in the second century BCE edited the *Bellum Punicum* of Naevius into seven books,[18] a task that Q. Varguntius later performed for the *Annals* of Ennius. So the idea of division into books was quite familiar, although in these two cases it was the work of a later editor or grammarian, not the author.

Famously, Virgil did not live to finish the *Aeneid* (at least, not to his satisfaction) and wanted it burnt. But the poem was prepared for 'publication' by two 'editors' or 'literary executors' appointed by Augustus. So we

cannot be absolutely sure whether the exact division into 12 books as we now have them was the work of Virgil, his 'editors', or subsequent grammarian/editor/scribes, although internal evidence – and the arithmetical analogy with the conventional division of Homer's two epics into 24 books – suggests strongly that the present structure is pretty much what Virgil wanted.[19] Martial is one of the few who make explicit and systematic reference to the numbers and numbering of his 'books' within his text, thus making it virtually certain that Martial himself planned the issue of his books in their present form, probably by making selections or collections from the epigrams and poems already read out and/or written and circulated by him singly or as small *libelli*. Martial frequently makes reference to his book numbers (e.g. in Book 6 he twice refers to *sextus libellus* – 'my sixth book').[20] So we can be pretty sure that Martial's books, as they have come down to us, are what the author intended, and their regularity in size may be seen as supporting that.[21]

Among other poets, Catullus wrote (as far as we know) 2,290 lines of verse, of which 848 lines appear in what is now known as his first book. It is thought that Catullus himself may have been responsible for the 'edition' of his poems that has come down to us, if only because 'the extensive cross-references suggest that they were edited by himself'[22] and Catullus does refer to his first book as *novum libellum* – 'a new book'. Horace, Propertius, Ovid and Statius are other poets sometimes considered to have issued editions of their poems compiled by themselves which have then come down to us via the manuscript tradition.[23] Among prose authors, Appian specifically tells us that Book 2 of his *Civil Wars* is his second book.[24] So the evidence is mixed. In some cases, we may detect at least an echo, even a strong echo, of the author's original intentions in the structuring of his work(s). In others, we just don't know – or know that today's apparent structuring is the work of later, possibly Roman, possibly medieval, or even early modern editors. This is shaky ground upon which to hypothesise some general influence of the medium, the scroll, upon the message, or some definable interaction between the two.

Lost meanings?

There remains a third possibility that further complicates the issue of author's intent. This is that some modern editions or 'rearrangements' of classical works, however well-meaning, may serve to disguise, even obliterate, the compositional structure and author's intentions of the original. Mary Beard points out[25] that the major modern editions of Cicero's letters[26] are based upon re-ordering them in chronological order, as compared to the original manuscripts in which they are preserved. If they are to be regarded mainly as historical documents, to be mined as evidence for the events of their time, then there may be a purpose to that re-ordering. But, Beard argues, this 'wholesale dismantling' may also destroy the literary

purposes of these letter collections in the form first presented to us. She argues that we may have lost as much as we have gained by this reordering of Cicero's letters, and investigates what we might gain by going back to reading the letters as presented. This is particularly important because:

> there is clear evidence to suggest that [the collections of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* and *To Friends*], more or less as they are preserved in the manuscripts, were assembled, 'published' and became part of the literary tradition of Rome some time before the end of the first century AD; clear evidence, in other words, that the books whose dismemberment we have witnessed were the product of a Roman editor, or editors, working within a century or so, at most, of Cicero's death.[27]

In other words, the manuscripts, if respected, take us back tantalisingly close to the author himself, especially if, as some suppose, the editor in question may have been Cicero's ex-slave freedman and literary secretary, Tiro, or Atticus, to whom many of the letters were sent. (For Tiro, see also Appendix A, where the challenge to Tiro's fame as the inventor of Roman shorthand is discussed and rejected.) Tiro is also the 'other person' involved in one particular set of Cicero's letters, the group of 27 letters known as Book 16 of the *Letters to Friends*. Beard points out that this set has been subject to a double distortion, so that 'the original book is practically invisible'. What is now referred to as 'the traditional order' (to contrast with the recent chronological re-ordering) was in fact established, not in antiquity at all, but in about 1566 by Lambinus in Paris, and was itself a reordering carried out by Lambinus in the belief that there had once been a correct order that had been disrupted. So, says Beard:

> the result is that even the traditional numbers do not match the order of the letters in the manuscripts.[28]

Beard suggests therefore that modern editions present Cicero's letters in a manner that was never intended, and that going back to the original manuscript presentation of the letters to Tiro, and reading them as a crafted unity conceived very near to the time of the author, shows them to be a powerful testimony to the nature of slavery in Rome, and invites the reader to experience them as a metaphor for, and commentary on, the slide of the Roman Republic towards the political 'slavery' of imperial one-man rule. One does not have to accept or reject Beard's literary and political interpretation to grasp the important point of methodology in considering the shape or shaping of Latin texts.

Thus the evidence on the original question – did the medium shape the message? – dictates extreme caution, not least because a typical Roman author's most immediate preoccupation was, I shall suggest, not with a written text as such, but with an oral presentation of his new work from a private stage and in certain cases with potential theatrical presentation

on the public stage**.** That Roman authors often or usually shaped their issued works with creative intentions and with the user/reader in mind, is clear and natural enough, even if we can no longer discern in all cases what those intentions were, or whose intentions we are witnessing. That is not the issue here. What a Roman author may have had in mind as he dictated his words to his slave-secretary is not to be confused with the creative processes of a modern author structuring his work in an entirely different 'publishing' environment – or with the alleged holding capacity of the scroll.

Deconstructing the Roman book trade

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5

Atticus and co. – Roman publishers?

The most persistent (and in its way attractive) mis-perception about the Roman book world has been that at Rome there were 'publishers' of books, much as there are today. This misconception merits close examination, not least to pave the way towards establishing, in later chapters, what actually did go on at Rome. L.D. Reynolds and N.D. Wilson in *Scribes and Scholars* argue that:

> Cicero could depend on [Atticus] to provide all the services of a high-class publisher who would hold private readings of the new book, send out complimentary copies, organise its distribution.[1]

The 2004 edition of the *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation*, repeating the 2003 *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, asserts that

> some publishers, like Cicero's friend Atticus, or the Sosii, Horace's publishers, or Martial's and the orator Quintilian's publisher Tryphon, are well attested.[2]

K.S. Staikos, in his two-volume *History of the Library in Western Civilisation*, also asserts that the Sosii were Horace's publishers, and elsewhere refers to the 'publishing business' of the Sosii, to which Tryphon was a 'rival publisher'.[3] A more popular book, Jones and Sidwell's *The World of Rome,* refers to Cicero's friend Atticus as 'the first person we know to go into the publishing business'.[4]

The idea that these people – Atticus, the Sosii brothers, Tryphon – can legitimately be called 'publishers' with a 'business', in anything like the way that these terms are used today, and with today's implications of commercial dealing between publisher and author, and between publisher, bookshops and reading public, dates back to Birt's influential work, but is misconceived. It has nevertheless trickled down from scholarly works, such as those of Birt and others, into much current general literature and conventional wisdom about Rome. This is despite the fact that at least as early as 1982, the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* pointed out firmly that:

> To style Atticus as a publisher, as is still done in more than one current treatment, is to import into the reconstruction of his activities an entirely modern and obtrusive concept belonging to the world of the printed book.[5]

The evidence

As we shall see later, Tryphon and the Sosii brothers were copyists and booksellers, not publishers. Atticus is the key case. Birt based most of his conclusions on the evidence that he thought he perceived in the relationship between the great republican orator, politician and author Cicero and his wealthy friend Atticus, and most notably on the famous and still extant letters that passed between them. Birt calls Atticus a 'publisher' ('Verleger') with whom Cicero, allegedly, also had a close consultancy relationship.

> The surviving detailed correspondence brings before us many vivid examples to illustrate what influence Cicero daily conceded to his friend and publisher on all his works.[6]

He then refers to Atticus' (well-attested[7]) large staff of literate slaves (*librarii*), among them those Birt chooses to call the 'mass production *librarii*' ('vervielfältigenden librarii'), and to the mass production process ('vervielfältigung') that they carried out. Cicero would, suggests Birt, himself send a dedication copy of a new work to the dedicatee, if there was one; keep an archive copy for himself; and then send the 'autograph copy' (in the sense of the copy bearing the definitive authorised text) to Atticus, who used his slaves to create and acquire a stock ('Lager') of Cicero's books. Once this mass-production had been completed, sales ('Verkauf') could begin, but only when the process of proof-reading ('korrectur gelesen') had been completed.

Thus, says Birt, Atticus is the first name of a bookdealer in Rome that we can have confidence in, though he must have handled retail sales ('Detailverkauf') through bookshops. In this way, Atticus allegedly built up a splendid business ('grossartiges Geschäft') as a publisher and publishing house ('Verlag'), whose authors' list was however not restricted to Cicero alone. Atticus, says Birt, also handled an alleged book about Cato and a lot of good Greek classic works, and presumably other books as well. Moreover:

> it would seem perverse to argue *ex silentio* that at this time Atticus was the only or even the first bookseller in Rome … That in fact other booksellers and publishers existed in Rome in competition alongside Atticus is most clearly testified to by the fact that Cicero decided henceforth to have all his works published only by Atticus.

Staikos, some 120 years later than Birt, follows this same line, affirming that Atticus:

> set up a publishing organisation … had works copied out, first editing them where necessary, and then offering them for sale … There existed a code of publishing practice between Cicero and Atticus.[8]

Cicero's letters to Atticus

It is worth pursuing this particular misconception, since it illustrates with great clarity how it, and other misconceptions, can arise. As evidence for his statements, Birt cites passages in two of Cicero's letters to Atticus, those now numbered 13.12 and 13.22**.** These two famous passages are often quoted, and often misconstrued. Take 13.12 first. In it, Cicero says that he will in future leave to Atticus the *praeconium* of anything he writes. *Praeconium* means 'promotion' in the sense of praise and making known to others. Cicero gives as his reason for this that *Ligurianam praeclare vendidisti*.

How do we translate this statement? Does it mean 'you did a good sale of my speech for Ligurius', in which case, it can sound as if Atticus is selling Cicero's books i.e. is a bookseller, and this may go to the very root of the idea of Atticus as a publisher/bookdealer. Alternatively, does it mean 'you did a good job of publicising my speech'? Such a translation is equally consistent with the Latin meaning(s) of *vendere*, but additionally is supported (and, I suggest, proved) by Cicero's reference to leaving to Atticus the *praeconium* of his future works. Shackleton-Bailey, in his translation of Cicero's letters to Atticus, renders the passage thus:

> You have given my speech for Ligurius a splendid puff. Whatever I write in future, I'll leave the advertising to you.[9]

Apart from the somewhat anachronistic reference to 'advertising', this catches the right emphasis, even if it obscures the interesting parallel ambiguity of both the Latin verb *vendere* and the English verb 'sell'. What Cicero does <u>not</u> say is anything about Atticus distributing or mass-producing his speeches as his 'publisher'.

In the other letter (13.22), what Cicero says is that 'there is nowhere where I would rather see my writings than at your place (*apud te*) but I would like them to go to outsiders (*foras*, literally 'out of doors' as opposed to *apud te*) only when it seems OK to both of us'. He says he does not blame Atticus' *librarii* (copyists), who have (one may infer) given out one of Cicero's texts without first asking permission: nor does he blame Atticus himself. This is far from saying that he, Cicero, will 'publish' all his works through Atticus. Rather, the situation is one where Atticus is lending the services of his *librarii* to make copies for his friend Cicero, and somehow one of the copies has been handed out to a third party without Cicero giving his permission.

Birt nevertheless thought that, on his interpretation of these two exchanges, he could also espy a financial relationship between Cicero and Atticus. He says:

> copies that were still to be sold were clearly the property of the bookseller. But it seems that the considerable costs were to be shared between him and

> the author, at any rate Cicero and Atticus shared them. The next question to present itself was whether the author might also earn profit from the publication. It seems probable that Cicero did, since the fact that Atticus had made considerable sales with the Speech for Ligurius prompted him thenceforward to publish all his works with Atticus.

But the two passages do not sustain any such edifice of assumptions, building one upon another. There is no evidence for such sales or any such publishing arrangement between the two men, and therefore no such financial rewards. In short, while still a most important figure in Latin literature, Atticus was not a 'publisher' in any recognisable sense of the term, nor were the Sosii, Tryphon, or the other bookshop operators of Rome who have also been co-opted, on even less evidence, into the role of 'publisher'. Apart from these names, there are no other candidates for this role. Indeed, once Atticus is ruled out, the whole case for 'publishers' at Rome collapses.

But the whole picture of Roman books and book publishing, from the 1880s to at least 2005, has been skewed by this misconception. In particular, the function of the *recitatio*, the semi-public reading of a new literary or historical work whose pivotal significance as the main Roman 'act of publication' is discussed later, has been relegated in this false view to merely being a preliminary step to, or trial run for, some other mythical act or process of 'publication' by these 'publishers' – who were no such thing.[10]

6

Bookshops and copyshops: a trip to Rome's Argiletum and Sigillaria

Alongside the idea of 'publishers' at Rome marched a parallel misperception about bookshops at Rome. For example, Ludwig Friedlaender, in his classic *Roman Life and Manners in the Early Empire*, says that:

> the retail shops, situated in the liveliest quarters of the capital, had their pillars and entrances decorated with notices and copies of books for sale, and formed … a meeting place for the friends of literature, who came to inspect the new books or have a chat [over] large editions of favourite and superior works … the circulation of books in distant lands soon followed … the book trade did its utmost to promote the circulation of the most recent books.[1]

The idea that there were lots of booksellers in Rome and across its empire, and that they were also proactive 'publishers' of books in 'editions' as part of a flourishing and empire-wide book trade, still has strong echoes to this day. So it is time to examine who and where these booksellers were, and in what sense there was a 'book trade'.

The earliest surviving reference of any kind to a bookshop in Rome is by Cicero, who speaks of a *taberna libraria* – a shop that does books.[2] Some assume that therefore there is no evidence of a 'book trade' before Cicero's time.[3] But Strabo tells us that when Sulla carried off Aristotle's library as loot to Rome in 83 BCE, certain booksellers got hold of parts of it and made bad copies.[4] These are the earliest booksellers to whom I have found reference in Roman literature. But it does provide a time-span of over 200 years, from the time of Sulla to the time of Aulus Gellius,[5] during which there were certainly attested bookshops or booksellers of some sort in the capital city. We have little idea who patronised such bookshops. Cicero and Pliny, for example, make no mention in their letters of ever themselves setting foot in such a shop. Perhaps it was beneath their senatorial dignity, and anyway, they had their own people to make copies for them. Catullus and Horace make poetic references to visits to a bookshop,[6] either by themselves or by others, and Martial makes general as well as specific references to visiting booksellers.[7] We cannot know whether those people advised by Catullus, Horace and Martial to visit the bookshops they mention, ever actually did so. But some people must have done, and Aulus Gellius does certainly tell us about various people besides himself congregating at the antiquarian bookshops of his day.

Writing in the later second century CE, Gellius makes many references to his hunt for old books, whether in libraries or bookshops, in order to pursue his hobby of studying linguistic usages and variants.[8] Most of his bookshop references are to Rome, and in particular to the Sigillaria[9] and to the Sandaliario,[10] shopping areas where at various times he or a friend found a copy of Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, said to have belonged to Virgil himself, and of the *Annals* of Fabius Pictor, about which the bookseller and a *grammaticus* (language and literature teacher) who was in the shop at the time had an argument as to its textual accuracy. More often, however, his hunt for old books found success in libraries. Nevertheless, at a time when there appears to have been strong interest in antiquarian rather than new books, there clearly were dealers – and ones well-enough versed in their trade to be able to argue about the quality of the books they were selling – who responded to this market by stocking and selling (alleged) old books.

After Gellius' time there are, as far as I have been able to discover, no further extant references at all to bookshops in Rome itself, except one. When Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St Martin of Tours* was brought to Rome, presumably in the early fifth century, there was great demand for it, which delighted the booksellers, who did good business with it – 'for nothing commanded a readier sale or fetched a higher price'.[11]

The *librarius*

The frequent Latin term for these bookshop keepers was *librarius*, and it is important to be clear who a *librarius* was. The basic job of a *librarius*, when that term referred, as it most usually did, to a slave or freedman employee of some grand family, was that of a copyist, someone who made copies of a text to order. In contexts which make it clear that the *librarius* referred to is a shopkeeper, there is a clear implication that his basic job or trade remained much the same. He was a man who ran a copyshop, a place where you could go to get copies of a book or text made to order. But his status was different. He was a freedman or free man who was self-employed and not in the direct service of some well-off owner. We have no idea how many such simple independent copyshops there may have been, many of them perhaps not much different from the local scribe at the street corner who wrote your letters for you. Often, it is better to translate *librarius* as keeper of a 'copyshop' rather than of a 'bookshop'.

But there are well-attested cases where the role of the independent *librarius* clearly went beyond that of a mere copyshop, to mean somewhere where you could also buy ready-made copies – take-away books from stock. Catullus for example says that he will run to the bookseller's shelves (*librariorum scrinia*) to buy books.[12] Seneca calls Dorus, who clearly sold books (see below), a *librarius*,[13] while Aulus Gellius several times uses the slight variants *libraria* or *librarii* for places where he went to look for books and chat to friends who were also bibliophiles.[14]

When Roman writers wished to make it clear that they were referring specifically to the activity of bookseller as opposed to the other possible functions of the *librarius* – but also when it better fitted the poetic metrical scheme, as a set of syllables scanning long-short-short/long-short that fits the rhythm of the hexameter – they imported a Latin variant on the Greek word *bibliopôlês*, which does properly translate as 'seller of books' – the Latin variant being *bibliopola*. They reached for a new word that would not only clarify the function but may also have clarified a social distinction – that between a slave/servant and someone who was, at least sometimes, an independent or semi-independent freedman (or perhaps citizen?) on nodding terms with the gentry (e.g. Tryphon, discussed below). Thus Pliny says that his books are doing well *nisi tamen auribus nostris bibliopolae blandiuntur* – 'unless the booksellers are flattering my ears'.[15] Martial says that Tryphon is a *bibliopola*.[16] How significant were these *bibliopolae*? Over the long course of recorded Roman history, there are surprisingly few references to booksellers by name, and this is itself a first reason for caution. In addition to Tryphon[17] and the Sosii brothers,[18] we hear of Dorus,[19] Secundus,[20] Atrectus[21] (all in Rome), and Demetrius and Deios in Egypt.[22] In addition, there were the un-named antiquarian booksellers visited by Gellius. That is about the sum total of specific references.

The Sosii brothers

Horace tells us that his books will earn money for the Sosii,[23] and that his book is smoothed by the pumice stone of the Sosii.[24] The former remark is taken as evidence for a commercial trade in books in which money changed hands. This is discussed below. No more is known about the Sosii.

Secundus

Martial 1.2.7 advises anyone wanting copies of his works to go to Secundus, 'freedman of the learned Lucensis', who is to be found 'behind the entrance to the Temple of Peace and the Forum of Pallas', where 'I am for sale' (*ubi sum venalis*). So Secundus is a freedman, therefore probably still with obligations towards (and maybe funding from?) his ex-master Lucensis. There is also a hint that Secundus was neither easy to find, nor a familiar place to Martial's intended readers (or purchasers). But he did have, or could make, copies of Martial's epigrams. No more is known about him.

Atrectus

Martial gives us a bit more information about Atrectus.[25] Atrectus was in his time a *dominus tabernae*, i.e. presumably a bookshop owner or manager, and was to be found on the Argiletum shopping street in Rome,

opposite Caesar's Forum.[26] His shop could be recognised, says Martial, by the doorposts which were covered with the names of poets so that you could work out quickly whose works or books were to be found inside as ready-made copies on the shelves of the store i.e. a sort of shop-window point-of-sale advertising.[27] Martial's own works are available there, he says, in good presentation copies with 'purple covers',[28] and he makes it clear that for the bookseller it is a commercial activity by telling us that these (deluxe?) editions cost five denarii each. That is the extent of it.

Dorus

Seneca refers to Dorus as a *librarius*, presumably in Rome, presumably also in the larger sense of a keeper or owner of a bookshop, and tells us that Dorus was somehow involved with the books of Cicero and of Livy.[29]

Tryphon and the tradition of *amicitia*

Tryphon[30] is an altogether more interesting, if still quite shadowy, character. He has the minor distinction of being the only bookseller in Rome to be mentioned by two different Roman authors, namely by Martial (twice) and by Quintilian. These two authors were rough contemporaries,[31] and their mentions place Tryphon as active in Rome in the last quarter of the first century CE. Not much else is known about him personally. Martial just calls him a *bibliopola*,[32] thus again using the Greek word used by Cicero when referring specifically to the activity of selling books, but tells us nothing about any financial or procedural arrangement with Tryphon. It may fairly be presumed that, since Martial recommends Tryphon, Tryphon had copies whose textual quality Martial approved of and that these copies were made from an original, or autograph, provided by Martial. But that remains a presumption, however reasonable, and Martial does refer to two other booksellers of his time, i.e. Secundus and Atrectus, where his works can also be bought. So if there was an arrangement between him and Tryphon, it cannot have been an exclusive one. Nor does Martial refer in these contexts specifically to *volumina*, i.e. scrolls, so we do not know for sure whether Tryphon had on sale the complete books of Martial's epigrams or whether initially he offered them for sale epigram by epigram, perhaps (as has been suggested[33]) on single papyrus sheets rather than in scroll form.

Quintilian, as the Preface to Book 1 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, writes what might be called these days 'an open letter' to Tryphon. In it Quintilian begins: 'Marius Fabius Quintilianus, to his friend Tryphon, greetings' and says that Tryphon has been badgering him for some time to allow him to publish (in the Roman sense of 'publish') the text of the books on oratory which he has already written (presumably privately) for his friend Marcellus.[34] There have been reasons for delay,

> but if they are called for as urgently as you suggest, let us spread our sails … but it depends very much on your own loyal care also to see that they come into people's hands in as correct a form as possible.

There is a clear implication that Quintilian is providing Tryphon with a full copy of his work as an authorised text or 'autograph', for Tryphon to use in his book business – in other words, to distribute by means of commercial sale. There are several notable things about Quintilian's letter to Tryphon. Firstly, it is striking that, in a trade mainly consisting of small businesses whose main function was that of copying done by freedmen or slaves, Tryphon was on sufficiently familiar terms with a wealthy and famous ex-consul and ex-imperial tutor (to Domitian's grandchildren) like Quintilian, that Quintilian would both write to him in these familiar terms ('to my friend Tryphon'), allow himself to be badgered, and (presumably) decide or consent to the letter being published along with the text, as a sort of 'celebrity endorsement'. Of course, Quintilian's apparent reluctance may have been just a literary pose, and could be taken as a form of conventional *recusatio*, i.e. saying in effect, 'Well, I didn't really want to be bothered with wider distribution, I am too modest for that, but since you insist ….' Quintilian is making it clear that he was not writing primarily for a general readership. That would be beneath his dignity. His work was by origin a private favour to a socially equal friend. 'Now that's clear, well of course, if you insist ….' But even granted that, it must have *not* seemed demeaning for Quintilian to write to Tryphon in those terms.

Secondly, Quintilian's concern that copies should be as accurate as possible is expressed in the words *quam emendatissimi*, which literally means 'as corrected as possible', thus 'faultless', presumably because Quintilian knew that the process of copying by hand was notoriously prone to introduce errors (then as now).[35] Tryphon may (one could speculate) have had a reputation for good quality copying, which may be the reason why he rates several mentions in the extant literature, and that may be why Quintilian handed over his books to him rather than to anyone else.[36]

But the passage does suggest some sort of relationship between the author and the bookseller, more active than anything suggested elsewhere, perhaps with the exception of Pliny. What was that relationship? The traditional assumption that it was an 'author-publisher' relationship, besides being anachronistic, may have masked the real and more interesting point. What we are probably observing in this interchange between Quintilian and Tryphon is a typical example of the Roman relationship of *amicus* or *amicitia*, which in such a context does not indicate 'friend' or 'friendship' in the relaxed contemporary sense, but in the Roman sense of an acknowledged bond between two people, possibly of very unequal social status, implying reciprocal but not necessarily identical duties and expectations flowing in both directions.[37] This web of *amicitia* was a powerful

social glue in Roman society, and people who mattered were careful about who they accepted as *amici*.

Here, I suggest, we see Quintilian, the socially bigger man, acknowledging Tryphon, the socially lesser man, as his *amicus*, by handing his text over to him, probably in the full knowledge that Tryphon, as his reciprocal duty, will ensure that the text is properly reproduced without copying errors for distribution to others. Thus Quintilian's letter to Tryphon, rather than implying some anachronistic role of Tryphon as 'publisher', is a much more vivid example of how Rome's highly stratified society actually worked.

A lump sum rights payment?

There is no implication that Quintilian got any money from Tryphon. Kenney takes seriously the idea that booksellers paid a lump sum to authors for the right to copy and sell their books on an exclusive basis as trade copies, also supplying author's copies as part of the deal.[38] Kenney cites Birt as his authority, but prudently adds the word 'maybe'. Sherwin-White, in his well-known commentary on Pliny's *Letters*, says that booksellers

> seem to have paid a lump sum for the right of copying, and acquired ownership of the work.[39]

He then admits that 'the satirists and the lawyers are surprisingly silent about these transactions'. As well they might be. Apart from the tenuous case of Dorus cited above, there is no evidence at all in Roman sources for this notion of lump sum payments paid by booksellers for rights to copy, or of 'author's copies' or 'trade copies', all of which are practices tied to the modern publishing industry. Martial does indeed tell us that Tryphon will make a profit from selling Martial's epigrams,[40] just as Horace tells us that his book will earn money for the Sosii.[41] In other words, these booksellers made some money out of these authors – they were after all traders. But there is nothing to suggest that any of this money found its way back to the authors.

A 'flourishing book trade' in Rome?

It has nevertheless been claimed that the activities of Tryphon, Dorus and the others were part of some developed and widespread book trade, at least during the period in which we are interested. Marshall for example says[42] that:

> Commercial book production was established in Rome by the early first century … and by Pliny's day bookstores could be found far afield in the provinces, remote from the central markets of the Argiletum and the Vicus Tuscus.[43]

Kenney says:

> by the end of the first century AD the book trade in Rome had developed to the point where it was normal for new books to be made available through trade channels.[44]

Here again, in addition to the references by Horace and Martial, the evidence of the younger Pliny is important. There are two references. In one, Pliny refers to his wish to see Suetonius' work both copied, read and on sale, which may imply sale through some sort of bookseller.[45] In the other (quoted above) Pliny remarks that his already issued books are still in people's hands even though their novelty value has worn off – unless the booksellers (*bibliopolae*) are flattering him.[46] Sherwin-White argues that by this Pliny indicates that the distribution of his books was entirely in the hands of the *bibliopolae*.[47] But this is an exaggeration of what Pliny actually says. Clearly the latter passage does mean that booksellers handled Pliny's books, or some of them, on some basis (unknown). But it does not stretch to mean that the distribution of his books was entirely in the hands of the *bibliopolae*. Pliny's statement (or boast) is no more (and no less) than a piece of self-congratulation that booksellers were still able to sell copies of his works long after they first 'appeared' i.e. there was a demand. It does not justify any conclusion to the effect that Pliny, or anyone else, used bookshops as their primary or regular distribution mechanism.

All that can be safely said on the basis of this evidence is that in a huge (by the standards of the time) city like Rome, whose population may have been around a million and may have contained more literate people than most cities outside Greece or Egypt, there were in Martial's time only three fairly well-known specialist booksellers – Secundus, Atrectus and Tryphon. Earlier, there was just one, Dorus, of unknown date but perhaps in the era of Augustus. Later, there were a few booksellers catering for lovers of old books. That there were at certain times some bookshops where you could buy ready-made copies of some contemporary authors, or get copies made, is therefore clear enough. But none of the above evidence constitutes safe ground for supposing a 'flourishing book trade' in Rome, as part of a wider 'publishing business'. On the contrary, all the references are consistent with the booksellers (insofar as they were not just copyshops) being marginal or ancillary players on an active literary scene in which the normal methods used to publicise and distribute literary and semi-literary works were, as we shall see, quite different.

What about the provinces?

If bookshops were real but marginal at Rome, what about elsewhere in the empire? It has been supposed by some that distribution of Roman literature

was widespread across the empire, and that therefore there must have been bookshops in all or most major cities. Marshall (as already quoted above) says that 'by Pliny's day bookstores could be found far afield in the provinces, remote from the central markets [in Rome] of the Argiletum and the Vicus Tuscus'.[48] On the same basis, Dilke also asserts that 'we may perhaps assume that they [bookshops] were widespread throughout the provinces'.[49]

Once again, the argument revolves largely around a statement by Pliny. What Pliny actually says is: 'I didn't think there were any bookshops in Lyon, so I am all the more pleased to learn from your letter that my books are on sale there.'[50] This is the earliest surviving reference to a bookshop in the western empire outside Rome, and we may accept this as reasonable evidence that there was indeed such a bookshop, or bookshops, in that city. But how should we interpret Pliny's remark? Some take it to imply that *any* city such as Lyon would have had bookshops. But there is a contrary interpretation. It may have been a snobbish or (for once) self-deprecating remark. But it does surely show that Pliny expected to get away with the pose that one did not necessarily expect there to be a bookshop in such a location, despite its being a major urban centre. His remark is therefore not positive evidence of widespread bookselling. If anything, it points to the contrary. It also, incidentally, contradicts the idea of a special relationship between Pliny and any particular bookseller.

Centuries later, Augustine tells us that there were in his time bookshops in Carthage and Hippo.[51] Later again, Sidonius in a letter to Bishop Remigius makes a highly ambiguous and vague reference to a possible bookshop in Rheims where copies of declamations by the Bishop may have been bought by a mutual friend.[52] It may be supposed that Athens[53] and Alexandria,[54] as great centres of learning, had bookshops. But the strong contrary example of Antioch in the fourth century CE must be noted. The fourth-century rhetorician and teacher, Libanius, in his letters and speeches, makes frequent reference to the shortage of copyists in that important city, both privately employed and public, in connection with his own and others' works, and refers to the need in schools to buy books. But he makes no reference to booksellers as such, and Norman, commenting on Libanius, infers that 'the demand for books in Antioch was relatively small' and that the cultured intelligentsia was not numerous enough to allow any great development of the book trade in Syria at that time.[55] There are, however, two other interesting cases which may point in a more positive direction, in Egypt and in Brundisium.

Demetrius

In a papyrus fragment found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt,[56] and dating to the second century CE, one man is writing a letter to another asking for copies of books by a certain Hypsicrates, and a different hand has added a report that Demetrius the bookseller has copies of that author. No more is known

about this Demetrius, but the reference raises the obvious question – if a small place in Egypt like Oxyrhynchus had a bookdealer (or even if he lived somewhere nearby), surely it must imply that bookdealers were common, at least in Egypt? Such a picture is supported by a second century CE letter referring to a certain Deios who tried and failed to sell six parchment codices to the letter writer, who however put down a deposit on eight others.[57] (The reference to parchment codices at that date is interesting for the discussion in Chapter 2.) Deios was presumably a travelling book salesman. So maybe such salesmen were common elsewhere in the Greek East or, just possibly, throughout the empire?

On the other hand, Egypt may have been a special case. It had a long tradition of the use of writing, and of a literate Greek-speaking upper class. Levels of literacy were probably high by the standards of the Roman Empire.[58] That Greek-speaking upper class, whether of Greek ethnic origin or 'assimilated' Egyptians, may have been keen to preserve their separateness from the (illiterate) general run of the Egyptian population by, amongst other things, emphasising its literary culture and connections to Greece and the rest of the Greek world. The Oxyrhynchus fragments certainly attest to the widespread presence of scribe-copyists in Egypt, if not actual booksellers. Cribiore remarks that these letters

> offer a very suggestive picture of a circle of friends who eagerly bought books, exchanged them, had them copied, and anxiously looked for others.[59]

Such a description could fit Rome itself. But outside Rome, in the absence of substantial other evidence, it may be safer to regard Egypt as a special case. But does Brundisium provide that other evidence?

The odd case of the Brundisium bookseller

A passage in Aulus Gellius that has intrigued many commentators is his vivid story that when passing through Brundisium (now Brindisi, in southern Italy, then a key port on the Greek-Italian trade route) on his way back from Greece he was amazed to find bundles of old books for sale in the port area which, despite their being in filthy condition, he bought because they were also cheap, and found among them many (to him) extraordinary things to read.[60] The books were of unspecified dates of origin but 'ancient', they were Greek, and he promptly read them from end to end. Is this incident evidence for a flourishing book trade in Brundisium, as some claim,[61] or even for a flourishing book trade outside Rome generally? A contrary interpretation of the passage is that Gellius' evident surprise at finding these books in this place, such that he thought it necessary and interesting to narrate his discovery to a wider readership, shows precisely the opposite – that such booksellers were <u>not</u> to be expected. If, that is, the incident happened at all.

Zetzel maintains that 'we must assume that Gellius invented the story of the bookstall at Brundisium'.[62] Why? Because the wonders that Gellius claims to have found in these books are almost all to be found, in the same order and in the same words, in the elder Pliny's *Natural History*.[63] The wonders described are (for example) that the Scythians eat human flesh, that there are men with one eye in the middle of the forehead, like the Cyclops, and men whose feet point backwards. All these are indeed also in Pliny. But that is not enough to relegate the whole story to fiction. The 'Brundisium' author may have got the stories from Pliny, or both may have had the same source, or the stories may have been part of a common story-telling tradition. Moreover, Gellius himself acknowledges the similarity to Pliny. A bit further on, he says that he himself later found the same stories in Pliny's book.[64] So the Brundisium incident could be taken as genuine, but it is still negative evidence, in the sense that it was surprising to find books on sale in such a place. This therefore is much like Pliny's reference to Lyon, cited above – taken by some to be positive evidence of a widespread phenomenon, but actually negative evidence of just the opposite, that booksellers were not to be expected in such places.

All in all, the direct evidence for bookshops being consistently found throughout the empire is at least as thin as the evidence for a substantial book trade in its capital city. Booksellers there certainly were – here and there. But a possible bookshop in Lyon, (later) a bookdealer in or near Oxyrhynchus, a bundle of books for sale in Brundisium, and (later still) a bookshop in Carthage and one in Hippo, and (even later) just possibly one in Rheims – these are not much upon which to build a picture of bookshops being found frequently in the provinces across the empire and across several centuries. While admitting that not all names of booksellers may have survived in such literature of the period as we still have, the best that can be said, to be consistent with the scrappy evidence, is that at certain periods there were one or two or three well-known copyshop/bookshops in Rome, and at other times one or two outside Rome, and that sometimes at least, as with Tryphon, these booksellers had a pro-active relationship with certain authors that went beyond the basic meaning of *librarius* as mere passive copyist. Sometimes, they specialised in old as opposed to new books. Such shops were small-scale businesses dealing in what were generally, by Roman standards, luxury items.[65] Roman bookshops were neither the only nor the main method of distribution of written works. Over-emphasis on an alleged book trade has confused discussion of the larger and more culturally significant set of inter-related issues of how, in the main, texts actually were put around, and why.

7

Books for looks: the library shelves as imperial patronage

If bookshops of some sort existed in Rome and its empire but were infrequent and far from constituting a systematic channel of distribution for works of literature, then might libraries have been correspondingly more important for their distribution and preservation? Some have thought so. But just as Roman bookshops were in the main copyshops rather than bookshops in the modern sense, thus making the use of the term 'bookshop' potentially misleading, so too the modern term 'library' can give rise to misperceptions about what a Roman library was, and indeed has done so. In particular, there has been a misleading tendency to differentiate Roman libraries between 'private' libraries and 'public' libraries, with the assumption that the use and facilities of these 'public' libraries were akin to modern public libraries.

The institution of the 'public library' is a familiar one in modern societies, and carries with it many implications about rights of public access, a comprehensive range of books stocked, an acquisition policy, cataloguing, rights to borrow books, and librarian services. The modern public library is essentially about putting its use and the books stored in it at the service of a broad public, and at the service of political and intellectual democracy. What are often referred to as the 'public libraries' that sprang up in imperial Rome were not like that at all. They can more usefully be seen as being in the direct line of tradition of the large libraries that leading Roman generals acquired in the closing century or so of the Republic, in the main through looting Greek cities – except that they were owned and managed by the emperor and his minions and successors. In both republican and imperial times, libraries were for the elite, and were about power, wealth and prestige, and the display of all three. Roman libraries, both republican and imperial, like libraries in many other eras, were social and political markers of status and pretension to (Greek) culture.[1] In imperial times, however, they took on an extra dimension, sinister or inevitable depending on your view, when they became an all-too-practical expression of imperial patronage of, and attempted control of, cultural life.

Imperial libraries certainly did function somewhat differently to the libraries of private individuals. But the danger lies in supposing that the imperial libraries therefore necessarily took on the ambitions or functions

of a modern public library, or necessarily took on the task of systematically acquiring and stocking new works of literature and making them available to the reading public. To the extent that they did this (we know very little about what filled the shelves of any of these libraries) it was not for reasons of public philanthropy or preserving the national literary heritage. What it meant to be included or excluded from the imperial libraries was as much a political as a cultural matter.

Private and republican libraries

The history of Greek and Roman libraries, as far as it is known from the typically scrappy evidence, has been discussed in several recent works,[2] and there is no advantage in rehearsing the detail here. But at Rome, the eminent Roman general Lucius Aemilius Paulus took possession in 167 BCE of the Macedonian royal library, then in the hands of King Perseus of Bithynia. It was war booty, and became the first great private book collection in Rome, and may have set the fashion.[3] Later, in the first century BCE, Sulla acquired Aristotle's library, or what was left of it, after his sack of Athens (later inherited by his son Faustus), and Marcus Licinius Lucullus as military commander in Asia Minor also amassed a big private holding of books by right of conquest, which he famously put at others' disposal at Rome.[4] Thus war and war booty, and the seizure and transfer of Greek book collections to Rome, was at the heart of the development of libraries in that city. The connection between libraries and imperial (in the broad sense) power was from the beginning a close one, and here again we see the imperial (in the narrow sense) Roman regime following on from its republican predecessor rather than instituting something radically new.

In the late Republic, famous figures such as Cicero, Atticus and Varro created private libraries. We do not know exactly how, but they borrowed and copied a lot from each other.[5] Casson argues that much earlier, by the closing decades of the third century BCE, private libraries of Greek works must have been widespread at Rome, either owned by well-off families or comprehensive collections owned by theatre managers.[6] Where else, he asks, did Latin dramatists of the time such as Plautus or Terence get their Greek originals to copy from and adapt for the Roman stage? This is not a strong argument, since there may have been other routes such as direct import from Greece or from the Greek-speaking cities of Italy. But over time private libraries certainly did become a feature of republican Rome's wealthy class, and private libraries created purely for social prestige – books-for-looks – later became the object of satire.[7] But Martial indicates that he had a small private library, presumably for his use as a writer:[8] the poet Persius was said to have a collection of 700 volumes of the poet Chrysippus:[9] and the elder Pliny had some 2,000 volumes from which to compile his own works.[10] Charred remains of some 1,100 papyrus scrolls

have been recovered from the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum – there must have been more.[11]

Imperial libraries

The first so-called 'public' (i.e. imperial)[12] library at Rome was set up by Asinius Pollio in the Atrium Libertatis (The Hall of Liberty). He was put in charge of what had been a pet but abortive project of Julius Caesar by Augustus in the 30s BCE.[13] This was soon followed by Rome's second and bigger imperial library, again set up by Augustus, but this time next door to his palace on the Palatine Hill.[14] Later, Augustus added a third imperial library, at the Porticus of Octavia.[15] I suspect (but it is my guess) that Augustus' original motive for setting up these imperial libraries, apart from honouring his adopted father's wish, may have been to house the vast stock of books he probably confiscated from the heirs of the great republican generals mentioned above, several of whom died fighting during his or his adoptive father's seizures of power – on the losing side.[16] He had a lot of books to put somewhere.

Equally, however, these new imperial libraries became part of the new imperial order created by Augustus, even if in typical Augustan manner they were a development of a previous republican institution, and they need to be seen in that light. Not surprisingly, therefore, following emperors such as Tiberius, Vespasian,[17] Trajan and Severus Alexander all added further libraries, and libraries, if small, were also added to some imperial bath complexes, i.e. those of the emperors Trajan, Caracalla and (probably) Diocletian. An inventory of Rome made in the time of Constantine counted 28 libraries in all.[18] Libraries were an integral part of the imperial apparatus, and were something that emperors routinely did.

Outside Rome, it may have been different. The younger Pliny gave money for the building and maintenance of a library in his home town of Comum,[19] and the emperor Hadrian built a library in Athens. A private donor in the fourth century CE financed a library at Timgad, in modern Algeria.[20] There was a library at Carthage.[21] But how many more such provincial libraries there were in the Latin (i.e. western) half of the empire, we do not know. The fact that well-educated men arrived in Rome from outside it in increasing numbers as the empire matured, as budding authors or senators or imperial officials (Spain for example produced the two Senecas, Lucan, Martial and Quintilian himself) is certainly *prima facie* evidence that such men must have had access to books in order to gain their evident educational qualifications outside Rome.[22] But we are given little clue about how these obviously well-educated figures obtained access to books or owned them. It may be supposed that it was through private family libraries, or through local municipal libraries if those existed, or though swapping and copying of texts between friends, as we saw in Egypt. But we just don't know – the evidence is next to nil, and there

were other means of acquiring and studying books. It may for example have been through the grammarian-teachers whose activities are well attested, aided perhaps by local copyists. Marseilles (Massilia) employed rhetoricians and philosophers, who seem to have moved in numbers between that city and Rome.[23] Tacitus tells us that the young Agricola found the teachers of philosophy in that city inspiring.[24] Gallic eloquence was proverbial. At Lyon, the emperor Caligula founded a competition in oratory.[25] Inscriptions attest to teachers of 'grammar' and rhetoric working in at least 14 cities of Gaul, but over several centuries.[26] Inscriptions show teachers at work in at least four Spanish cities. So this is a more likely route for those clever provincials to attain the texts and qualifications to storm Rome itself.[27]

Library holdings

Typically, imperial and at least some other Roman libraries were divided into two sections – one for Greek books, one for Latin books. But they may have been small compared to the huge holdings attributed to the Greek libraries of Alexandria and Pergamum. Trajan's library is reckoned to have been the largest, with over 10,000 scrolls in each of the two sections, Latin and Greek, making over 20,000 in all – or perhaps 42,000 if the scrolls were stored end-to-end on each shelf.[28] This compares to the 200,000 imputed to the library at Pergamum or the much larger, if hotly disputed, number reputedly held at the great library of Alexandria – estimates have ranged from 500,000 to 700,000 items. However, these numbers may have been a gross exaggeration. A recent estimate for Alexandria puts the probable total there at a mere 10-15,000 rolls, so perhaps Trajan's library did bear comparison in terms of size.[29] The real problem is that we have only scant detail about what was in any of these Roman libraries.

Casson argues that such libraries must have maintained 'a representative selection of older works',[30] but if so, we do not know what that meant in practice. And what new acquisitions were then made? Ovid refers to the 'works of old and contemporary authors' that can be inspected by readers in these libraries, so there was presumably a spread of works, old and new, to be found on the shelves.[31] Ovid also lists the libraries from which his works were expunged after his disgrace and exile,[32] and that may be taken as an indication that both he and other contemporary authors could be found in them. Varro had his statue in Pollio's library, which indicates that his many works were there too.[33] The works of Livy and Virgil were in the libraries of Caligula's time, because Suetonius tells us that Caligula did not like those authors and considered having them, and their statues, expunged from the libraries. Tiberius had three Greek authors put into the libraries because he liked them.[34] Martial asks a certain Sextus, who may have been the librarian of the Palatine library,

to get his epigrams onto that library's shelves, along with those of other similar writers.[35] Galen refers to bookshops and libraries as places to find books.[36] Much later, the emperor Tacitus had the works of his historian namesake put into all the libraries in case they got forgotten.[37]

Does all this prove a systematic policy of stocking contemporary literature? Casson assumes so,[38] and the evidence suggests that at least those writers who gained contemporary fame and imperial favour would be found in the libraries. Casson also suggests that authors donated copies of new works to the libraries, in their own self-interest, and that this was the way in which the libraries acquired most of their holdings of current writing.[39] Perhaps some authors did – but there is no proof, and perhaps it was mainly authors of learned works, making libraries more like reference libraries.[40] So it may be that for works that were not intended or suitable for reading aloud at, say, a *recitatio*, libraries did offer an alternative route for 'publication' and survival. But that is a supposition, and when Aulus Gellius tells about his frequent visits to libraries, it is in search of much older learned works dating back centuries.[41] If he found books of such age intact, it hardly suggests that they had been much used. Casson also suggests that the libraries in Rome specialised in order to offset the comparatively small size of each of them.[42] Perhaps they did. But again there is no evidence. Perhaps they did consciously try to act collectively as the storehouse of the national literary heritage, like the British Library or the Library of Congress. Or maybe that idea too is an anachronism, drawn from the modern library system. In short, we do not know what the 'acquisition policy' of the libraries of the imperial regime was, so it is rash to assume that new authors could rely on libraries as propagators of their new works, any more than they could or would rely on bookshops. Nauta remarks that Martial

> does not seem to have believed that the existence of public libraries greatly increased the number of his readers.[43]

Rather, it seems to me more likely that imperial librarians would feel it safe to put a new work into the imperial libraries only if it was a low-risk learned treatise such as Pliny's *Natural History* (once it had been approved by its dedicatee, the emperor Titus) or had already acquired a status as part of the canon of acceptable Latin literature. Horsfall refers to the 'empty shelves on the Palatine' as an incentive to Roman writers to fill them.[44] I see them rather as an indication of hesitation about what to put on them.

Using the library

The Roman imperial libraries were certainly managed and staffed as part of the imperial bureaucracy by men like Martial's Sextus. There was an

imperial procurator in charge of them all,[45] and the job became part of the imperial civil service career ladder. One or more librarians[46] actually looked after the books, and we know the names of many of them from inscriptions. There were also freedmen or slaves to do the routine work.[47] But what was that routine work? Casson argues that:

> Rome almost certainly followed Alexandria's practice of making sure that the texts on their shelves were accurate, were as free as possible of scribal errors and other flaws … [copies could be made] from a trustworthy text.[48]

Once again, the problem is that there is no evidence for this assertion. It may be true – or false. It is also often assumed that the libraries had (or were) in effect public reading rooms, in the modern sense.[49] But we have no surviving description that demonstrates that type of use, either written description or visual record.[50] Could just anyone wander in and demand a book? We don't know, but it hardly seems likely.[51] Horace tells a certain Celsus to stick to material he found privately, and not bother with material found in the Palatine Library.[52] So presumably Celsus did or could use the library. But Ovid refers to the *custos* of the library, the guardian who would not let him in,[53] and that may have a standard figure who, like the doorman in a large private house, allowed or refused admission, depending who you were.

It is assumed too that you (or one of your literate slaves) could go in and copy some work, new or old, that you were interested in.[54] The main evidence cited for this copying in libraries is a reference in Quintilian,[55] where he remarks (ironically, I suspect) that if anyone queries his list of poets to be read as part of a proper education, they can always go to a library and copy out 'the index' and incorporate it into their own version of his list. He uses the Latin word *index*, which means the label-identifier attached to a scroll or more generally, perhaps some sort of catalogue. What sort of catalogue is a matter of debate, since the clumsy Roman numerical system does not lend itself easily to making lists, and the Romans tended to think more in terms of syllables than letters, so that for them the alphabet was not a natural method of listing.[56] For example, Book 1 of the elder Pliny's *Natural History* is a detailed contents list of, and list of sources for, the remaining 36 books. But it is not arranged in alphabetical order or as a numerical list, nor is it a book index in the modern sense to help find things. There are of course no page numbers cited. It is just a list of topics, in the same order as in the books themselves. So maybe Quintilian just meant scanning the labels on the shelves. And were there facilities for copying? Could you sit in a library and read and/or transcribe a chosen book? Casson refers to 'chairs'.[57] Modern visual representations of Roman libraries tend to show them with tables at which people sit and work. Casson believes that:

> Greek libraries were in essence stacks. No facilities were supplied for readers … A Roman library was just the opposite: it was designed primarily for readers, to provide them with spacious, handsome surroundings in which to work … No doubt most of their users were people with a professional interest in, or deep-seated feeling for, literature and learning – writers, lawyers, philosophers, teachers, scholars, and the like.[58]

In short, a sort of idealised senior common room at Yale or Oxford. The problem is that there are no references in Latin sources to chairs in libraries, and the supposition that there were tables is at best questionable. Small argues that the Romans did not use desks or tables for writing, only for counting money; that there is little or no evidence about the interior set-up of Roman libraries; and that the putting of tables into visual reconstructions of Roman libraries is a modern assumption, another anachronism.[59] No fragments of marble tables have been found, she asserts, and in the case of Trajan's library, the evidence is confined to patterns found on the floor and their interpretation. Given that Romans normally read aloud, often standing or walking about, it may not have been their preference to sit at tables to read – or that of their fellow library users.[60] Perhaps here we see at work the false assumption that the Roman book was essentially like a modern book, an object to read silently in a reading room.

If you did not sit in a library, could you borrow books from it? Small, despite her scepticism about library furniture, distinguishes between 'circulating' and 'non-circulating' libraries, and by the former presumably means a lending library.[61] Casson says that 'at least some libraries permitted borrowing'.[62] What is the evidence for lending and borrowing? There are two references only. One is that Fronto, on the advice of his friend, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, gets a book from one of the imperial libraries.[63] But this could be a special case – the library official in charge would hardly refuse a suggestion from the emperor. The other is a story told by Aulus Gellius about when he was at Tibur and there was a discussion about the merits and demerits of cold snow-water as a drink, and one of the disputants went off to the library and fetched a book of Aristotle that mentioned the subject.[64] If it is a true story, it does attest to taking out a book from a library. But it may have been a private library and/or a library owned by a friend at one of the villas at Tibur, so that it too was a special case. One or two known but probably special instances are a thin basis upon which to generalise about lending of library books.

The main thing that becomes clear from reading Roman authors is that libraries were, like so many other venues in Rome and elsewhere, social centres, places to meet other people of your class or with the same interests, just as bookshops were except that libraries also had statues. Martial lists libraries alongside theatres as meeting places where labour is transformed into pleasure.[65] Aulus Gellius haunts libraries, meets

friends there and chats, in his search for antiquarian books and phrases.[66] A library was a congenial environment in which the literati of Rome could spend their leisure hours in learned discourse. What serious research, reading, or copying they did there is another question.

Ovid and the imperial system

In the time of Augustus Ovid's works were expunged from the main three imperial libraries when he fell out of favour and was sent into exile – for life, as it turned out. So his works were in the libraries in the first place – he was after all the leading literary figure of his day, and inclusion in the libraries was perhaps a way of confirming or advertising that high status. Ovid may also have had his bust in one or more libraries,[67] as Varro did – a very visible mark of imperial favour and a mark of honour bestowed upon (presumably, given space limitations) only a small number of authors. But being thrown out of an imperial library did not necessarily mean that his works were not available. Ovid expressed the hope that if a *statio publica*, a public institution, is closed to him, he may still lie in a *loco privato*, a private place.[68] So while ejection from the imperial libraries did not necessarily spell oblivion – in the case of Ovid, it clearly did not – it was still something that hurt. It meant withdrawal of imperial patronage of the poet (or any other author) and presumably meant that other patrons would withdraw support as well. Marshall writes that:

> the new imperial libraries, though housed in state buildings, were not so much Carnegie-style institutions, 'public' in the modern sense, as the emperor's libraries generously thrown open to his 'amici' and urban 'clientes' as a form of patronage.[69]

Even if not sent into exile, an author could become some sort of social pariah, ejected from the emperor's circle of acknowledged friends, and so from other circles too. In the context of Rome's complex web of patron-client relationships, loss of this status as *amicus* was not just a matter of pride, but struck at the very heart of a man's status in life. The example of Ovid shows that by means of his libraries which he controlled, and by use of his extensive staff managing the libraries, any emperor could if he wished exercise great power over writers – quite apart from the more violent means of book burning and prosecution of their authors discussed later. Marshall goes on to say that from the outset there was:

> a sinister implication of imperial interest and power [so that] the power of gratifying inclusion or damning exclusion thus lay ultimately with the libraries' proprietor – the working of the imperial libraries may be said to have amounted to an oblique form of censorship.[70]

Without denying that people (of the right sort) used them, the dominant

impression is that imperial libraries were in the main symbols, statements and instruments of imperial power and prestige, not unlike the other grand imperial buildings of Rome. Libraries typically held huge statues of the emperor who had them built.[71] As buildings, they were grandiose public monuments, meant to impress as well as (rather than?) educate. Through its libraries, the imperial regime took at least partial control of literature and learning, as it took what control it could of everything else. The imperial libraries were an upper-class equivalent of 'bread and circuses' for the populace.[72] Innocent public libraries, in the modern sense, they were not.

Within the limits of the imperial system, Rome's libraries may well have played a significant if unquantifiable part in Rome's literary culture. The evidence tells us too little about the contents and use of these libraries for it to be safe to make generalisations. But quite apart from the imperial selection (and rejection) system, about which we get a glimpse through the case of Ovid, the libraries cannot have been relied upon as a standard distribution mechanism for new works. After all, you had to know that a new work existed, that it was worth having a copy of it, and that a particular library had it, to think of sending your copyist along to make a copy – if, that is, you could do that at all. Inclusion in a library must have followed rather than created an established reputation. So that initial reputation and demand for copies had to be created by some other means – by the *recitatio* and by privately-made copies, as discussed in later chapters. We may however be grateful to Roman libraries for at least one thing, and that is the survival of that small portion of Latin literature that we still have. The works that survived into the Middle Ages may well have been plucked from the imperial or other libraries amid the upheavals that followed the collapse of Roman central authority in the western empire.[73]

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What the Latin tells us

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8

Slavery as the enabling infrastructure of Roman literature

There are many figures that appear on the Roman literary landscape in addition to those we might refer to as the author, writer or reader – functionaries whose distinctive roles merited separate job-titles such as *librarius, notarius, amanuensis, anagnostes, bibliopola, glutinator* and *exceptor*. Who were all these people? Even with the Latin equivalents of author, writer and reader – words like *scriptor* and *lector* – we have to look closely at who was doing what. To do this, we need to look carefully at the Latin terminology, at what the Romans actually say, to see what they and their language can tell us about what 'publishing' really entailed at Rome, about how books were created, and by whom. What is striking is the degree of 'indicative ambiguity' that we find in the terminology they used.

Authors, writers and readers

The Latin language does not contain a noun that normally and unambiguously denotes an 'author' in the way that this English word does. The obvious Latin equivalent ***auctor*** can indeed mean 'author' in the modern sense,[1] but more often it means an 'authority' on some subject or fact,[2] an expert, or someone who authorises something to be done. *Scriba* as meaning an author is rare,[3] and more usually indicates one who has charge of public records or accounts, a public or official scribe, who may have been a public slave or may have held a more elevated status. They may, for example, have been officials attached to a Roman magistrate or other office-holder. Thus one inscription[4] – presumably having an inscription implied some higher status – refers to someone who was a *scriba ab epistolis Graecis* (roughly, clerk in charge of Greek-language communications) for a religious affairs office in Rome. Confusingly, such persons may also be called *scriba librarius*. Perhaps being an 'author' was not, for the Romans, so clear-cut or separate a function as to merit a standard word for it.

Words for writer and reader are not clear-cut in meaning either. ***Scriptor*** also has an interesting 'indicative ambiguity' about its meaning. *Scriptor* can certainly mean an author or writer in the modern sense of the person who composes a work.[5] But it also often means simply one who writes things down, a scribe or copyist.[6] To emphasise this latter meaning, Horace refers to the *librarius scriptor* – the 'book writer'.[7] But it is the

duality of the word that is interesting. *Scriptor* straddles both the manual and the intellectual meanings of the English 'writer' – but English has the more specific term 'author' for the person who intellectually composes, which Latin does not.

The same 'indicative ambiguity' appears in relation to the ***lector***. *Lector* can mean simply 'reader' in today's sense.[8] Sometimes there is a clear implication of reading aloud. Quintilian refers to a schoolboy told to be the *lector* to read aloud to the rest of the class.[9] But the word could also denote a professional reader, someone who is employed to read aloud to others.[10] The *lector* could, in this latter sense, be the same person as the *scriptor* – Cicero refers to one Diphilus as the *scriptor et lector* of Crassus.[11] Yet one may assume that Crassus was quite capable of being a *scriptor* and a *lector* himself – but in the other meaning of those two terms.

In addition to his large staff of *librarii*,[12] Cicero's wealthy friend Atticus also had a different group of men in his household, the *anagnôstae,*[13] his professional readers. ***Anagnôstês*** was a Greek word imported into Latin usage as an equivalent to *lector* but to denote more clearly the second meaning of *lector* as a professional reader-aloud. This is itself, I suggest, an interesting verbal importation, perhaps indicating some anxiety about the ambiguity of the Latin term. Thus in the case of Atticus the *librarii* presumably did the writing and copying which Atticus performed as a service to his friends (but not as a business), while the *anagnôstae* did the reading aloud. For people with poor or failing eyesight, the *lector* was also the Roman equivalent of a pair of spectacles or reading glasses.[14] The lector could also be in effect an entertainer. Pliny refers to people leaving a dinner party when a *lector* appeared to read to the guests.[15] Hendrickson points out that the word ***auditor*** in Latin, 'listener' or 'hearer', also often means in effect 'the reader', with again an indicative ambiguity as to whether the reader hears his own voice when he is reading aloud to himself or whether it is the voice of another reading to him.[16]

Secretaries

Of these important literary 'dramatis personae' the most commonly referred to is the ***librarius***. This was a staff member who could deal with all aspects of handling books and textual composition (hence the job title, from the Latin *liber*, a book) and of writing and reading generally, so the term can be inherently confusing. Where there was not a specialist *scriptor* or *lector* or *notarius* (see below), the *librarius* seems to have straddled all or any of these skills – and more. A term that meant (to Cicero, for example) a person who could write and read, and was a sort of literary and correspondence secretary, also came to signify someone who worked in a library and later a bookseller in the sense of a place where (as we have seen) you could get a book copied or buy a scroll with the text of a given author already copied onto it. Cicero at one point asks his secretary Tiro[17]

to send him urgently a *librarius*, preferably a Greek one, since he is wasting so much time copying out his notes – *in scribendis hypomnematis*. This was presumably a man with native skills in writing Greek, though it may just be a preference by Cicero for a Greek 'secretary'. This basic sense of *librarius* as a secretary with literate skills occurs elsewhere in Cicero,[18] and in Livy.[19]

Librarius also came to be used in a wide variety of contexts other than the retinue of rich households like that of Atticus. An inscription[20] tells us of someone who held the post of [*librarius*] *ab epistolis Latinis* in the imperial household, so showing how the post of *librarius* became an important one around the imperial court or in the imperial civil service. Suetonius says that already in the time of Claudius the emperor had in his retinue [*librarii*] *ab epistulis, a studiis, a rationibus* i.e. for correspondence, for making extracts from books for his master's literary efforts, and for accounts.[21] There was also the military post of ***librarius legionis***, which presumably refers to the man who writes letters for the officers (and others?) perhaps from dictation, as in the many letters found at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall, written on thin slivers of folding wood and often in the same hand, apart from the signature and salutation which appear to have been added by the sender to the dictated text.[22] The skill range of the *librarius* could possibly also cover the job of the ***glutinator*** whose job it was to glue together the papyrus sheets that went to make up the bookroll.

Librarius may also be contrasted with the ***notarius***, who was something akin to a shorthand note-taker or speedwriter who took down dictation from his owner and made sense of it by later writing it out in full. For example, Pliny tells us that his uncle the elder Pliny, in addition to a *lector* to read to him, had a *notarius* constantly at his side with notebooks – *pugillares* – to take down ideas and excerpts for the many books he owned, so that when he died he left 160 such notebooks crammed with tiny writing on both sides of the 'paper'. Pliny himself refers to his own *notarius* ('*notarium voco et … quae formulaverim, dicto*' – 'I call my *notarius* and dictate what I have composed') and says he took his *pugillares* with him even when out hunting. Martial has an epigram written to/about a *notarius* and elsewhere refers to a *notarius velox*, a 'swift notetaker', presumed to be a particularly skilful shorthand writer or other sort of speedwriter.[23] The *notarius* also took down proceedings of the law courts. The ***exceptor*** appears to have had much the same imperial function as the *notarius*. Quintilian refers to *notarii* who were sloppy in taking his words down ('*excipientium*') in the hope of a quick profit.[24] It is to be noted that the *notarius* is by definition someone to whom one *dictates* material.[25] Martial refers to a pretentious man surrounded by a crowd of *notarii* with their notebooks outstretched.[26] Much later – and as an illustration of the change in usage over time – the *notarius* also became a high official in the imperial court, much as, or more so than, other members of the imperial

secretariat. Constantine, for example, used people of this title in the imperial chancellery, and sent them on important missions. In addition, there was the general term ***amanuensis***, almost literally an extension of the hands of the person he worked for, a general-purpose term that seems to have covered almost all these secretarial duties.[27]

Slaves as infrastructure

So who exactly were all these people with this great range of job titles? This analysis of the personnel that the Romans used in and around their composition and 'publishing' of books is most revealing about the role played by slaves and slavery.[28] As we have seen, on the one hand, the 'writer' at Rome could either be what we call the author of the literary work himself, or the secretary who physically wrote out the text for his master/patron. On the other hand, the 'reader' could be either the person perusing the text for private purposes; or a professional reader who perused the text and read it out to, or for, other people. Here we come to what is perhaps the most important of the 'indicative ambiguities' of Roman publishing terminology. All these people whose job titles we have been discussing were slaves, or sometimes freed slaves still in the household.[29]

Such persons, slaves or freedmen, were on the staff of those men who were able to afford them. These literate slaves or ex-slaves were perhaps among the fortunate few compared to the generally brutal regime suffered by Roman slaves. Nevertheless, Romans of the upper classes apparently took for granted the presence of these human aides to writing and reading. Often, the presence of a slave/freedman figure is not mentioned, but has to be inferred. So common were they in these grand households that their presence is often unacknowledged, assumed, taken for granted. Yet these slaves were a key component of literary life at Rome, perhaps a defining instrument (an *instrumentum vocale* – a tool with a voice) of how literary life was carried on. Literate slaves were the indispensable enabling infrastructure of Roman literary life, as of written exchanges of all kinds.[30]

Naming some names

Some of the names of these slave-secretaries have come down to us, though of course the vast majority have not. Cicero had his main secretary Tiro and a reader called Sositheus[31] and another called Dionysius who ran away with some of Cicero's books.[32] He also had a man called Tyrannio who sorted his books.[33] His friend Atticus had two men (among many others) called Dionysius (one may assume, not the same one) and Menophilus. Crassus had his Diphilus. Such men are referred to, by Nepos among others,[34] as Atticus' *pueri* (boys), much as white settlers in Africa used to refer to their African servants as 'boy' – whatever their age. M. Marius, a friend of Cicero, had his *lector* Protogenes.[35] The younger Pliny had a *lector*

called Encolpius;[36] and the emperor Marcus Aurelius had a *lector* called Niger.[37] Virgil had an ex-slave called Eros who was, says Suetonius,[38] his *librarius et libertus*, his secretary/copyist and his freedman. All or most have Greek names, suggesting that they either came from the eastern half of the empire, or had their ethnic origin there – or perhaps it was the fashion to call a literate slave by a Greek name, just to make clear his status and skill.

Of these men, Cicero's Tiro is by far the most famous, thanks largely to the letters sent to Tiro by Cicero or by Cicero's brother Quintus that have survived as part of Cicero's voluminous correspondence – the 27 letters that form Book 16 of Cicero's *Letters to Friends*. Tiro was the likely initiator of Roman shorthand (see Appendix A). Tiro began as a slave, and was later freed by Cicero. He outlived Cicero, and may himself have been Cicero's literary executor, or editor of Cicero's collections of letters.[39] Cicero's letters to Tiro show great concern for Tiro's health, in tones which suggest a very warm relationship between the two men. There has been much speculation about the exact nature of this relationship, but little doubt that it was

> a relationship of love and care … forged across the boundaries of social status. [But] the paradox is that Cicero and his family love their (ex-) slave in the language of slavery itself (or its parodies).[40]

Particularly striking is the use, even if in jest, by Quintus of the word 'thrash' in relation to Tiro. In what is labelled as Letter 26, Quintus says he has 'thrashed' Tiro, at least in his mind, for not sending him a letter. Thrashing with a whip was the most forcible symbol of a Roman master's absolute power over his slave. The correspondence generally is full of terms that characterise the slave/freedman's relation to his (ex-)master – words like *officium* (duty) and *fides* (faithfulness).[41]

Slaves as process

Such men as Tiro and the others were perhaps the true readers and writers of the Roman world, and were slaves by status – those who wrote down the dictation of the great and not-so-great men who could afford a literate slave, and those who read out texts, literary or otherwise, to their masters, in business sessions, during travel, or at dinner parties and as entertainments. Dictation to a secretary figure, probably repeated several times with successive drafts, was the key process of literary composition. In some cases, such as Martial, we do not know for sure whether or not a particular author did it like that – Martial does not tell us. In other cases, such as Virgil, Cicero, Horace and both Plinys, we can be sure that they did. That creates a likelihood that Martial did too, even if his means were so comparatively modest that the younger Pliny had to give him some travel money to get back to Spain.

A literary or other work came about through an oral process of composition, or rather an iteration between oral and written, between high-class 'author' and menial slave 'secretary'. In that iteration between spoken word and text-on-paper that was characteristically Roman, one may speculate about what positive contribution such menials may have made to the literary and intellectual quality of their master's work: one may suspect, quite a lot. Rome's slaves, the literate ones, were the essential mediators of the transfer of the oral to the written and back to the oral. High skill and slavery were not incompatible. One consequence of this was that slaves, if not already accomplished in the arts of writing or of reading – and these, as we have seen, appear to have been separable skills, often practised by separate slaves but sometimes by the same one – were specially trained up in these skills and in the slave markets could be sold on for appropriately higher purchase prices that reflected their higher utility value.

Seneca in one of his letters is quite rude, in a snobby but illustrative way, about a rich man called Calvisius Sabinus, who paid large sums of money for slaves who had memorised all the works of Homer and Hesiod.[42] Sabinus bored his guests at dinner with half-forgotten lines learnt from these slaves. In other words, he regarded the knowledge inside the heads of his slaves as his knowledge – the slaves were merely external memory devices. Thus it is arguable that upper-class Romans neither read much in our sense of 'read' (they had slaves to read to them[43]) nor physically wrote much, in our sense of 'write' – they dictated to slaves or freedmen. Dio Chrysostom says explicitly that it is better to have someone reading to you because that way you get more benefit from it.[44] His exact words are instructive. You get the best from texts

> not casually by reading them yourself, but by having them read to you by others, preferably by men who know how to render the lines pleasurable.

Note who is the casual reader and who is the expert reader.[45] Slavery, and the high skill of these literary slaves, made it a totally different landscape to any other epoch of high literary activity that I am aware of. The obvious comparison might be with Greece, and in particular with Athens in its cultural hey-day. But I have been unable to find any references at all to slaves assisting in the production of Greek literature. There are just a couple of references to books being bought in the *agora* at Athens. The schools, like Aristotle's Lyceum, had libraries, but we do not know who created the texts in them, or how. There is a reference in Plato's *Theaetetus* to a slave being told to read a text, but slaves were, in the main, just general dogsbodies.[46] Even rich Athenians appear to have had 20 or fewer slaves on their domestic staff, as opposed to the many hundreds kept by rich Romans. So at Athens there was presumably much less scope for specialisation among slaves, even if there had been a supply of literate slaves in the first place.

8. Slavery as the enabling infrastructure of Roman literature

The prevalence of slaves on the Roman scene also explains why metaphors deriving from slavery/freedom are so strikingly common in Roman writers' own references to their books and to their success or failure.[47] Word plays on *liber* = book and *liber* = freed slave were common – and not just by semantic accident. The near-universal presence of slaves also helps to explain why Roman distribution of books took the form that it did.

9

Getting into circulation: from private space to public space

What did Roman authors do to compose and launch their new works and get them into circulation? Unfortunately, there is no treatise or manual left behind by the Romans to tell us at length about their authoring and publishing processes, nothing (or nothing that has survived) equivalent to, say, Vitruvius on architecture[1] or Cato on agriculture.[2] The result is that we have to make what we can of what we have in Latin texts of the period – passing references, bits of letters between friends, occasional incomplete descriptions, words used but not closely defined (why should they be?), words used in (apparently) several meanings, different words used with (apparently) much the same meaning, poetic circumlocutions. The challenge is to analyse the Latin terminology that the Romans used in a way that is internally consistent and yields a truer picture of the sociology of publishing at Rome.

How does Roman terminology, freed from the false assumption that it indicates something like modern practice, begin to sketch in the actual book world of Rome? The key role of the *recitatio* (a semi-public platform reading) as the Roman equivalent of 'the act of publication' and the pivotal event in the life (or death) of a new literary work, is separately discussed in the next chapter, given its central importance. This chapter examines certain clusters of Latin verbs that are closely associated with books and 'publishing' at Rome, and discusses what these 'activity words' tell us about Roman literary society and how it functioned. The clusters are:

1. Words about writing and authoring – *scribo*, *dicto*
2. Words about reading – *lego*
3. Words about putting into circulation – *publicare*, *edere*, *emittere, divulgare,* plus equivalent Greek terms.

1. Words about writing

The Latin verb ***scribo*** is the most obvious equivalent to the English verb 'write', but it has an even wider range of meanings. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary*[3] lists no less than 15 separable meanings. These range from the physical act of inscribing or writing down letters, spelling, making a record, drawing up a financial transaction or a law text, naming in a will,

to composing a letter or literary composition and/or writing an account of something. It is an even more general term than its English equivalent, but contains the same dual meaning of the physical act of writing and the mental act of composing.[4] It leaves open the question, which we have already encountered, of whether one and the same person was engaged in both the physical and the mental activity – or whether it was separate people. This same question is also raised, perhaps more forcefully and interestingly, by the Latin verb ***dicto***. It may mean 'to say repeatedly',[5] or it may by extension mean 'to indicate matter to be written down, to compose'.[6] In this latter meaning, it is hardly distinguishable from *scribo*, except with the clear indication that composing was being done by a process of dictation and iteration i.e. that two persons were involved, to-ing and fro-ing the text between spoken and written, master and slave, author and scribe.

2. Words about reading

The Latin verb ***lego*** also has an interesting variety of meaning that differentiates it from today's verb 'read', even though it is the most obvious English-Latin translation. *Lego* can mean (and by origin may have meant) 'to gather, select, pick or traverse', thus recalling the difficult process of reading or deciphering a Latin text in *scriptura continua* (the non-punctuated river of letters). It then develops so as to mean to read,[7] whether silently or more usually aloud,[8] and does not necessarily mean that only one person is involved. There may be an unspoken reference to the ***lector*** or slave-reader who may also be there.

3. Words about 'putting into circulation'

This cluster of 'activity' words consists of words like ***editio*** and its verb ***edere*** and what appear to be near-synonyms for the verb, such as ***publicare***, ***emittere*** and ***divulgare***. Alongside these Latin terms are the closely related trio of Greek terms ***ekdosis***, ***paradosis*** and ***diadosis***, whose usage has a strong bearing on what the Latin terms may be taken to signify.[9] What these verbs collectively signify is that putting a literary (or other) composition into 'circulation' was radically different to anything denoted by that modern term.

Publicare. This Latin verb cannot simply be translated as 'to publish' in the modern sense, despite the lexical similarity and the derivation of one from the other. If it is so translated, it must be with a clear understanding of what is and is not implied by the Latin term. *Publicare* not only lacks almost all the assumptions and implications that go with the modern term, but implies a different set of circumstances. *Publicare* means 'to make public' or 'make public property', even 'to throw open to the public'. By extension, it means 'to make known', 'reveal', 'disclose' and hence in a

limited sense 'publish' – limited in the sense that *publicare* signifies, but only signifies, the act of making something hitherto private (say, a text which you as author have been working on) into something public, available for others to copy, read and hand on. It carries no implications as to how or by whom this transfer from private to public status is effected.

It is not irrelevant, in the light of comments by, for example, Horace,[10] about the chanciness of what happens to a text that is 'published', to note that *publicare* can also mean to prostitute oneself – an overtone that many an aristocratic author contemplating the fate of his literary product, once it escapes his hands into the commons, must have been aware of. This sense that a work, once subject to *editio* ('handing out' – see below), was lost and out of control, seems to have persisted throughout the Roman period – for example, it finds its echo in around 400 CE in Symmachus.[11]

Emittere. This verb has as its root meaning 'to let go, or send out' and so in that (again limited) sense 'to publish'. It may also mean 'to utter or emit' a sound. Once again there a less-than-dignified usage of the verb, as in Suetonius' comment[12] about the emperor Claudius that *flatum crepitumque ventris emisit* (i.e. he farted a lot) where Suetonius seems to be suggesting a direct and unflattering parallel between this and Claudius' attempts as an author, remarking that Claudius liked to play the dice *de cuius arte librum emisit* – 'about the techniques of which he issued a book' – thus using the same word for issuing a fart and issuing a book. But in general, Latin authors seem to mean much the same by *emittere* as by *publicare* – the act of sending out or letting go or releasing something from the private status to the public status. Thus Cicero qualifies a comment by saying *si quando aliquid dignum nostro nomine emisimus* – 'if I have ever sent out anything worthy of my name'.[13] Quintilian says that the bookseller Tryphon has been pressing him to *emittere* his books on oratory i.e. to let them out of his own hands into those of someone like Tryphon who can therefore copy and sell them.[14] Pliny speaks of *emittere libros* – 'to release [my] books'.[15]

Divulgare. This seems to have a similar meaning to *emittere*, that is, not far from its contemporary English descendant 'divulge' but with the nuance of 'broadcasting' a work to some general public. Cicero says that he is sending a book to Atticus for copying by the latter's *librarii* so that it can then be *divulgari*, i.e. be put into the public domain.[16] There may even be a hint of 'vulgarising' a work by allowing the general public to get at it.

Edere/editio. It has been tempting for translators to render *editio* as 'edition' and therefore *edere* as 'to publish'. But *edere* signifies, not to 'edit', but 'to make public'. Thus *edere* normally means much the same as *emittere* or the other verbs discussed above, i.e. to send out or hand out a text. Similarly, the noun *editio* does not normally mean 'edition' in the modern sense, but the act of 'handing out' or 'giving out' a text. Quintilian in his letter to the bookseller Tryphon[17] refers to Horace's *Ars Poetica* and the poet's advice there[18] to wait nine years before the 'handing out' (*editio*)

of a work, since, says Horace, 'once sent out you can't recall it' – *nescit vox missa reverti*. Note also the interesting use of *vox* ('voice') as a synonym for a book. Similarly, in the introduction to Book 1 of his work on oratory, Quintilian says that two of his books on rhetoric were already 'being carried about' (*ferebantur,* which the Loeb edition[19] translates as 'circulating' but surely means more like 'being handed around') despite not having been *editi* by him, not 'given out' by him but as a result of a rash act of *editio* (i.e. handing around) by friends i.e. they had not been formally made available to others by Quintilian himself, but others had pre-empted him by making them so available. There are other, similar examples elsewhere in Quintilian, in Pliny, and in Tacitus.[20]

There is however another shade of meaning to the Latin *editio*. That is where Quintilian refers to a line of Homer that is 'not found in every edition' – *non in omni editione reperitur*.[21] Could this imply an edition or editions, in multiple identical copies, as in a modern edition? More likely, he means Homeric texts as edited and annotated by different scholars or grammarians, so meaning more like our 'version'. Another case is where Quintilian says that where a speech has been delivered in a shortened form, *editio habebit omnia* which the Loeb translation renders not unfairly as 'the published version will have it all' but which more properly means 'the version handed out in writing will have the full text of the speech'.[22] There are also Latin quotations in which two of the above terms occur in the same sentence, showing a nuance of meaning that is initially hard to grasp but was clearly meaningful to Roman authors. Seneca in one of his *Moral Essays* remarks[23] that *monumenta ingeniorum publicavit editio* ('works of genius are published for everybody' – Loeb translation[24]) and Statius speaks[25] of a letter which *de editione Thebaidos meae publicavi* ('the letter which I published concerning the appearance of my [poem the] Thebaid' – Loeb translation again[26]).

What is interesting in both cases is the implied connection between the act of *editio* and the status of *publicare*. Clearly, the two words cannot have exactly the same meaning or significance and cannot both be translated as 'publish/publication' without descent into tautology. So in the case of Seneca's remark, could it mean that the works were 'edited' in the modern sense before 'publication'? In the case of Statius, the Loeb translator is, wisely, more cautious, rendering *editio* as 'appearance', a neutral term, but others might take it as an edition in the modern sense. Both quotations however make better sense if the act of *editio* is taken at its basic meaning, that is, the author's pivotal decision to allow a work to pass out of his private hands, and *publicare* is taken at its basic meaning, that of the work arriving into or being in the public domain. Thus both Seneca and Statius are describing basically the same process whereby a work is put into the public domain by the act of sending it out from the author's hands into the hands of others.

As if to further distance Roman usage of this word cluster from the

modern English usage, another derivative from the *edere* root is the noun *editor*, which in Latin denotes, not the modern 'editor', as of a newspaper or magazine or book, but the person who sponsored and presided over a set of games or entertainments, such as the chariot races. That sponsorship function was called *editio*, so that the same Latin word indicates providing an event for the public and providing a text for the public.

The Greek terms ***ekdosis/paradosis/diadosis.*** The sense of *edere* and *editio* discussed above is similar to, perhaps almost identical to, the meaning of the Greek verb *ekdidonai* and its noun *ekdosis*. Given the continuity of tradition between the two literary cultures, that may be no accident. But if anything, the usage of these Greek words seems to have been more nuanced than the Latin. Those nuances may help to further clarify what the Romans were talking about when they spoke of *edere* and *editio*. In his illuminating analysis, on which I draw, Groningen[27] in fact discussed three related Greek terms – *paradosis*, *diadosis* and *ekdosis* – each with interesting differences.

Paradosis signifies (to paraphrase Groningen) the passage of a text from hand to hand, from generation to generation, from century to century, from papyrus scroll to codex book. *Paradosis* begins when the text starts to be copied and recopied from manuscript to manuscript. It is the 'handing down' of a text over time – the textual or manuscript tradition.

By origin ***diadosis*** signified the passing of something between individuals, say, food rations between soldiers, money between debtor and creditor. With a text, it signified the way in which it passes from hand to hand (that is, between the living who are interested) by a process of copying. The text is 'passing around'.

The first step in this process of *diadosis* is the ***ekdosis***, the sending out of the first copy, or autograph, to a friend or patron; or if not that, then the sending of the second copy, with the author keeping the first copy, to a bookseller like Tryphon or Atrectus. *Ekdosis* in this Greek (and Roman) context has very specific connotations. By origin the word signified the ceding to someone else of something over which one previously had the power or the rights, for example property, or a son or daughter in marriage, and allowing it/him/her to pass into the power of that other person – in effect, abandoning them, with all the risks that this entails. Thus, the author was by this step ceding the power over his text to other (largely unknown) persons. This sense of *ekdosis* sheds light on what the Latin equivalent term *editio* really signified to the Romans. It was a big and irrevocable step to take.

Into the public domain

What is impressive about the Latin terminology and the big cluster of words with similar or related meanings is that they show how the key distribution processes for a Roman author were not about publishers,

bookshops and libraries, but about letting the new work go from their jealously guarded private space out into the public domain where it may be handed around by others and handed down from generation to generation (or not), by the usual means of copying, often by slave specialists. The key distinction for an author was between a work still held in that private space, and one let loose into the chancy world of peer-to-peer circulation between persons unknown, in places unknown. How a new work moved from the first status to the second, often and perhaps mainly via the *recitatio*, is the subject of the next chapter.

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Texts in an oral/aural society

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Effecte! Graviter! Cito! Nequiter! Euge! Beate!:[1] the *recitatio* as act of publication

It is to the *recitatio*, as described by the younger Pliny and others, that we must look for some coherent account of what 'publishing' a new work actually involved in Rome, at least during the period that concerns us.[2] What was a *recitatio*? The *recitatio* was a semi-public (but therefore semi-private) reading from a raised platform, often but perhaps not always performed by the author himself, but at least with the author present, of a new work of literature, whether poetry, oratory, philosophy or history, before an invited audience of friends and contacts. It was, in its way, the launch party for the new opus, but much more than that. The French scholar Henri-Jean Martin called the practice of public readings one of the Romans' great institutions,[3] and Cavallo aptly calls the *recitatio* a collective ceremony at which literary works were launched.[4]

It is not easy to provide a helpful English translation for the Latin word. 'Recital' tends to mean a musical recital. 'Recitation', although so near in terms of letters of the alphabet, along with the verb 'recite', tends to mean a public recitation of someone else's already composed work. Also, the *recitatio* was not, strictly speaking, a public reading in the normal English sense that just anyone could come along and listen. A 'rendering' might convey the semi-theatrical nature of an event which, unlike a plain reading, was highly performative and stage-like. 'Launch' may convey one but only one of the functions of the *recitatio*. Moving the *recitatio* to centre stage (almost literally) of Roman 'publishing' involves rescuing it from its detractors – or rather, two sets of detractors, one hostile, the other bland.

The hostile view of the *recitatio* as 'monster'

For various modern authors, dedicated to the virtues of republican politics, the *recitatio* was a detestable institution or innovation of the alleged imperial 'years of decline'. It was, they believed, a degenerate form of literature wherein the great authors of the golden age of Latin writing were disgraced by their successors, who under the dead hand of autocracy descended into mere public show and the empty verbal flourishes that were said to characterise the *recitatio*. For example, Friedlaender wrote that:

> owing to the crowd of idlers [and] the number of dilettanti and poetasters … the rapid degeneration of the new institution [the *recitatio*] was unavoidable [characterised by] theatrical affectation and annoyance at the continual round of recitations.[5]

Carcopino called the *recitatio* a monster and a tumour which helped to kill literature itself.[6] The1970 edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* admitted that the *recitatio* at first offered advantages as a test of whether a work was worth publishing, but said that it then degenerated, becoming an end in itself, encouraging the conceit of authors, so that it exercised untoward influences, particularly a love of the showy and smart sayings, and a neglect of depth in favour of form.[7] The 1996 edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* said that the *recitatio*, like the *declamatio*, could encourage showy and superficial writing.[8]

The bland view of the *recitatio* as intermediate step

Even those who did not take this hostile view, sometimes took the blander but still dismissive view that the *recitatio* was just a preliminary step to publication. Sherwin-White for example says that the *recitatio*

> became the popular form of initial publication, providing the cheapest and quickest means of making works known to the largest educated public available before the invention of printing. [9]

The 1996 *Oxford Classical Dictionary* says that the younger Pliny used the *recitatio* as a good way of publicising his work so that it was simply a stage between delivery and publication of a speech. Newlands also calls the *recitatio* an intermediate stage between composition and publication.[10] Markus, in an otherwise perceptive article on the recital of epic poems, claims that Horace himself confirms the *recitatio* as part of the pre-publication process[11] and speaks (wrongly) about the cultural tensions between live recital and written work. A variant on this was the idea that there was some competition between the *recitatio* and bookshop sales of hard copies, so that the *recitatio* deprived the booksellers of revenues.[12] Starr calls the *recitatio* a test flight and an experimental reading of a work in progress.[13] If such commentators thought that there was indeed a flourishing publishing industry and book trade in existence at Rome and elsewhere in the empire in which there was a separate and more important event called 'publication' of a book, then there was perhaps no great need to think more carefully about the *recitatio*. In the absence of such an industry, a more careful analysis is needed.

The origins of the *recitatio*

The origin of the *recitatio* has been disputed, if only because the only extant explanation by a Roman author may appear to be contradicted by

other evidence. It is a statement by Seneca about Asinius Pollio that causes the trouble.[14] Pollio (76 BCE-4 CE) was a soldier and supporter of first Julius Caesar and then Mark Antony who resigned from soldiering and politics before the battle of Actium in favour of literature. He wrote a history of the period from 60 BCE to the battle of Philippi in 42 BCE, and is the man who, referring to Augustus' role in the terrible proscription or purge of opponents which took place in 43 BCE, famously remarked that 'it is not easy to write about a man who can proscribe'[15] – a nice Latin pun on *scribere/proscribere* deriving from the Roman custom of putting up written public lists of condemned men but also, say the critics of the *recitatio*, a grim forecast of the loss of creative freedom that was embodied in the *recitatio*.

Seneca says, or appears to say, that Pollio was the first person to institute readings of literature at Rome in front of an invited audience, i.e. the *recitatio*, presumably at the first-ever imperial library at Rome, in the Atrium Libertatis (Hall of Liberty)[16] of which he was put in charge by Augustus in the 30s BCE.[17] Pollio rebuilt it from the spoils he extracted from his military campaign in Illyria and put in a library of Greek and Latin works, and busts of famous authors, including Varro. The apparent problem with Seneca's comment is that Horace, writing about the same time, complains that Rome is already too full of poets publicly declaiming their works, which is why he purports to hate the place.[18] Juvenal confirms the picture.[19] Budding authors, it appears, just stood up in the forum, at the baths, at the circus, at a convenient crossroads, and declaimed, much like speakers at Speakers Corner in London's Hyde Park, in the hope of attracting an audience and, hopefully, an invitation to dinner, a patron or a reputation. Horace famously pokes fun at the *recitator acerbus*, the oppressive reciter who repels everyone, unless he can grab you and 'kill you by his reading'.[20]

So Pollio cannot have started the practice of public reading. Because of this anomaly, the grammar and meaning of Seneca's remark have been minutely picked over.[21] But in a deeply oral society such as Rome, it is anyway highly unlikely that Pollio or any one individual could be said to have started the custom of public reading. So what exactly was Pollio the first to do? I suggest that Seneca, who was after all much closer to the events than we are, knew what he was talking about, and that he meant the formal and regular readings in a private (or at any rate non-public) place at an advertised date and time to an invited audience, such as was denoted by the term *recitatio*, as opposed to the informal and *ad hoc* extempore public readings to which Horace appears to be referring. Thus the reference by Seneca makes it clear that by the 30s BCE, in and from the Augustan era, the *recitatio* became an established part of literary and cultural life at Rome. Suetonius records that when new writers presented their works (*recitantis*), Augustus himself was

> a well-disposed and patient listener, not only in the case of poetry and history, but also speeches and treatises.[22]

This, incidentally, is but one reference to the wide range of different types of new writing that might be the subject of a *recitatio* (see below), an aspect also attested by Pliny, who refers variously to history, poetry, drama and speeches.[23]

What happened before Pollio?

The Augustan innovation was however only a variant, or formalisation, of a long tradition at Rome of public reading – another reason not to regard it just as a perversion of the imperial era. The Greek writer Crates was said to have been the first to give formal public readings of literary works at Rome.[24] That was when he was in Rome during the Punic Wars in 168 BCE as an ambassador from King Attalus of Pergamon but had to stay on in the city to recuperate after having broken his leg in a fall down a manhole in the sewage system on the Palatine. If so, he was reading, not his own works, but those of authors of the past. But this was not yet the formal *recitatio*. Did big pre-Augustan names like Sallust (86-*c.* 35 BCE) or Catullus (*c.* 84-*c.* 54 BCE) give a *recitatio* of their new composition? If not, how did *they* get their works into general circulation? There is no evidence, so we just don't know. Still less do we know what even earlier writers such as Fabius Pictor (*c.* 270-200 BCE), Cato the Censor (234-149 BCE), or Polybius (200-118 BCE) did with their texts. Commentators remark on the 'apparent disorder' with which Cato, famous orator and founder of Latin prose literature, put together his *De Agri Cultura*.[25] His unfinished *Origines* is lost, except for about 100 fragments, but is dismissed by Cornelius Nepos in his life of Cato as 'without learning'. It may be fair to assume that such authors had some access to books, maybe Greek texts, but if so we don't know how – it would be wrong to hypothesise the existence of bookshops and libraries just because there were some authors – and in a profoundly oral society like Rome, it is a not unreasonable assumption that readings of some sort took place. But 'how, when, and in what sense Cato's speeches were published and circulated after his death, is obscure'.[26] Much has been made by some writers of the *collegium poetarum* (poets' college or club) that is said to have existed in the republican period, but a detailed analysis of the evidence and the claims made for this 'poets' club' concludes that it remains 'an enigma … the mystery remains complete'.[27] In short, for that republican era, we just don't know. It is better, as Quintilian remarked, *aliqua nescire* – to admit ignorance of some things.

It is nevertheless striking that Catullus makes no mention of a *recitatio*. It is even more striking that Cicero in his large collections of letters to his friends and relations makes no reference at all to any *recitatio*, either by himself or by anyone else, although he does often use forms of the verb

recito.[28] If he was familiar with the *recitatio* as a regular social and cultural event at Rome, it would be odd if he did not make at least one mention of it, given his obsession with literature. The readings-out that he does describe when using the verb *recito* are invariably (as far as I have been able to track them) references to occasions in the law courts when some document is read out to the court.[29]

So it is reasonable to conclude that the literary *recitatio* was not a familiar event in the time of Cicero, but sprang into life as a semi-formal semi-private event, as Seneca says, as soon as peace was restored to Rome after the final victory of Augustus in the civil wars. Prior to that, as Horace indicates, public readings of new works were much less formal or institutionalised events occurring in open spaces and public places, at least for those would-be authors who felt bold or desperate enough to test their talents on passers-by. Horace names the Forum and the baths, where the vaulted halls had a fine resonance.[30] High-born Catullus was presumably above that sort of thing, but Cicero does say that poets in his day liked to test out their new works on audiences before finalising them.[31] Varro after all wrote a three-volume work *De Lectionibus*, which was (presumably – it is lost) about the various forms of reading of his day.

One may imagine that well-to-do Romans, of the sort who took up literature as a more-or-less serious preoccupation in imperial Rome, would hardly have descended to the vulgar street to declaim their compositions to random crowds of listeners. They needed a more dignified environment, and the *recitatio*, from Pollio's time onward, gave it to them. Just as Cicero used to consult Atticus privately about his new works, and Atticus used to attach bits of red wax to the places he thought needed attention, so in later times the *recitatio* provided the same sort of peer-to-peer semi-private means of consulting friends and getting opinions about new works on the verge of completion.[32] In this sense, it was a development of another well-known republican institution, the *consilium amicorum*, the council of friends that republican generals and magistrates regularly had around them to offer advice and act as a sounding-board. The *recitatio*, far from being a degenerate form of anything, therefore developed out of respectable republican traditions.

The 'floruit' of the *recitatio*

Within a few years of Cicero's death, we are on safer ground. We know for sure that both Horace[33] and Virgil[34] did give *recitationes* of their works, if only sometimes, and there is no suggestion in the Latin sources that such performances by them were at all unusual. Indeed, Suetonius tells us that Virgil dictated the *Georgics* and later read them to Augustus over the course of four days, just as he later read to the emperor and his family parts of the *Aeneid* – books 2, 4 and 6. Suetonius also says that Virgil gave *recitationes* to various groups of people, to get their opinion. So it can be

assumed that the *recitatio* was a standard feature of literary life by this time, and it is notable that, when Ovid is bemoaning his fate in exile on the coast of the Black Sea, what he really misses is the opportunity to read his works, obviously not in the literal sense of perusing his own texts, but in the sense of reading them out to an audience at a *recitatio*.[35]

Thereafter there are fairly frequent references in Seneca, Suetonius, Tacitus and the younger Pliny. Pliny refers to the *recitationes* given by Silius Italicus of his (extant) 12,200 line long epic about the Punic Wars.[36] He also says at one point that there was scarcely a day in the month of April when someone was not giving a *recitatio*,[37] and he gives an elaborate description of the occasion when a poem in elegiac couplets entitled *Legends of the Stars* was declaimed by the young Calpurnius Piso.[38] Martial himself attests to giving readings, probably at dinner parties,[39] and readings to large and small audiences are well attested for the poet Statius.[40]

The emperor Hadrian for the first time provided a formal dedicated public building in Rome at which *recitationes* could take place – the Athenaeum.[41] (How this related to the Atrium Libertatis used by Pollio, we don't know.) This suggests that the *recitatio* was still alive and well during the first half of the second century. Later, Apuleius, writing about 160-170 CE, has an amusing story about a *recitatio* being given by the comic playwright Philemon in the time of the famous Greek dramatist Menander, i.e. centuries before Apuleius' time. Philemon was interrupted by rain when in the middle of the third act and said he would finish it the next day, so the audience reassembled, fighting for places on the benches with a lot of buzz, but Philemon did not turn up. He had died in the night, hand still wrapped round his scroll. But the point here is that Apuleius gives a different version of the apparently well-known story to other tellers of it,[42] and features the *recitatio* in it where others do not, since it was the natural thing to expect in his own time.

Did the *recitatio* persist after that? The 1970 *Oxford Classical Dictionary* says that it went on into into the sixth century CE, but cites no evidence for this, nor have I found any.[43] That does not however prove that it did not. But it is suspicious that Aulus Gellius, while telling of verses *recitatos* by Virgil, and despite being a book-fanatic, makes no mention of *recitationes* in his own times (mid to later second century CE). Galen's (129-199 CE) lectures on medical topics were not, strictly speaking, literary *recitationes*. But it is odd that, despite his moans about the way his lecture texts were mangled and pirated, and his concerns that posterity should know exactly what he wrote and when he wrote it (the collection of his works, or works attributed to him, is huge[44]), does not use any Greek equivalent to *recitatio* in his *About My Own Books*. Interestingly however, he does tell us that those who were passing off his work as their own were reading them aloud. Also in the latter part of the second century, Cornelius Fronto, who as a literary fanatic should know, makes no mention of the *recitatio* in his

letters to the emperor Marcus Aurelius and to others. So perhaps literary customs were by then changing. But at least for the two centuries upon which this investigation is focussed, between, say, 80 BCE and 170 CE, the formal *recitatio* was evidently a standard feature of Roman literary life.

Some have argued that the *recitatio* could take place in a theatre or at a banquet as well as in a private hall, and that there was a distinction between a *recitatio* for a restricted audience and one for an open public, so that there were fundamentally two kinds of *recitatio*.[45] There is indeed a fascinating question about the relationship between the *recitatio* and the theatre, indeed between authors of literary works and the world of the popular stage, that merits a separate chapter. But theatrical performance was not itself a *recitatio* in the proper sense and use of that term, because a *recitatio* required the physical presence of the author as reader or at least sharing the stage with the reader, whereas a theatrical performance did not. Also, the essence of the formal *recitatio* was precisely that it was a private or semi-private event by invitation only, not a public or theatrical event, and it featured a new work, i.e. it was its first formal airing.

Pliny as evidence

Much of the evidence about the *recitatio* comes from one source, namely the younger Pliny and his letters, supplemented by interesting asides from Galen about how his writings got into others' hands. In neither case can we be totally sure that they were not 'talking up their own book'. Galen may be adopting a deliberately disingenuous attitude to the way his vast medical and philosophical output got around to 'unauthorised' users. Pliny may be reflecting his political concern to both praise and sustain, after the dark tyranny of the later years of the emperor Domitian, the claimed new freedom of expression under the new emperor Trajan, about whom Pliny composed his famous *Panegyric*. So Pliny may be presenting us with an idealised view of how he and others composed and launched their new works, as an example of this new freedom in action.[46] He was after all a close friend as well as correspondent and appointee of Trajan, who would presumably read Pliny's collected letters, assuming that they were in some sense 'published' or put into circulation (as seems likely) during their lifetimes. There may be a closer connection between the *Panegyric* and the letters than might at first sight appear. Pliny may have been playing out a political as well as a literary agenda. On the other hand, he could hardly be telling outright lies, and the *recitatio* was a flexible social custom, not a contractual requirement.

The process of composition and publication

The cycle of events that led up to and included the *recitatio*, and the organisation of the *recitatio* itself, were not simple matters, and show that

composition of a new work was more of a process[47] than a flash of romantic creative inspiration.[48] Composition, as Pliny shows, went in stages.[49]

Stage 1: the author, having thought about the next part of his new text, dictates a first draft of this new bit to his (slave) secretary, or *librarius*. This is already the first rehearsal of the *recitatio* that is to come, the first oral/aural presentation of the text, of which the written text is to be a record. Thus the author of a text is the *dictator*, the person who dictates it. This is also the stage at which the author may indicate, for copying, the extracts from existing works that he wishes to incorporate (acknowledged or not) into his new text.

Stage 2: The *librarius* writes out this piece of dictation, and the author corrects it, and another written version is made by the *librarius*. This routine may be repeated again as necessary until the first draft of the new work is completed.

Stage 3: This first draft is sent, strictly privately, to one or two friends for comment, and their comments are incorporated, or not, and another draft completed that is almost finished and ready to 'go public'.

Stage 4: A *recitatio* is organised, given to an invited audience made up of those people that the author would like to impress, or who are themselves authors attending out of mutual obligation and support. At this event, comments and reactions may also be given (or expected), but it is hard to know how critical such an audience would be.

Stage 5: Any comments from the *recitatio* are incorporated, or not, and a text is created that is final as far as the author is concerned – the 'autograph' copy.

Stage 6: A copy of the new finalised text, perhaps a de luxe copy in a special 'binding' (by which would be meant the cylindrical tube into which the scroll was put) is sent out to the dedicatee (there often was one, but we can't know whether there always was) and a copy also went to at least some friends who ask for it. This is the act of *editio*, handing out, where the work gets sent out and is by that very act abandoned by its author to the chances and dangers of copying and recopying beyond any authorial control.

Stages 7-*n*: Fame, fashion, chance, indifference, politics, war, fire, religion, time and modern editors determine the fate of the new work.

This then was the 'publishing cycle' of antiquity – a process utterly unlike today's publishing cycle. This staged process, much reliant on the evidence of Pliny, is to an extent confirmed from an interesting source. An analysis[50] of how the philosopher Philodemus went about composition, based on carbonised remains of his books found at Herculaneum, shows that he first provided lists of passages he wanted copied for inclusion in his book, or dictated them: then dictated links and introductions: then his scribe produced a first draft: then Philodemus supplied additions and

corrections: then the final text is copied out or dictated. This comprises at least the first stage of the Plinian process, and confirms the interaction between selection, dictation, drafting by a scribe and re-drafting. It also confirms a key characteristic of that staged process of composition – the interplay and repeated interaction between spoken and written that is quintessentially Roman and a contributor – perhaps a defining contributor – to the quality of what was composed.

The use of wax tablets

In the same context, one must not ignore the use of practical objects like wax tablets in the process of literary composition, at least in the early gestation stage of a new work. The poet Catullus, admittedly writing before the *recitatio* came into fashion, refers to his *pugillaria* and *codicilli* (i.e. notebooks) that a lady-friend will not return to him, and to the verses written the day before with Licinius *in meis tabellis* – 'on my (wax-covered) tablets'.[51] But it is Quintilian, writing well into the age of the *recitatio*, who provides an interesting discussion of the relative merits of writing privately on wax tablets, and of dictating to an *amanuensis* secretary.[52] Acknowledging the 'delights' (*deliciae*) of dictating to a secretary, Quintilian nevertheless insists on the virtues of writing with a *stilus* pen on wax, in that it can be rubbed out easily with the pen (or rather, the flat end of it – Horace refers to creating poetry by lots of rubbing out, *multa litura*[53]) and you are not up against the faults of the *amanuensis* (secretary), who may be slow, both in writing and in understanding, or to the contrary, get impatient.[54] Moreover, he says, writing on a wax tablet is a private affair, and you can make gestures or pull faces or strike yourself, all of which others watching might find ridiculous (slaves presumably did not count).

So we may suppose that some writers did use wax tablets and did start the process of composition in private, perhaps depending on what sort of work it was, and on the quality of their eyesight – Quintilian admits that wax tablets are not always easy to read. On the other hand, Pliny in his letters does mention use of a pen[55] but never mentions wax tablets, and given the severe limitations imposed by the small size of waxed tablets, it seems clear enough that, sooner or later, the process of dictation to a secretary/scribe, as described, would take over.

How long did a *recitatio* go on for?

How long could you expect people to sit still (or still-ish) and put aside other commitments in order to listen, attentively or otherwise, to your new composition at a *recitatio*? Nobody really tells us. There is the famous story told by Pliny about how he spent two days giving a *recitatio* of his revised and much expanded version of his panegyric of Trajan (previously deliv-

ered to the Senate in the emperor's presence), and as he had not finished it, was persuaded by an allegedly enthusiastic audience to come back for a third day to get to the end.[56] But Pliny does not tell how many hours of each day this took, and anyway, the official panegyric of the emperor was no ordinary reading. It might have been politic for many people to be seen to be in the audience and to be seen to have seen it through to the end. Estimates varying between one and three hours for an average day's *recitatio* have been made.[57] But these seem to depend more on subjective estimates of the staying power of a Roman listener (or his buttocks) than on any direct evidence. With the great emphasis on gestures, facial expression, style of speech, oratorical flourishes and, one must suppose, pauses for applause or comment, an average *recitatio* of one to two hours seems reasonable, but given that the potential Roman attention span was probably far greater than today's (e.g. in the courts or at the theatre) it might have gone on much longer – if there was good reason.

Was the *recitatio* always used – for example, for history?

Inevitably, if that was the length of a *recitatio*, the question arises whether one can envisage Livy reading out his immense historical opus to assembled invited audiences. Was there time? Even if he did not, could he have done? The same question applies to, say, Tacitus, or indeed to Quintilian – to anyone who composed large chunks of prose. Even in the prime period of the *recitatio*, whether all works were launched by means of one [a *recitatio*] must be a matter of surmise. For example, when Quintilian tells the bookseller Tryphon that he will now yield to Tryphon's request to allow the latter to start putting around and selling his work on oratory, Quintilian expressly states that this work is already written, and was composed for his friend Marcellus and the latter's son.[58] Are we to suppose that this long work was read out in its entirety in a succession of *recitationes* to Marcellus, his son and his friends? Or only excerpts? And was it only to Marcellus and family, or to others as well? Or not at all? We don't know: Quintilian does not tell us – but how else was the alleged 'urgent demand' for copies created?[59] At best, it seems likely but unprovable that some readings took place – especially of a work about oratory.

It is also noticeable that even Pliny, while talking a lot about his own and others' recitations, does not once mention by name his two distinguished friends Tacitus and Suetonius, or his acquaintance Martial, as giving such readings, although there is one of Pliny's letters which may refer to Tacitus – see below – and Martial himself tells us that he did read out his epigrams to other people. This silence does however induce some caution in supposing that the *recitatio* was a fixed and necessary procedure as opposed to a custom and common practice. If it is true that the strange satire, or character assassination, of Claudius entitled *Apocolocyntosis* and attributed to Seneca was written to be read to an audience,[60]

then it would surely have been to a select private audience (just the emperor Nero and his cronies?) and hardly meant for general copying (though, obviously, someone did copy it).

Again, it is easy enough to envisage poetry being performed in front of an audience. Poetry readings are common in most cultures, and happen today, if less often than in previous eras. Readings of tragedy, comedy, lyric poetry and elegy are well attested. But what about history? These are commonly large, slabby works of prose that, nowadays, it is hard to imagine being solemnly read out to a seated audience. Unfortunately, neither Livy nor Tacitus make any direct reference to how they presented their works, nor does Quintilian. The size of their output – Livy wrote over 140 books (Roman size) and Tacitus 30 – is not in itself an issue. As we have seen, a *recitatio* could be and often was spread over two or three successive evenings. Also, they need not have read out their whole work at such *recitationes*, only selected passages, in order to establish their reputation in Roman society. One might also ask how else they could have publicised their work in the Roman context. Pliny tells the story of the man who travelled all the way from Gades in Spain (modern Cadiz) just to see Livy, and then went home again.[61] So Livy gained great fame somehow. Some Roman writers tell us that they saw no great difference between poetry and history, so presumably saw little reason to treat history differently from poetry.[62]

As an entirely hypothetical example – reading Book 4 of Tacitus' *Annals*, if you strip out the bits about events outside Italy, would make a splendid evening's entertainment in the unfolding of the lurid story of Tiberius and Sejanus, full of dark doings and even darker sayings and forebodings. Tacitus, if he did read it out, famous orator that he was, could have had fun with it – even if some in his audience did not (see Pliny's anecdote below). But of course, all that is pure speculation.

There is, however, sufficient evidence of a more general nature that history reading was common. As we have seen, Suetonius records that when new writers presented their works Augustus himself was a well-disposed listener, not only to poetry and history, but also to speeches and treatises. Seneca tells the story of how a *recitator* read a chunk of some large history and then offered to stop, only to be greeted with shouts of 'go on, go on'.[63] Suetonius describes how Claudius, before he became emperor, wrote history with the help of Livy, and gave *recitationes*.[64] Pliny several times refers to history being the subject of a *recitatio*, most notably when he tells the story of a historian who, at the end of a reading, was asked by some members of his audience to refrain from reading out any more of it the next day, because of the imputations it cast upon certain contemporaries.[65] The historian may have been Tacitus, but Pliny does not say so. Lucian, in his essay on *How to Write History*, refers to those listening to a history reading as 'bursting with applause'.[66] Thus the references, though not as frequent as to poetry and to edited speeches, make it quite clear that

history too was a common event at a *recitatio*. Whether collections of letters like Pliny's were read out in this way, we have no evidence to demonstrate. One editor of Tacitus argues that:

> [Pliny's] letters were probably treated in the same way as the epigrams of Martial, that is, they were recited before being gathered into books for publication. At the 'recitatio' only excerpts need have been given.[67]

My own estimate however is that, whereas individual letters may have been passed around, letter collections were unsuitable for public reading, and Pliny never says that his were read thus: nor does anyone else. But there is a bigger and more vexing question. What happened to big chunky reference books like, say, the elder Pliny's *Natural History*? Poetry, history, philosophy, even didactic works like Quintilian's – these we can imagine being the subject of some sort of *recitatio*, even if in abbreviated form. But the elder Pliny's huge and hardly literary opus? He himself does not tell us, nor does anyone else. Some have suggested that such reference works were put directly into the big libraries for consultation. A nice idea, and Varro did have his statue in an imperial library, which may suggest that his reference works were there too. But Pliny does make one odd comment in his preface, where he says that his work is written

> for the mass of peasants and artisans and finally for those who have the time to spare for studies.[68]

How he thought it would get to peasants and artisans, he does not say – not through libraries, presumably. That may have been a literary flourish, not to be pressed. One may presume that Pliny's admirers, then and later, simply had copies made as a standard work for their library shelves or book box.

The *recitatio* as performance

The *recitatio* was no simple event to organise. First, you needed a place to hold it. If you had a suitable or dedicated room in your mansion house in town, all well and good. If not, you had to beg, borrow or hire a suitable room, theatre or hall. The hall had to be furnished with chairs and/or benches, at least for the important attendees, at the reader's expense.[69] Invitations, possibly even some sort of programme (*codicilli* or *libelli*), had to be sent out. Clearly, you had to be already a man of some means to do the *recitatio* properly. But the practicalities did not end there. There was, for example, the question of dress. You did not just turn up. If Persius is to be believed (he was a satirist, after all, but satire needs to reflect reality, if in a distorting mirror) you put on your best toga, all white and washed, and your best sardonyx ring, as befits a performance before an invited

public. You were, after all, on stage and on show. Dupont says, somewhat dismissively, that Persius' account is of 'singular obscenity', because of its reference to the quasi-sexual excitement aroused in the audience. What Persius actually says is: *carmina lumbum intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ibi intima versu* – 'the poems enter the loins and intimate parts are scratched by the tremulous verse'. But the alleged 'obscenity' is hardly any worse than many sexual references in Roman writing. Persius is surely using satirist's licence to depict the pleasure that educated Romans derived from a well-presented *recitatio*, and writes in that long tradition of using sexual imagery to depict the poet-reader/listener interaction.[70]

Then there was the question of who should actually read the new text. It is often assumed that it was and must have been the author himself. But often we cannot be quite so sure. Maybe it was the author – or maybe, in accordance with the famous story told about himself by the younger Pliny, the author was uncertain about his abilities as a public reader and got his slave or freedman or his professional *lector* to do it instead.[71] As so often in Rome, references to reading and writing carry a lurking but elusive sub-text that there may be two people involved, not one.[72]

Pliny anxiously asks his correspondent what should he, as author, do if someone else is doing the reading? Sit still and silent, as if it was nothing to do with him, or, as some do, follow the words with murmurs and eye and hand gestures?[73] The picture of splitting the role like this is amusing, even silly to our view. But it does show how important was the performance aspect of the *recitatio*. A mere reading it was not. The usual practice does seem to have been to read or declaim some preface or introduction while standing up, but then to read the main text sitting down. This meant having a suitable chair and possibly a reading table or low lectern. Pliny does indeed complain of the restricted range of arm and hand gestures that can be employed at a (seated) *recitatio* compared to the standing oration.[74] But effects there certainly were.

What is however remarkable is that none of these accounts, satirical or otherwise, make reference to the actual means of reading, to the unrolling of the scroll or to the deciphering of the 'river of letters' or the movement of the eyes or the necessary concentration. What Pliny talks about, in his 'pantomime letter', is essentially his body language.[75] In that letter, Pliny is explicitly separating the act of reading (perhaps by his freedman) from the body language (articulated by Pliny). Nevertheless, the *recitatio* was very much a physical, almost theatrical, performance that relied on the visual as well as oral impressiveness of the speaker. The voice, the dress, the face, the eyes and the hands all played their part.[76] That is what lay behind the poet Julius Montanus' remark that he could only borrow material from Virgil if he could also borrow Virgil's voice and delivery – without that very voice, the text was almost nothing.[77]

The audience

The seating of the audience was probably hierarchical, to reflect the Roman sense of class and place in society, just as it was in the imperial theatre. But the performance was not just by the reader/author. The audience too was an essential part of the performance. They were not just mute listeners – or were not meant to be, anyway. They too had a role to play, by their evident attentiveness, their verbal comments, their physical attitudes, their enthusiasm once the *recitatio* was over.[78] But they did not always live up to the ideal.[79] Plutarch lists the faults of an audience, such as not sitting still, frowning, putting on a disagreeable expression, a wandering gaze, physical contortions, crossed legs, grinning, lowered head – all these and more are 'reprehensible', he says. Even silence could be taken two ways – there was attentive silence, and there was passive silence.[80] At the same time, the audience was supposed to encourage the author/reader to go on, by applause[81] or otherwise, however much of a polite convention this encouragement may have been. It was not easy being a good listener, any more than it was easy to be a good reader.

Not surprisingly, Pliny complains[82] of the behaviour of some audiences – lounging about outside waiting for the good bits (having someone stationed inside to nip out and tell them when to go in), or just being rowdy, when they should be lending a keen ear so as to offer constructive criticism, or to make the appreciative noises recorded by Martial.[83] Elsewhere, Pliny complains of their being like 'deaf-mutes'.[84] Perhaps Pliny was just having a bad text day. Equally, some audiences must have endured terrible stuff. Juvenal complains of the stale themes that caused suffering at these events – perhaps, for once, he was not being satirical.[85] But many must have been there just because of the demands of *amicitia* – the bonds and debts of mutual obligation that so characterised life at Rome – rather than as literary connoisseurs. Others may themselves have been aspiring (if gentleman amateur) authors, there only to ensure that someone came to their own next *recitatio* under these same bonds of mutual obligation.

Worse, some of the audience might just be paid to be there – hired 'clappers' whose role was to applaud on cue.[86] But there was also genuine applause, and cries (spontaneous or not) of '*effecte*', '*eugê*', '*pulchre*', '*sophos*' – roughly 'terrific, nice work, lovely stuff, clever!'.[87] Such noises were to encourage the reader to go on. Seneca, as we have seen, tells how a *recitator* read a chunk of some large history and then offered to stop, only to be greeted with shouts of 'go on, go on'. Or there might be a background murmur, or contrarily, sometimes, the silence of concentration.[88] But broadly, it was a noisy, one might say very Italian, affair.[89] The noise was what attracted the emperor Claudius, who happened to be walking past, to unexpectedly – and perhaps disconcertingly? – join the audience of a

recitatio. Suetonius says that Claudius himself could only get through a *recitatio* of his history works by dousing himself in cold water, and then had to put up with a bench breaking under the weight of a particularly fat man, thus causing much laughter and reducing Claudius himself to giggles.[90] Suetonius was of course mocking Claudius. But it just shows how far these occasions were as much a physical interaction between reader and listeners, as an intellectual one.

What did the audience appreciate?

It has been argued as a criticism of the *recitatio* that it was all about style, and not about substance – that the finer points appreciated by the listeners were stylistic, about vocal delivery and physical comportment, and not about the meat of the subject.[91] After all, how could the young Calpurnius Piso, already referred to, possibly have known much about astronomy, the subject of his poem? Indeed, what could the audience have known? What Pliny rushed up to congratulate him on was his delivery, not his content.[92] None of Pliny's letters, nor any other witnesses to a *recitatio*, discuss the content. Presentation, vocal and physical, is what the audience appreciated. But that is hardly surprising, nor necessarily an adverse criticism. Oratory was after all the standard training of an educated Roman, the common ground of all or most of them. It is hardly surprising therefore that it was the oratorical aspects that they felt on sure grounds to appreciate (or not). Moreover, if you were expected to sit through two hours or so of a platform presentation, you had every right to expect more than a dry academic lecture.

Appreciation of the style was what a Roman audience knew how to do. The content was a separate issue. It might be good, or it might be bad. That was for subsequent readers, and generations, to decide – by copying or not copying the text. Virgil's stuff was good, despite Montanus' remark about it needing Virgil's voice for the complete experience, and survived. Many others were no doubt bad, even if stylish, and perished. But style in literature does matter, and it is not a dismissal of the *recitatio* to say that style was the aspect that a Roman audience could (sometimes) get its metaphorical teeth into. Moreover, the style v. content argument (false as I suggest it is) also ignores one vital aspect of Roman literary culture (and not only literary). Originality of material was not the objective.[93] On the contrary, to recall and rehearse what others had said before, was not antiquarianism or plagiarism, as it might be in modern terms. It was the very stuff of literature of all kinds (and indeed of politics and military organisation).[94] An author's hope might often be to rehearse the material better or with new effects. That is what the audience was listening for. To suppose otherwise, is to force yet another anachronism onto Roman society and manners.

The *recitatio* was publication (in effect)

Referring to the *recitatio*, Cagnac uses the memorable phrases 'a literature of the voice' and 'oral writing'.[95] In that environment, it would be wrong to assume that, just because 'publication' in the modern world is a single commercial event closely defined by date and publisher with important legal and financial consequences, its Roman equivalent was also necessarily a single or precise event. The *editio*, the sending out of copies after the *recitatio*, thus moving the new work from the author's private sphere into the public domain, was clearly a big and irrevocable step to take, as we have seen. But what created the reputation of a new work, the interest in it and requests for copies, was the *recitatio*. The *recitatio* was therefore the pivotal event in the life of a new work with literary pretensions (though not necessarily of all works that have come down to us), the event to which all the efforts and concerns of its author were directed. The *recitatio*, followed by *editio* if the new work warranted it, was in effect publication for most genres, even if libraries may have been an alternative route for some others.[96] There was no other act of 'publication'. Both composition and launch were a staged process dependent on frequent iteration between the spoken word and the written text, but with the key event or events being oral presentation by means of the *recitatio*. The landscape of Roman 'publishing' was thus utterly different from today's commercial and technically sophisticated industry.

11

Literature of the voice: 'toss me a coin and I'll tell you a golden story'

Eumolpus is perhaps my favourite Latin fictional character. This indefatigable bad poet-cum-vagabond turns up in the *Satyricon*.[1] Eumolpus likes to declaim his poetry in public porticos, or in a theatre, or in the baths. The hero of the story, Encolpius, meets Eumolpus at an art exhibition. Confronted by a picture of Troy, Eumolpus insists on declaiming 65 lines of a poem he has written about Troy. The other gallery visitors chase them both out with stones, the poem is so bad, and Encolpius promises to give Eumolpus dinner on condition that he does not read out any more of his poem (a reversal of the normal protocol of a writer offering a reading as after-dinner entertainment, in return for his dinner). But later, the two men, plus one Giton, are caught in a storm at sea, and as Giton and Encolpius are abandoning ship, they realise that Eumolpus is still below decks, both writing and declaiming the next part of his epic, oblivious to the raging storm outside. They drag him out, are rescued by fishermen, and on their long walk to the nearest town are quite relieved to have Eumolpus lecture them about poetry and then declaim his new lines to them, to while away the time.

Here we see the close nexus between writing and declaiming, hand and voice; the dedication of a poet needing to be heard rather than read, and using a variety of public places to do so; the interest in hearing poetry (the characters in the *Satyricon* never read a book themselves); and the close similarity between a poet (however self-styled) declaiming and the story-teller whom you might meet almost anywhere, even in a picture gallery. When Lucian, in his diatribe against *The Ignorant Bookcollector*, admonishes him: 'Never sully with your tongue the prose and poetry of the ancients' he is surely using the word 'tongue' deliberately.[2]

The *recitator* of the *recitatio* had a close affinity, except in terms of social class, with the *circulator* and the *aretalogus*, the story-tellers who were a common sight and sound in the streets and buildings of Rome and, one may suppose, of any town of Italy or other warmer parts of the empire. Such men must have been very like the famous *halakis* who to this day (but in much reduced numbers) ply their trade as story-tellers in the Place Jemaa El Fna in Marrakech, Morocco, offering all the tales from *A Thousand and One Nights* and the *Old Testament*.[3] Horace remarks that 'numerous people read their work in the middle of the square or in the

baths, where a lovely resonance comes from the vaulted space'.[4] Juvenal comments sourly: 'when you find hordes of poets on each street-crossing, it's misplaced kindness to refrain from writing. The paper will be wasted anyway'.[5] Dio Chrysostom tells us of visiting Rome and seeing around the Circus Maximus (the city's main racecourse) men playing the flute, dancing, doing tricks, reading poems (Eumolpus?), singing, and telling stories and myths.[6]

The tradition of public reading and public discourse goes back a long way into Roman history, and was persistent. Suetonius tells us of a certain Q. Varguntius, who in the second century BCE would give public readings of Ennius' *Annales* to large crowds.[7] Much later, Gellius tells us in five different places[8] about the philosopher Favorinus who was to be found declaiming in at least four different open-air locations in Rome, including the Palatine and Trajan's Forum. Pliny starts off one of his letters with a (no doubt humorous) reference to the professional storyteller who seeks to attract listeners to his street corner entertainment with the words 'Toss me a coin and I'll tell you a golden story'.[9] Pliny too, it seems, stopped to hear a good story at the crossroads, just as he also joined the crowds at the theatre, despite his lofty attitude to both. But at all times, it seems, the populace of Rome, literate or not, had many opportunities to listen to stories, poetry and philosophy, if they so wished.[10] In one of his letters Seneca writes, in dialogue form:

> Why should I listen to something I can read?
> Because the living voice contributes so much.[11]

In a way, that says it all. The full cultural significance of the *recitatio*, and the reason why it constituted the nearest Roman equivalent to 'publishing' a new literary work, can be appreciated only in the wider context of Rome as a predominantly oral society. The *recitatio* not only created (or failed to create) a current reputation for the new text that might give it currency and staying power in society, but also fixed or at least indicated how that text was to be expressed and 'read' in later renderings of it. It is in this sense that Roman readers 'read with their ears', and that a Roman text only gained life when and if it had been read aloud by, or at least on behalf of, its originator.[12] The written text became an inevitable and necessary bridge between the oral memory of a text's first reading and its prolongation of life when that memory faded. But that second-order 'recreation' could also be oral. Cagnac says that:

> A text had to pass through the ears to gain sense … only sound could fix words in the memory and give writing a durable character.[13]

Our contemporary world is one where the written word reigns. Illiteracy is a bad thing: literacy is the norm. Contracts, law, text books, literature,

records, archives and much else are held in written form, and have limited or no validity unless committed to writing. Computers and the Internet have modified the form that the written word can take, and first radio and then television have restored a degree of importance to the spoken and the heard, the oral and the aural, the visual and the performative. But even these electronic media are often means of delivering prepared written scripts to ever larger but unseen audiences. Thus, to recreate 'oral Rome', and from the usual scrappy evidence, requires re-thinking many contemporary assumptions.

At the dinner party

Given that a Roman text was a mere river of letters**,** all the functions now delivered by commas and full stops, paragraphing and cross-heads, underlining and italics, quotation marks and exclamation marks, stage directions and pictures, had to be performed and delivered to listener-readers by the author himself or by the *lector*, the professional reader, by his reading of the text aloud as expressively as he (or the *lector*) knew how, at a *recitatio* or, later, at one of those well-attested after-dinner readings of literary works as a form of entertainment[14] and the readings of established works by a reader who accompanied learned persons on their peripatetic discussions.[15] Examples of such literary dinner parties were those given by the philosopher Favorinus, as described by Aulus Gellius. Favorinus, from Arles in Gaul, was a friend of Fronto as well as Gellius, and had been close to the emperor Hadrian, but fell out of favour and was exiled, later recalled by emperor Antoninus Pius. Gellius says that at the dinners of Favorinus, after the guests had taken their places and the serving of food has begun, a slave commonly stood by his table and began to read something. Martial also refers to recitation over dinner. Similarly, Pliny refers to the bad manners of people who get up and leave the dinner party just when a *lector* or *lyristes* – a reader or a musician – comes in to entertain the guests (one wonders, in the Roman context, what exactly the distinction between a *lector* and a *lyristes* was – did the latter provide a musical accompaniment to the former?). Gellius describes how, when walking with Favorinus in the courtyard of the Titian Baths, Sallust's *Catiline* was being read – a book that Favorinus had seen in the hands of a friend, and had 'ordered to be read' – plainly indicating a slave/servant reader who could be ordered, rather than the friend himself.

Comparison with Greece

Despite the large number of studies demonstrating that Greece was predominantly an oral society, the equivalent evidence for Rome as a predominantly oral society has still not been fully presented in one single comprehensive review that can rival the definitive summing up of Greek

oral culture by Rosalind Thomas.[16] Literacy and orality is a massive subject that has attracted many volumes, and at best this chapter can only summarise the evidence for Rome. Aristotle famously remarked that 'spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words',[17] thus giving the spoken word primacy. Svenbro argues about Greece – and I believe that it applies equally well to Rome, since in this, as in so much else in the cultural/educational field, the Romans followed the Greeks – that:

> the text is more than the sum of the alphabetic signs of which it is composed. The signs will guide the voice that will permit the vocalisation of the text, its sonorous realisation … The ancient Greeks tended to read aloud … Greek writing was first and foremost a machine for producing sounds … letters were meaningless to the average Greek reader until they were spoken. Letters had to be pronounced aloud if the text was to become intelligible … the reading aloud is indeed a part of the text, which is incomplete without it.[18]

Thomas's key statements about Greece, which I suggest apply almost equally well to Rome, are that:

> Ancient Greece was in many ways an oral society in which the written word took second place to the spoken … most Greek literature was meant to be heard or even sung, thus transmitted orally … whether or not a written text existed, oral transmission, performance and discourse were predominant … literacy and orality must be examined together in the ancient world … we should examine the interactions of oral and written communications techniques.[19]

But for Rome, Thomas goes on to suggest that:

> society in the late Republic and Empire is far more dominated by books and documents than classical Greece … everyone would agree that there was plenty of reading matter (at least in the cities), a flourishing book trade, and a fairly wide reading public … perhaps Rome should be considered … as a society in which the spoken word, though important, was increasingly dominated and influenced by written texts.[20]

As I have argued in previous chapters, this picture of the Roman Empire as a place with a flourishing book trade and a fairly wide reading public is at least a partial misconception, and is therefore the wrong place from which to start to assess the relative 'orality' of Rome. The mix of written and oral was distinctively Roman, but it was still the spoken word that dominated the written rather than vice versa. What is important to understand, for a full picture of what a Roman 'book' actually was, is that the 'background noise' of the Roman universe was oral, the spoken word. The evidence comes from many quarters, so having started with the story-telling tradition, let us move on to the next most obvious determinant, the low rate of literacy.

Literacy

The question of the size and composition of the class of those who took an active interest in the composing of 'books' and formed the potential catchment area for the 'reception' of literary endeavours, is obviously linked (though not one for one) to the rate of literacy in the Roman world. The older idea that of course all or most Romans could read has given way to the sober realisation that there are different types and levels of literacy, and that even after differentiating between different centuries of the Roman Empire and between the Latin West and the Greek East, the rates of full literacy were probably at best 30 per cent, at worst 5-10 per cent – as far as can be ascertained. For a detailed analysis of this complex topic, the reader may refer to W.V. Harris's *Ancient Literacy*, whose basic thesis about the (low) rate of Roman literacy remains, in my opinion, unmoved by subsequent discussion.[21]

Many more people may have had what is called 'functional literacy', a level quite adequate for reading inscriptions on monuments or official documents posted up in a public square or for scrawling the odd quotation from Virgil, memorised at school, on a street wall or on a tile.[22] The graffiti found on the walls and other surfaces of Pompeii and Herculaneum since they have been unearthed from beneath the debris from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE – some 11,000 of them in all – show vividly how writing and so reading livened up the walls and public spaces of those Roman towns, perhaps of Rome itself. But that level of partial, everyday and far from universal literacy would have been quite inadequate for unravelling the deliberately complex and allusive literary texts so beloved of Roman authors. If the above figures for full literacy are even roughly correct, it means that for the large majority of the population that was semi-literate or illiterate, oral communications must have been the norm, indeed the only option.

Music and song

Closely allied to the spoken word is the love of music and song. Dupont remarks that:

> the Roman spectator had this same experienced ear, this same musical keenness which is explained by belonging to a civilisation where music was, it seems, omnipresent.[23]

Similarly, the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* remarks that:

> small groups of musicians entertained guests in wealthy households: streets and taverns were alive with buskers … [music] was indispensable at Rome to all religious rituals and civic celebrations, prominent in public theatrical performance and private merrymaking, a fully institutionalised ingredient

> of military activities, and a common element in the education of well-bred citizens … as a people they [the Romans] were intensely musical. The Romans sang, often and most willingly, as part of a wide, much relished musical heritage.[24]

Horsfall remarks:

> the crowd in the Roman street was evidently not particularly meek, taciturn or orderly (of quiet, let us not speak even); song, sometimes contemporary, political, topical and irreverent, if not grossly abusive, was a strong element in that tornado of noise which reached up menacingly from … Subura to Palatine … not, though, a mere confused racket, for popular song and chant were strongly rhythmic.[25]

Quintilian tells us that music was an important part of the education of an orator.[26] He says that music provides the budding orator with patterns of two kinds, patterns of sound and patterns of movement of the body. These are relevant to gesture, to word arrangement and to inflexion of the voice. He adds this at first sight curious detail about Gaius Gracchus, amongst other things a famous orator, 'behind whom, when he spoke in public, a musician used to stand and give with a pitch pipe … the tones in which his voice was to be exerted'. It would be fascinating to know how often music accompanied oratory: sadly, we do not.

Acclamation

Acclamations are an aspect of Roman public 'orality' that is particularly difficult to resurrect today, because so unfamiliar.[27] They were not, as in the modern sense of the word, spontaneous outbursts of enthusiasm and approval, but took the form of a rhythmic ritual chant, often shouted out in unison to a set and familiar formula, at formal state occasions.[28] They may be characteristic of the empire rather than the Republic, but can hardly have sprung from nowhere. Take the case of Germanicus. When he recovered from illness, not long after his state triumph of 16 CE, the Roman crowd chanted *Salva Roma, salva patria, salvus est Germanicus* (roughly, 'Rome is safe, the homeland is safe, [if] Germanicus is safe') in an archaic verse format.[29] But when earlier he was in Alexandria, he refused to accept acclamations because they were 'used for the gods'. The point of this was that Augustus, by then deified, had previously been acclaimed at Alexandria.

When Vespasian got back to Rome in 70 CE he was greeted with cries of 'benefactor, saviour, only worthy emperor of Rome', and he and Titus the same year were greeted with acclamations by their soldiers.[30] Or take the emperor Commodus. When he entered the arena as a gladiator, there were chants of 'You are the lord, you will conquer, Amazonius', and Dio refers to the 'shouting in the theatre in a rhythmic way' to honour Commodus. 'Long life to you' was another chant to Commodus (much good it did him).[31]

Chants, in ways that are no longer clear to us, could also be a form of protest rather than praise. Dio tells us that the cry *Roma regina et aeterna* ('Rome queen and eternal') formed part of a protest against the emperor Severus.[32] A protest against Macrinus in 217 CE took the form of hostile acclamations – chanted in Latin, so that (bizarrely to us) the senators present retaliated by counter-chants – in Greek.[33] Chants built around the formulaic word 'increase' (Latin *augeat*) seem to have been common, as in Ovid's formula *Augeat imperium nostri ducis, augeat annos* ('may our leader's authority grow larger and his years longer').[34] Some chants were openly self-interested, as when Dio Chrysostom tells us of salutations to local magistrates as 'the best, Olympians, saviours and feeders' – i.e. as suppliers of the local food dole.[35] Today's football fans would probably evince little surprise at these rhythmical chants by the crowds in public places.

Oratory and education

The Roman upper classes also contributed to the 'background noise' of Rome. Among that minority that were fully literate, it was in oratory that their 'orality' was expressed. Much has been written about Roman oratory and rhetoric, which need not be rehearsed here. The essence is that oratory, story-telling of a different sort and in a different context, was not only the supreme art form, but also (in an extended form reaching well beyond today's meaning of 'oratory') the backbone of the educational system. The education given to upper-class youths was above all aimed to enable them to express themselves clearly in public, according to the rules of rhetoric, but also to give them a wide range of literary, historical and mythological material from which to draw in their oratory. Cicero, Julius Caesar, Pliny and Tacitus, to name but a few, were all noted orators. The law courts and the Senate were where your oratory shone – and later, in front of the emperor, in particular when delivering a panegyric.[36]

But importantly for this investigation, oratory also had links to the stage. Cicero was close to two famous actors of his day. One, Aesopus, gave him lessons in elocution and supported his recall from exile, i.e. it was more than a technical association,[37] and the other was Roscius, a man of free birth and a member of the wealthy equestrian class, very popular as an actor, with enormous earnings, who used Cicero as his 'legal team' on at least two occasions.[38]

Reading aloud – or not

The 'orality' of Roman upper-class society was also for long bound up with a debate about whether, when a Roman read a text, and read it himself, he always and necessarily read it aloud, even if there was no-one else present. Previously, it had long been assumed (tacitly as it were) that Romans read silently and interiorly, just as we do today, unless they had

a clear reason to do otherwise. But the debate was set off in the 1920s by an article entitled *Voces Paginarum* by Josef Balogh, a Hungarian scholar.[39] In it, Balogh argued that silent reading was unknown or rare in the ancient world, whether of literary or non-literary texts. His key (though not only) evidence for this was Augustine's apparent astonishment at witnessing Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, reading silently.[40] This passage has been much argued about ever since. The explanation of this incident that I find most plausible is that it was probably due to a difference of class and ethnicity, and nothing to do with universal cultural habits in the later Roman Empire. Ambrose was an upper-crust Roman (and ex-top civil servant) to whom reading silently was quite normal. Augustine, then still a young man, was from a much lowlier North African background,[41] where reading aloud may well have been the norm.[42]

In the broader debate about Roman reading habits, there have been various contributions.[43] But the matter was (I suggest) put to rest by Knox, who concluded that while Balogh's evidence was faulty, his main thesis – that for Romans, reading aloud, and being read to aloud, was the normal and the best way of appreciating a literary text – was true.[44] Knox writes:

> Ancient books were normally read aloud, but there is nothing to suggest that silent reading of books was anything extraordinary … the evidence … does indeed make it perfectly clear that the normal way to read a literary text (non-literary texts are a different matter) was out loud, whether before an audience, in the company of friends, or alone.[45]

Learning to read

On the matter of learning to read, Quintilian sheds light. 'Orality' and the sound of words are implicit in Quintilian's remark that 'only practice can teach how a boy may know when to take breath, pause, raise or lower the voice, inflection, go slow or quick'.[46] In other words, learning to read was an oral performance, learning by means of the *praelectio* (a pre-reading or rehearsal) how to use the voice to make sense of the text, and Quintilian's parting shot on this matter – *intellegat*, get the boy to *understand* – relates understanding to sound.[47] It recalls Aristotle's view that 'grammar studies all articulate sounds',[48] and Plutarch's comment that grammar is 'an art useful for the production of sounds and for storing up sounds by letters for their recollection'.[49]

It is conjectured that one consequence of the method of learning to read described by Quintilian is that the main interest lay in the individual syllables, the units of pronunciation, rather than in the individual words, which are essentially visual recognition patterns.[50] There is, as far as I know, no precise Latin equivalent for 'sentence'. The Latin word *sententia*, its semantic root, has a different basic meaning, that of an 'opinion', 'decision', 'vote' or 'judicial pronouncement'.[51] The main job in Roman

reading was to work out how to put the syllables together, by using the human voice to create the syllables out of the 'river of letters'.[52] This may in turn be one reason why the Romans found it easy to adopt the Greek style of not putting gaps between words in written texts. Of course, there was probably a cultural motive as well – aspiring to be Greek.

Public speaking as visual performance

Quintilian is also informative about the performative aspects of oratory. He says that 'apt and becoming movement of the body is essential and cannot be obtained from any other source [than music]'.[53] Cicero refers to the *sermo corporis* – the body language – of an orator.[54] In more detail, Quintilian talks a lot about the use of the eyes, eyebrows, lips, neck and nostrils, and particularly and in detail about the use of the hands in gestures there were, it seems, not far off a non-verbal language in themselves. Some of his advice is basic stuff like 'don't pick your nose while making a speech'.[55] None of this should be particularly surprising, as a glance at the treatise known as the *Ad Herennium* (To Herennius) clearly shows. In it, the author discusses *both* the tones of voice appropriate to various types of discourse (the 'gentle quiver', 'the rapid full voice', the 'deep chest tones' and so on, to a total of three tones in eight sub-divisions): *and* the appropriate physical movements, facial expressions and gestures (the light movement of the right hand, the keen glance, walking up and down, stamping the foot, and slapping the thigh, beating one's head).[56] Quintilian lists 23 types of hand gestures appropriate for an orator, then discusses feet and dress (How much leg to show below the edge of your toga? When is it OK to sweat?). Thigh slapping with the palm of his right hand to demonstrate indignation was said to be a favourite gesture of Cicero.[57] There must have been a lot of thigh slapping.[58] Habinek remarks that:

> even literature is a bodily practice in ancient Rome, and for all of the efforts by its proponents to differentiate it from popular or musical culture, it remains part of that culture.[59]

But there were other ways in which such proponents sought to differentiate their products – by the use of 'special speech', and by the use of writing.

Special speech

The core of the aristocratic use of orality seems to have been the idea and practice of 'special speech' – what Quintilian calls, by its Greek name, *orthoepeia*, literally 'rightness of speech',[60] or even more indicatively, what he calls the 'muffled song' of Cicero's oratory.[61] Cicero himself refers to the arrangement of words in a speech being perfected 'by the rhythm and tone

proper to oratory as opposed to poetry' – by the *numero et modo*, themselves technical terms of poetic composition. *Numerus* was the rhythm and metrical system, *modus* was the beat, note or tone.[62] Similarly, Quintilian stresses the *numerus* and the *pedes* of oratory – the metrical form and the individual verse 'feet', again technical poetic terminology in the structuring of Greek and Latin poetry.[63] Elsewhere he defines history as *carmen solutum* translatable as 'prose poem' but more accurately as poetry freed from the constraints of formal poetic metre – not a modern definition of historiography.[64]

But the concept of special speech is most vividly illustrated by the range of use of the Latin verb *cantare*.[65] It is most often translated as 'sing', but, as in the use above of *carmen* to refer to a prose work, it refers to a much wider use, or modulation, of the human voice. Cicero says that the variant *canere* means to deliver a speech in the Asian manner, with an ululating voice.[66] Presumably, some did it like that. Pliny uses *cantare* for private recitals of poetry, without music,[67] and Cicero refers to the *cantores Euphorionis*, those who recite the poems of Euphorion.[68] Clearly, 'singing' and 'song' extended to the special modulations of the voice appropriate to poetry, just as the modulations appropriate to poetry could or did extend to oratory – hence Cicero's 'muffled song'. It also follows that *cantare* and *legere* (usually rendered 'read') may have meant much the same thing, depending on context or occasion. Kenney comments that:

> even private readings often took on some of the characteristics of a modulated declamation.[69]

This is (presumably) the point of the *bon mot* coined by the young Julius Caesar about or to an unknown person**:**

> *Si cantas, male cantas: si legis, cantas*
> if you are singing, you are singing badly: if you are reading, you are singing.[70]

Special speech, ritualised speech, denoted by *cantare* – these were the hallmarks of upper-class orality, to distinguish it from the speech of ordinary people, denoted by the simpler verb *dicto*. We can't know how exactly this special speech sounded in the courts, at the *recitatio*, or in the Senate, any more than we can recapture the highly praised reading voice of Virgil, which commentators contrasted with his hesitant normal speaking voice. As previously noted, the poet Julius Montanus said that he would copy material from Virgil if only he could also copy Virgil's facial expression, voice and method of delivery. Telling us this, Suetonius uses the Greek word *hypokrisis* for 'delivery', which Dionysius Thrax says is what reveals the *aretê*, the quality, of a poem, as opposed to the 'modulation' of the voice (*diastolê*) which reveals the frame of mind of the poet. Thus the true essence of a poem is revealed by how the poet, or lector,

enunciates it to his listeners, by his delivery and modulation.[71] So 'special speech' must have been an audible hallmark of the upper class, over and beyond what we today call 'accent'. The average Roman would probably know a toff as soon as he opened his mouth – nothing, historically, very unusual about that.

Memory

A corollary of oral communications is a good memory, an essential asset for anyone, like a popular storyteller or an aristocratic orator, who performs in public. Good memory is therefore a shared characteristic across classes. There is evidence that, by today's standards, some Romans could perform astonishing feats of memory.[72] Cicero tells us that memory is one of the five parts of rhetoric. The elder Seneca could (he claimed[73]) repeat 2,000 names in the order in which they were given to him, and could recite back lines of poetry given to him by 200 students, last line first and then back down the chain of quotations. Augustine had a friend who could recite all of Virgil – backwards.[74] It seems that the Romans had a developed system for the training and use of memory, a system which the *Ad Herennium* treatise tells us was a kind of inner writing that revolved around the creation of a set of mental places (*loci*) and images, the former acting as re-usable mental filing-drawers into which to put things, the latter for recreating emotional associations.[75] Goody refers to these as 'mnemotechnical devices' to aid memory.[76]

Goody also regards Greek (and therefore Roman) verse metres, with their emphasis on vowel quantities and metrical regularity, as being at least partial aids to memory. However, it may be doubted whether the Greeks, or anyone else, 'invented' good memory, which may have been a universal characteristic of societies, or of some of their members, before the days of large-scale literacy and mass recording of information on paper or on databases. Rather, it may be the case that the Greeks, followed by the Roman literate class, constructed aids to memorisation to assist their rhetorical and oral needs – a memory 'system' – which may have augmented the natural good memory that all storytellers and officials, upper or lower class, must have had in order to ply their trade or profession.

Texts as musical score (and other metaphors)

The idea of the text as primarily a 'machine for making sounds' is one of several useful similes that have been proposed to explain what a Roman text was. A written Latin text has also been compared to a template from which further sound events, such as further speeches or recitations, can be generated by other people at other times.[77] Texts have also been called an 'aide-memoire', or 'mnemonic aid', or 'silent record of a much richer experience',[78] or 'performance script',[79] or 'traces of embodied practice'.[80]

Another especially attractive simile, often proposed, is that a text had a similar relation to the spoken version to that which a music score today has to music.[81] The score is not itself the music, is not itself the final objective, and is capable of various interpretations. But the score is the indispensable means of carrying the conception of the music from one performer to another, across time and space. The music however is far more than the score, and the interpretation given to the score by the musician (for which, read 'reader aloud') is all-important, and can vary from one performer to another, and from age to age. Mr G. Hindley, an expert on medieval music, has provided me privately with the following illuminating comment on the evolving relationship between score and music. Remarking that it is fashionable today to view a musical score as a text (thus the analogy works both ways), he writes:

> Some people can and do read a score in the sense that by so doing they can hear the music in their mind's ear. Those who can will tell you that it can be preferable to live performance as it cuts out the intervention of another's interpretation … For about 1000 years western musical notation has been advancing in precision and refinement and has long been the world's most prescriptive – specifying pitch and note duration, rhythmic aspects, dynamics, and technical practicalities such as piano pedalling, string bowing etc. The point about the prescriptive notation in the west is the person of the composer, by no means so common in other traditions, and his desire to prescribe exactly what he wants and thus proscribe the vagaries of performers' interpretations. But in non-western traditions, notation is often essentially mnemonic – to jog the performer's memory on traditional 'riffs' or musical elements that mostly have to be learnt by rote. The musician's skill, supported by his mnemonic notation, consists in his individual combination of these vocabulary elements. When teaching music appreciation I compare that skill, loosely, to extemporized oratory. The audience knows the words and the grammar as well as the speaker. What they want to hear is how he manipulates the familiar material and apparatus.

The idea of a Roman text as a mnemonic aid and as inviting inventive interventions by the performer, is very helpful in considering Roman 'publishing'. In a society with a profoundly oral tradition like Rome, one important function of a text was as a mechanism for (re)creating sounds, not unlike a music score. That is, Roman books were not, in themselves, necessarily the final objective of the exercise, as they would be if they were modern books that formed part of a corpus of 'literature'. They were, as their most important function, a stage between two sets of oral activity – the original oral presentation of the 'work' and some future (if, at any given moment, not yet fixed) oral recreation of it. They were in that respect an 'aide memoire', a useful memorandum of what was or might have been said at a previous oral event, whose aim was to assist some future oral event (which, of course, might never take place).

Interplay between written and oral

This role as a quasi-music score and bridging mechanism between two oral events was however quite compatible, in the Roman context, with the self-same texts being also indispensable written records of the work in question, fully capable of being appreciated by the reader's eye, silently, if the reader chose to approach the text that way, just like a modern book. What Rome offers us is its own specific and perhaps unique mix of the oral and the written, and it is that mix that must be brought properly into focus.[82] The use of writing and writing materials was widespread in the Roman Empire, and there was a dynamic interplay between spoken and written text that was particularly evident in the creative processes of Latin literature, and partly explains the particular genius and adaptability of that literature. Put simply, this uniquely Roman interplay between spoken and written is one of the elements that gives Latin literature its astonishing suppleness and staying power, replayable both as oral events and as written texts, and in the modern world in ways never dreamt of by the Romans, as Shakespearean plays, as novels, as Hollywood blockbusters, as TV serial dramas, as DVDs and, not least, as the school textbooks so mocked by Horace.

In other words, there is no fundamental incompatibility between a Latin text containing effects that may seem to rely on the reader seeing the full written text in front of him or her, and the written text's primary role at Rome as facilitator of oral events. Martial, for example, frequently addresses his 'reader' (*lector*) head on in his individual epigrams and in his books, and Martial's expertise is above all about verbal effects. But that *lector* could as easily be an oral performer as a silent reader. Martial tells us proudly that 'the reader and the listener likes my books' (*lector et auditor nostros probat … libellos*), claims that 'Rome sings my little books' (*cantat nostros libellos*) and when he sends a book of his compositions to Caesius Sabinus who was in Umbria at the time, Martial tells the book that it will resound 'at banquets, in the forum, in temples, at the crossroads, in porticoes, in bookshops'.[83] That hardly sounds as if Martial expected private or silent reading to be the primary means of consumption of his book, however much his epigrams may also be appreciated in private perusal. A striking and specific example of this duality is to be found in Virgil's *Georgics*, where the name of Maecenas appears at line 2 of the first and fourth book, but at line 41 of the second and third book.[84] This is a neat example of textual symmetry dependent on seeing the text. But we know that Virgil himself gave a reading of the *Georgics* to the emperor Augustus. If Virgil saw no incompatibility between oral presentation and written textual effects, then neither (I suggest) should a modern reader. In the light of this discussion of texts as musical scores, a comment on the *Georgics* in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* is worth quoting here:

> To several sensitive critics, the *Georgics* have suggested a musical composition, a symphony with four movements and various themes enunciated and then harmoniously interwoven.[85]

For a Roman author like Virgil, perhaps it was not just that there was no incompatibility between oral presentation and written textual effects, but much more positively, there was a creative dialogue between sound and sense, between the heard and the written, between musical form and literary form.

An inferior type of society?

The idea that a society was essentially an 'oral' rather than a 'written' society has been interpreted by some as an indicator of broader social, political and intellectual characteristics, specifically that 'orality' entails a lack of individualism (presumably implying group-think rather than personal choice) and/or lack of analytic skills, which on this view derive from and are supported by written texts that can be referenced and re-examined. The implication of this idea is that an 'oral' society is less developed, even backward and reactionary, and inimical to the freedoms of the individual that go with personal choice and direct communion between self and text.[86] One author[87] has suggested that 'orality' and the need to read aloud the Roman-style *scriptura continua* (the river of letters) of a text created 'tunnel vision', both literally and, by extension, metaphorically.[88] Contrarily, literacy has been seen as a necessary condition of democracy, rational thought and philosophy (and, not least, the writing of history).[89]

This is another subject too large to explore in detail here. But the essential point is surely that 'orality' as we now understand it was a hallmark *both* of Athenian democracy *and* of Hellenistic tyrannies, *both* of Roman republican oligarchy *and* of later Roman imperial autocracy. As we have said, it was the 'background noise' of the ancient world generally. It may be true that the accumulation of durable easy-to-use written texts is a necessary precondition of the immense stock of scientific and technical knowledge that so differentiates the modern from the ancient world. But philosophy, scientific enquiry and democracy all have roots in the 'oral' society of classical Greece, and modern education, literature and architecture (not to mention religion) have, at least until recently, owed much to the 'oral' society of classical Rome. To equate 'oral' with 'worse' or 'primitive' is to write off the whole of the ancient Mediterranean world, and much of our own.

Lifeless texts

Perhaps it is because we have today largely lost the tradition of reading literary works aloud in public that so many Latin texts appear lifeless to today's readers. Given the background orality of the world they inhabited,

the Romans might well be horrified at the 'reception' given to their works today – put into a sound-less context for which they were never meant, and which (they might argue) robs them of their very essence. Dead things, unless given new life by reading out aloud.[90] The Romans, by the way, were not unique in their emphasis on the oral. Ong remarks that:

> in the West through the Renaissance, the oration was the most taught of all verbal productions and remained implicitly the basic paradigm for all discourse, written as well as oral. Written material was subsidiary to hearing in ways which strike us today as bizarre. Writing served largely to recycle knowledge back into the oral world.[91]

In historical terms, Rome is more like the norm. It is we who are the historical exception.[92] When Carruthers remarks that:

> there is little work which attempts to capture the entire experience of ancient literature [93]

– such work would have to begin with the 'background noise' of orality and the sheer physicality of all forms of presentation, public or private, and then integrate writing into that continuum of sound – the sound of books.

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The perils of publishing

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The battle for survival: mice and worms, plagiarism and posterity

Once the *recitatio* had been given, the 'book' was, in Roman terms, 'published'. Its future was then in the lap of the gods – or in the lap of the scribe. Either people continued to request copies or had copies made, or they did not. Either the libraries stocked copies, or they did not. Either the work survived, or it did not. There was nothing more that the author could do. There was no copyright, no sales figures, no payments to be calculated, no licence fees, no British Library or Library of Congress to which copies had to be sent for the public record, just the inherent uncertainty of literary fashion and an author's persisting fame – or not. The author would have had no idea how many copies were ever made of his new work (if any), beyond the first few that he sent out to the dedicatee and to friends who asked at least for a copy from which to make their own copy. The author either gained fame and reputation in his lifetime, by this or by other *recitationes*, or he did not.[1] He might get rewards, of status or money, from his patrons, if indeed he had need of any such rewards or patrons – or not. By some means or other, some booksellers in Rome might decide to stock a ready-made copy, or not, and/or be able to make a new copy for a purchaser, or not.

Within the small world of Roman literary endeavour, that was about the sum of it. Some works, like the *Aeneid*, got almost immediate lift-off as instant classics; others would have sunk without trace, either immediately, or with the passage of time and at the whim of the tastes of later generations. It was, all in all, a pretty haphazard way of setting about creating that monument (*monumentum*) to their existence that some Roman authors hoped that their work would become.[2] Of course, sometimes, it did.

Abandoned – or escaped?

With hand-copying and private handing-around as the main technical means of survival, Roman writers were acutely aware of the wide gamut of hazards that faced their new work once it was launched by means of a *recitatio*, although some of those hazards lay too far in the future for them to imagine.

Horace wrote, 'you can always delete what you haven't handed around:

but once your words are sent out, you can't recall them'.[3] Martial warns his own book that it might be safer to stay at home – *tutior domi*.[4] That was the only sure defence against being relegated to what Catullus – referring of course to another author's work, the *Annals* of one Volusius, and not to his own – calls *cacata charta* – crap paper.[5] Copies of your composition could just end up as wrapping paper on the market stalls, for fish or incense or pepper.[6] Horace warns the bearer of some of his poems to Augustus not to sweat too much onto them, and not to trip over when carrying them – soiled copies in a hot climate and dirty streets can all too easily be imagined.[7] Or copies could end up – horror of horrors – as rough-sheets for schoolboys.[8]

Writers therefore speak of the moment when a work is 'abandoned' to the mercy (or otherwise) of readers/users, when control of it is lost in a world without intellectual property rights, as a moment of loss or even sadness, compared by some writers to the abandoning of an infant or the giving over of a child to a tutor, or the putting out of a child for adoption, even the surrendering of a daughter by a father who has hitherto kept her safe at home under lock and key, whether into marriage or, as some hint, into a life of prostitution.[9] Indeed, there is a strong sense conveyed sometimes that what we today might, with pride, call 'publication' was seen by some Romans as exactly that – an act of prostituting their work.[10] Writers also often used metaphors or phraseology deriving from slavery to describe 'publication'. Pliny talks of verses breaking free of their author like a runaway slave.[11] Martial refers to his work as 'fleeing' like an escaping slave, and calls his book a *verna*, the Latin term for a slave born in the house and so born into slavery.[12] Such vivid terminology gains its force not only from Rome as a slave society, but also as a literary society in which literate slaves were the enabling infrastructure of book composition itself.

Bad copying/copies

Complaints about poor copies made of their (or others') originals are frequent in Roman authors, as the most obvious form of degradation. They did not, of course, have any control over, or indeed any knowledge about, who made copies of their works, or where or when. Cicero complains to his brother Quintus about Latin works which *mendose scribuntur* – 'are written down full of errors', possibly (depending on how you interpret the Latin word *mendose*) full of blemishes.[13] The same use of the word *mendosus* occurs in Seneca where he refers to 'a book which we throw out because it is written in minute letters or tear up because it is full of errors' – *mendosum*, says Seneca, 'blemished'.[14] Bad copies are not unique to the Roman Empire, but, given manual copying, hard to check. In a later century, Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones* wrote about the opposite problem – preventing over-eager scribes from changing the text because they

thought they knew the rules of grammar or style better than the previous transcriber. Cassiodorus was mainly worried about Christian texts, but the same problem must have beset 'pagan' texts.

Bookworms and mice

Threats of basic physical destruction were ever present. Martial refers to 'bookworms' (*tineas*) of the literal variety that eat the papyrus.[15] Strabo tells us that after Aristotle had bequeathed his library to Theophrastus, his associate and successor as head of their school at Athens, the Lyceum,[16] later owners hid the books in a trench to avoid them being taken off to the city of Pergamon, but in the process the books were damaged by both moisture and moths. With moisture presumably came mould. Mice also ate the papyrus. Protection against some of these threats could come from rubbing cedar oil[17] into the papyrus, which also gave it a pleasant scent. Vitruvius says that great houses should look east, to get the morning sun and avoid bookworms and damp.[18]

Fire

Fire was an ever-present menace. For example, the great library of Alexandria was either burnt out or at least damaged when Julius Caesar was fighting in and around that city in 48 BCE. That same library suffered badly when the emperor Aurelian was again fighting around the city in about 270 CE, and there was a further destruction of the Serapeum library in Alexandria in 391 CE.[19] Fire devoured Augustus' Palatine library in Rome several times, under Nero or Titus, then again in 191 CE and finally in 363 CE: and of course the private library in the so-called Villa of the Papiri in Herculaneum all but perished in the great Vesuvius eruption of 79 CE, leaving charred remains awaiting modern microscopic techniques to decipher the black-on-black that is all that remains from the volcano's fire.

Theft and plagiarism

Galen tells us of an occasion when he found himself in a bookshop in Rome and witness to an argument between two bookshop browsers about whether a book they had found in the shop was or was not written by Galen.[20] Galen did not, apparently, intervene and reveal his identity. Perhaps he was not surprised. But it did prod him to try to put the record straight by listing his genuine works, and publicising the list in his *About My Own Books*. By then, he too had become well aware of the dangers of 'publication'. He comments that his writings had been subject to all sorts of mutilations, whereby people in different countries had been reading out to audiences various versions of his work under their own names, with cuts, additions and alterations – in other words, plagiarism.

Galen also refers to the theft of some of his texts by servants,[21] and elsewhere in the same context refers to a talk he had given which he then put into writing by dictating it to a man skilled in shorthand,[22] only to find (can he really have been surprised?) that it was swiftly put into general circulation – presumably by some form of theft or passing-on by the shorthand writer. Galen cites several instances in which such 'unauthorised' texts had come into the hands of someone unknown to him who had then passed them off as their own work. Admittedly, Galen may be seeking to approximate the fate of his own medical texts to the fate encountered by the texts of Hippocrates, whose self-appointed editor and corrector Galen was. Galen may have seen some prestige for himself in aligning himself with Hippocrates.[23] But it is hard to credit that his complaints about what is now called in law 'passing off' were entirely manufactured. Both Quintilian and Galen tell us of people, such as pupils, who, not necessarily from malice or for personal gain, had rashly put certain of their compositions into the public domain without permission and before those compositions had been made ready by the author for the author's own distribution of them.[24]

The line between, say, taking notes at a lecture by Quintilian or Galen and then writing the great man's material out on papyrus and providing it to your friends, and the same material written up and issued by the great man himself, must have been a fine one, not clear even to pupils close to them. Indeed, Galen admits that some of the texts he objects to were things that he himself gave out to friends and pupils, without a proper title or label (*sine inscriptione*) and as *commentarii* (something like lecture notes) rather than finished works, but which were passed on to others after the original recipients died and so got out of hand.[25] In another case which he cites, he wrote three books as a private favour to a fellow student, and these too found their way into the wrong hands. Similarly, Quintilian says that:

> two books on the art of rhetoric were already in circulation under my name, though neither issued by me nor composed with that in mind … some young men [Quintilian says *pueri,* which could well mean 'slaves'] … had learnt the first by heart: the other … some of my pupils … had made known through the indiscreet honour of handing round (*editio*).[26]

If the first example was indeed the fault of slaves, that is virtually theft of a master's property. In any case, the possibility of an in-house 'leak' of this sort must have been ever-present for anyone rich enough to keep a staff of literate slaves to help their process of composition. Cases of what may pass for over-enthusiasm shade off into, or indeed blatantly become, cases of outright plagiarism.

Plagiarism was one of the nightmares of a Roman author, at least if he became famous enough to be worth plagiarising. The *plagiarius* – the

plagiarist – was a stock figure of the literary scene.[27] It was not a matter of money or lost income – there was no money in 'publishing' as such. Rather, it was a matter of honour and (lost) reputation. Martial, in revenge, holds up to public ridicule the wretched Fidentinus, who had dared to buy Martial's verses and then presumably tried to pass them off as his own.[28] He does the same for another alleged plagiarist, Paulus, who buys then recites Martial's lines pretending that they are his own work.[29] In fact, plagiarism seems to have worried Martial a lot. Elsewhere he admonishes a 'greedy thief of my books' to be careful to get hold of a book that had been kept hidden away, rather than one that was already dolled-up for distribution – and adds ironically that he has some that he can supply.[30]

But it must be borne in mind that Roman authors were constantly copying or excerpting or paraphrasing from previous authors, in ways which we often cannot now detect because the original is lost, and indeed preferred this method of relying on previous texts to what we today might call 'original research'. So the definition of 'plagiarism' in the Roman context was interestingly different from today's legal definition.

Authenticity: is it really by Plautus?

The anecdote told by Galen, cited above, where there was an argument in a bookshop about whether a text allegedly by him really was by him, shows how real was the problem of verifying the authenticity of a particular copy or work, or of a portion of it, or of a word in it, in a world where there were no ISBN numbers or publishers' lists. Varro for example drew up a list of 21 plays generally agreed to be by Plautus, but that compared to the 130 that had previously been attributed to him.[31] The only solution was to find as old a copy as you could in, say, some library, on the grounds that the older the copy, the shorter the chain of copying from the original and the less the likelihood of errors having crept in. What has been dismissed as the literary antiquarianism of later litterateurs such as Aulus Gellius and Cornelius Fronto, may have been partly based on a concern to establish what the author actually wrote.[32]

Changes in literary fashion

One important factor in the survival or disappearance of a work was whether educated people, or people aspiring to appear educated, continued to make copies of it as time and the centuries of the Roman Empire rolled on. This was in turn a matter of changes in contemporary literary taste. It seems that in the later empire literary taste had decided that the great era of Latin literary talent lay between, say, the early first century BCE and the death of Augustus, with a secondary peak around the turn of the first and second centuries, so that works earlier or later than that were less

copied, if at all, and even copying of works from those so-called 'golden' and 'silver' periods may have been very selective.[33] In the fourth century, for example, both Ammianus Marcellinus[34] and St Augustine[35] had educations based on Cicero and Virgil, both of whom wrote several hundred years before their time. Ammianus is critical [36] of aristocrats of his time who only bothered with authors like Juvenal or Marius Maximus.[37] 'Some of them hate learning like poison', he says, but those two authors 'they turn over in their idle moments'. Ammianus may have exaggerated for effect.[38] But Tacitus may have been largely ignored for centuries, only to come back into favour and achieve 'classic' status in the fourth century.[39] There is nothing unusual about long-term swings in literary, musical or other cultural tastes. But their effects could be more prejudicial to the survival of a work in a society whose means of recording cultural works was so (to us) haphazard.

Scroll to codex

It has been suggested that the decision, taken case by case in the later Roman Empire, whether to transfer a text from papyrus to parchment was perhaps the greatest hurdle or winnowing-out processes that Latin literature had to endure.[40] The transfer to parchment also meant, of course, a transfer to the codex format with its different conventions of presentation, so that it would not have been a mere 'slavish' copying across from one text-bearer to another, but would have entailed a complete re-think of how to present any given text. So in each case, there had to be a decision – is it worth it, or not?

Hostility on the part of the early Christian church towards 'pagan' works generally must also have played a large part in making that decision. It is hard to believe that the huge losses of classical literature that occurred after the collapse of the western Roman Empire in the fifth century CE were not due, in part, to the view of the church that most of it was not worth preserving. The church was after all the only social mechanism in existence for centuries which could, had it so wished, have preserved much more of the Roman literary heritage. But between the collapse of the western Roman Empire and the first revival of interest in classical texts under Charlemagne some four hundred years later, the bulk of Roman literature was lost for good. The survival through that long period of almost any Latin texts apart perhaps from Virgil and Cicero was the ultimate gauntlet to run. Reynolds and Wilson remark that:

> One cannot consider these facts without marvelling at the slenderness of the thread on which the fate of the Latin classics hung.[41]

13

Bookburning and treason: 'a time of savagery even in peace'

One of the most vivid visual images of the Nazi dictatorship in Germany is the burning of books in mass pyres by Nazi storm troopers and students in1933. They were, in the main, books by Jewish authors, part of the Nazi purge of the Jews and Jewish influence. It was, they said, 'cleansing (Säuberung) by fire'. Such images came to symbolise the suppression of free speech and thought generally by the Nazi regime.[1] Perhaps it is this sinister Nazi background that has caused puzzled attention to the recurring cases of book burning at Rome, notably but not only in the first century CE.[2] These book burnings were a more radical attack on books and authors than the simple expulsion of books and authors from imperial libraries, discussed earlier. The burnings shaded off into the even more sinister practice of actual accusations of treason against certain writers. Many instances of book burning at Rome are recorded by Seneca, Tacitus, Suetonius and Ammianus, and these were deliberate burnings of works written by authors who had incurred the displeasure of the emperor – or, more specifically, the more determined emperors such as Tiberius, Nero, Domitian, Diocletian, Jovian and Valens. The book burnings appear to have had an especially sinister significance for the historian Tacitus, and they are the occasion for some of his sourest comments on the first century of the Roman Principate.

> In the fires doubtless the government imagined that it could silence the voice of Rome and annihilate the freedom of the Senate and men's knowledge of the truth.[3]

It has been suggested that Tacitus had his own agenda in playing up these events, to lend an air of risk to his own telling of martyr-tales.[4] After the event, with the wisdom of hindsight, we can judge that Tacitus ran little risk – but could Tacitus at the time? After all, as with other phenomena often thought of as sinister developments of the Roman imperial regime, the tradition of bookburning goes back a long way into previous Roman republican history. Both Varro and Livy assert that the burning of books had strong precedents under the Republic, or even earlier. Varro says that King Tarquinius Priscus stood by as the Cumaean Sibyl burnt six of her nine books of prophecies, before agreeing to buy the remaining three for

300 gold pieces.[5] These remaining three (having been accidentally destroyed but reassembled in 83 BCE [6]) were finally burnt by Stilicho, the Vandal general in Roman service, in 408 CE, after 1,000 years as a sacred Roman text.[7] Their longevity shows how the Romans well knew the value of preserving a written record, for texts that mattered.

'Foreign' beliefs

This connection between bookburning and divination or 'foreign' beliefs is persistent throughout Roman history. Livy tells us that several times before 186 BCE Roman magistrates were asked to collect and burn books on soothsaying.[8] Then in 181 BCE, the Senate ordered texts about Pythagorean philosophy to be burnt.[9] The emperor Augustus took over this tradition. He caused over 2,000 books in Greek and Latin on soothsaying to be gathered up and burnt.[10] His successor Tiberius reviewed books of prophecy and had some burnt.[11] Later, the emperor Caracalla wanted to burn the books of the Peripatetic school of philosophy, although we do not know if he actually did.[12] In an odd case, the emperor Diocletian ordered the burning of Egyptian books about gold and silver, allegedly as an attack on Egyptian spending on luxuries, but given his other book burnings (see below), one wonders whether he had other, more ideological or mystical, motives.[13]

Given this Roman tradition of burning of mystical or philosophical books, it is not surprising that periodic book burning became a phenomenon of the later struggle between Christianity and 'paganism' i.e. the orthodox Roman religious system. For example, in 303 CE the emperor Diocletian ordered the burning of Christian scriptures, and after the switch to official recognition of Christianity, in 363/4 CE the emperor Jovian had the library of 'pagan' books at Antioch burnt.[14] What is hard to bring back into focus when discussing the burning of books for ostensibly political reasons by Roman emperors is this possibly religious or even mystical aspect of the power of the book.

> One can detect traces of the deep-rooted superstition in the magical powers of the written word … written words from the point of view either of subject matter or of author might be held to exercise some sympathetic magic force.[15]

Authors' own burnings

The perceived magical or mystic powers of the written word may partly explain why burning their own books became something of a habit among authors themselves. Plato notoriously burnt most of his poetry,[16] but most notoriously of all, Virgil wanted the text of his *Aeneid* burnt at his death because, he said, he regarded it as unfinished.[17] Then, in a conscious and self-conscious literary imitation of Virgil, Ovid, as he was about to depart

into exile in Romania, threw his *Metamorphoses* onto the fire as being the work to blame for his exile.[18] Timagenes of Alexandria had a disagreement with Augustus over a book he had written about Augustus' activities, and as a gesture of anger and scorn tossed his volume into the fire.[19] But Ovid gives the game away. He fully admits that there were other copies around.[20] Probably the same was true for Virgil and Timagenes. It was the symbolic burning that mattered – a sort of expiation or purification, a ritual ceremony of some sort. Of course, it was also a way of dramatically drawing attention to the work in question.

Imperial burnings

The perceived magical powers of the written word may also help to explain the persistence with which the Roman authorities burnt books, perhaps again as a sort of purification ceremony like the Nazis of the 1930s, even though they too must have known full well that other copies of the offending works existed and would survive. But it does seem that the evident political insecurity of the first Roman imperial dynasty, the Julio-Claudians, also played its part. While bookburning cannot be regarded as just the aberration of the more paranoid Roman emperors, since it had a solid history in republican Rome, it was also sanctioned as a practice by the example set by the 'untouchable' Augustus, and it did get worse after Augustus.

As the first in the line, Augustus set the imperial precedent for the rest of the dynasty when he ordered the burning of books allegedly libellous of himself.[21] Then, by Senate decree but surely with Augustus' approval, the books of Titus Labienus and Cassius Severus were incinerated, in the former case after he had attracted great hatred by his outspoken attacks on people. Labienus then walled himself up in his family tomb and (presumably) starved himself to death. Interestingly, Labienus had been giving a reading of a work of history. Seneca notes dryly that Labienus' accuser (unnamed) also later got his books burnt – a neat reversal, and remarks that it was 'a new and unexpected turn of events for punishment to be visited upon a man's intellectual efforts'.[22] But thereafter, there were regular cases. The *Histories* written by Cremutius Cordus were burnt in 25 CE by the aediles, under Tiberius,[23] as were the writings of Scaurus.[24] Tacitus also records the burning of the writings of Fabricus Veiento in 62 CE under Nero,[25] and the mass destruction in the Forum of the works of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio in 93 CE, on orders from Domitian.[26] Domitian also clamped down on so-called 'libellous verses commonly in circulation' but we are not told how.[27]

Then there is a long gap in the record. But in 371/2 CE there was another massive burning of books for political reasons by the emperor Valens. After a terrible purge and bloodbath of alleged conspirators against Valens' life, says Ammianus Marcellinus in a memorable passage,

> innumerable codices and large numbers of volumes were made into piles and burnt under the eyes of the judges, having been rooted out of houses as being illegal, even though most of them were treatises on liberal studies or on the law.[28]

He adds the telling detail that people burnt their own libraries for fear of what might happen to them if their books were discovered.

What was the purpose?

What was the practical point of these burnings? Tacitus several times picks up the Ovidian theme that the burnings were both futile, since there were other copies around, and a sure way to draw attention to the work burnt. About the burning of Cremutius Cordus' books, he remarks:

> They survived, first hidden and later re-published. This makes one deride the stupidity of people who believe that today's authority can destroy tomorrow's memories.[29]

Interestingly, they were re-published by the emperor Caligula, perhaps as a gesture to distance himself from his predecessor, copies having been preserved by Cordus' daughter.[30] About the bonfire of Veiento's works, Tacitus remarks, even more epigrammatically, that as a result of the burning his writings

> were eagerly sought for and read – for as long as it was dangerous to have them. When, later, the ban became obsolete, they were forgotten.[31]

So Tacitus thought that these burnings were sinister but futile gestures, because they ultimately failed to eradicate all copies or erase human memories, and/or because they were counter-productive by drawing attention to them. But evidently the emperors in question did not agree with him, nor did later emperors. The episodes must, in their view, have had some effect, and the tradition of bookburning is too persistent to dismiss as an aberration. The Roman state did not have at its disposal the organised means of state censorship that were available to the Nazis. But in the political context of imperial Rome, it seems that the book-burnings did have real meaning.

The burnings were, in my view, partly for political propaganda, a public statement of imperial power and supremacy, of imperial suzerainty, negative as well as positive, over literature as well as finance, the army and the administration. Partly also they may, *pace* Tacitus, have had a practical effect. In an context where the number of copies of any particular work or book in circulation might be quite small, and most of those within the capital city or the bigger cities of the empire, then collecting and destroying all the copies to be found in the imperial libraries was really an

extension of the simple exclusion from these libraries suffered, for example, by Ovid.[32] Those copies in the hands of the emperor's friends (*amici*) would then be added to the heap on the bonfire, one may suppose, and that might then oblige all those who wanted to curry favour with the emperor to throw in their copies also. So too might those who feared, as people did in Stalin's Russia, that being found in possession of one of the banned works might itself be grounds for a prosecution against them, in the case of Rome by one of the many informers (*delatores*) who flourished under the more suspicious emperors, and who, under the Roman system of justice, had big financial incentives to bring prosecutions, in the form of a share of the victim's property if the prosecution was successful. It could therefore have been a very dangerous thing to keep a copy of a banned work, in case word got around – even if the emperor had no way of knowing for sure that all copies had in fact been committed to the flames. The bonfires might have been quite spectacular as political propaganda, but also have had that possible magical or superstitious aspect, as if, by burning the books, the beliefs embodied in them were somehow purified away.

But there was certainly a very practical aspect as well. Since Roman writers were in the main drawn from the same upper-class which assisted in the civilian and military administration of the empire, and from whose ranks any challenger or conspirator for the imperial throne would be drawn, control of literary activity was for a Roman emperor part of the political process by which he both kept his throne and kept his life. In Rome, books were not and could not be neutral (perhaps never can be).

The case of Domitian is an instructive case of how patronage of the arts could also go hand in hand with destruction of the arts, as two sides of the same imperial coin. Vespasian, Domitian's father, was a great patron of arts and literature,[33] and the poet Statius' father (also a poet) had been tutor to the young Domitian. So Domitian also fancied himself as a patron of the arts; founded the Capitoline Games which featured poetry competitions; and built the Odeon, an open-air theatre for poetry recitals, plays and other public performances (see Chapter 14). Suetonius says about Domitian that in his first years as emperor he displayed:

> a particular enthusiasm for poetry, something which he had been as indifferent to in earlier years as it would be despised and rejected by him in years to come, and he even gave readings in public.[34]

So on the one hand, a remarkable group of poets flourished during the Flavian Principate – Statius, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, Martial. Many of them received imperial favours, notably (for some reason) entry into the prestigious priestly colleges.[35] Later, the Graecophile emperor Hadrian continued the tradition of founding or encouraging literary and cultural festivals. On the other hand, Domitian also burnt a lot of books, as noted above. For Domitian, destroying works that he disapproved of

was the reverse of promoting those he did approve of. Imperial book-burning was the corollary of imperial promotion of the arts and culture, even if building upon republican and Augustan precedent.[36] It was particularly evident under emperors like Tiberius and Domitian who were nervous about the political security of their tenure of power, as was, at least in 1933, the Nazi party in Germany. So the emperors demanded and enforced support from other, cultural sources, and became vengeful when they thought that this type of support was being wilfully (or possibly accidentally) denied.[37]

Texts and treason

In many though not all cases where books were burnt, it was as part of the condemnation of their author for alleged treason. But there were many more condemnations of authors than incidents of book burning (as far as we know). Sometimes, the condemnation of authors was not a result, or at least not a direct result, of what they had written. But frequently it was the direct result. Ovid was sent into exile for what he wrote (and saw?),[38] and in retrospect may have got off lightly. The physical danger to authors was most evident in the case of those who wrote history, both in the form of prose and of poetry. History-writing, as under other more recent autocrats such as Stalin, was a dangerous activity. So too, less often, was political pamphleteering. It evoked one of Tacitus' many memorable epigrams, referring to the period 68-96 CE that included the reign of Domitian:

> *Ipsa etiam pace saevum*
> a time of savagery even in peace.[39]

No wonder that Horace cautions Asinius Pollio that Pollio's history of the civil wars of the first century BCE was 'a work full of dangerous throws of the dice' (*periculosae plenum opus aleae*), referring both to the events themselves, and to the writing of a history of them.[40] Tacitus echoes this with his comment that in the first century 'truth had been corrupted in many ways'[41] and complains that historians of his time run the risk of offending both the descendants of those criticised in histories of the recent past and those contemporaries who see such criticisms as a veiled attack on themselves.[42] Ammianus refers to the 'dangers attendant on truth', and to the writers of previous times who wrote freely about events but did not dare to publish in their lifetimes, citing a (now lost) letter of Cicero as his evidence.[43] Tacitus' friend Pliny echoes his worries. In one of his letters Pliny ponders whether he should write history, and wonders what period his history should cover.[44] 'Shall it be recent times which no-one has handled? I shall receive small thanks and give serious offence.' The whiff

of danger returns in two other incidents, one narrated by, the other (probably) about, Tacitus.

In his *Dialogue on Orators*, Tacitus (the presumed author of that work) tells the story of how Tacitus and friends drop in on Curiatus Maternus, who the day before had given a reading (a *recitatio*) of his play entitled *Cato*.[45] Even in that short space of time, it had become known that the play had offended people in court circles by its evident enthusiasm for Cato, a champion of republican 'liberty'. The visitors suggested to Maternus that he should tone down the words 'so as to be, if not better, then at least less dangerous' and then re-issue his play. The scene was set in the time of Vespasian, and it is possible that this Maternus is the same as the one later executed by Domitian.[46] At the visit, Maternus refused to compromise: maybe he later paid the penalty for his robust attitude.

This incident shows not only how sensitive the emperor and his court could be to implied criticism, however oblique, but also how quickly news of a possibly offensive *recitatio* could get around. In the hot-house context of the narrow upper stratum of an intensely oral society like Rome, it did not need the distribution of written copies to trigger a reaction – the *recitatio* itself was the key political statement, and news of it went from mouth to mouth in a matter of hours. The same immediacy is shown by the story recounted by Pliny, perhaps referring to Tacitus but he does not say so, where a historian, after reading part of his new work at a *recitatio*, was visited by some people who begged him not to read any more of it the next day, as he had promised to do, because it was embarrassing some of the audience.[47] It is a scene eerily reminiscent of Tacitus' story in the *Dialogue on Orators* – except that this historian agreed to desist, honourably so in Pliny's opinion, whereas Maternus did not desist. But then, Tacitus was Pliny's friend.

This political stand-off between written or recited word and imperial power seems to have begun even under Augustus. Tacitus tells us that it was Augustus who revived the treason law – the law of *maiestas* – and was the first to use this law to investigate written libel, having been provoked by one Cassius Severus, who slandered (allegedly) eminent people. Tiberius also got annoyed by anonymous verses.[48] So the general sense of danger associated with writing, and writing of history in particular, set in early, and was widespread and persistent. Freudenburg remarks on how

> the telling of stories about freedom-fighters itself plays a significant role in securing the story-teller's demise … Those who tell such stories are put to death, and their deaths in turn become the source of new martyr tales, and so on.[49]

It occasioned Suetonius' most savage outburst against the emperor Tiberius.

> Every crime was treated as a capital offence, even when it was just a matter of a few simple words. A poet was prosecuted for including criticisms of Agamemnon in a tragedy, a historian for describing Brutus and Cassius as the last of the Romans. Authors were attacked and books banned, even though some years previously they had been well received by audiences which had included the emperor Augustus.[50]

Suetonius adds that this contrasted with Tiberius' earlier tolerance of critics, a time when the emperor said:

> In a free state, minds and tongues should be free.

Indeed. Then he, or things, changed.

Case histories

In summary, the main cases that we know about where authors were accused and convicted of treason during the period of this investigation, were these:

Under Tiberius. Cremutius Cordus, who committed suicide in 25 CE after his history of the still-recent civil wars, going down to at least 18 BCE, allegedly celebrating Cicero, Brutus and Cassius, offended Tiberius and his chief minister (until his downfall) Sejanus. Tacitus records his passionate but vain speech in self-defence before a grim-faced Tiberius.[51] In 35 CE, Scaurus, author of a tragedy that allegedly reflected badly on Tiberius, committed suicide before inevitable condemnation.[52] In 36 CE Sextus Paconius was strangled when already in prison for verses he had composed there criticising Tiberius.[53]

Under Nero. Veiento was merely expelled from Italy in 62 CE (see above) for allegedly libelling other senators. But the writer and author of the *Pharsalia* and the *De Bello Civili* (About the Civil War), Lucan, was caught up in the so-called Piso conspiracy of 65 CE to assassinate Nero and died reciting some of his own verses. Lucan is indeed a complex case. Suetonius suggests that it began as a literary feud between the two men, but says that later Lucan became 'almost the standard bearer of the Piso conspiracy'.[54] And most famous of all, Nero's ex-tutor Seneca was also caught up in the same conspiracy and forced into suicide. Antistius Sosianus was sent into exile for writing what Tacitus calls 'offensive poems' about Nero, as was Curtius Montanus, 'scribbler of detestable verses' according to his accusers, but according to Tacitus 'no libellous poet – the cause of his banishment was his manifest talent'.[55]

Under Domitian. Herennius Senecio was put to death in 93 CE for the biography he wrote of Helvidius Priscus. Arulenus Rusticus was put to

death because of the panegyric he wrote of Thrasea Paetus.[56] Hermogenes of Tarsus was crucified because of some allusions in his *History,* the punishment even extending to the unfortunate slave-copyists who had written out the work.[57] Several philosophers, including Dio Chrystostom, were sent into exile. Dio's exile, probably in 82 CE, was on a charge of being implicated in a conspiracy hatched by a relative of Domitian. Dio himself says it was for 'an alleged friendship', but admits he was an adviser to the conspirator, so Domitian may have had good reason.[58]

History as politics by another name

The important thing about the history writers was that many or most of them were members of the elite senatorial class from which any opposition to the emperor of the day would have to come, and from which any successor to him would probably be drawn. For example, Tacitus was a senator, as was Cassius Dio: Senecio had been quaestor and senator. Even the bookish Lucan had been granted the rank of quaestor, and Seneca had been suffect consul,[59] although that is not the true measure of his great political importance in the early years of Nero. Other history writers had held senior positions in the army and administration, such as Sallust, who was commander of a legion and governor of Africa Nova, and Velleius Paterculus, army officer and later quaestor.

In other words, their historical works either were, or could easily be read as, extensions of their actual careers in the empire, or as barometers of the state of opinion in the senatorial class to which they belonged. If therefore what they wrote implied criticism of the regime, either the regime of the current emperor or of the imperial system as a whole, it was, or could be, an act of contemporary politics, and not just an academic exercise – in other words, treasonable. Given the close relation between history and poetry, such that much history was written as poetry, poets could be as much at risk as prose writers.[60] This degree of imperial suspicion may also have been, in the first instance, a product of the uneasy and highly oral world of upper-class Rome, where 'the word' was examined minutely just because 'the word' got around so quickly, literally mouth-to-mouth.

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Gluing it all together

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14

Scripts for all classes: the theatre of Rome, Rome as theatre

In the year 14 CE an emergency meeting of the Roman Senate had to be called when a famous dancer (i.e. *pantomimus* in Roman terms) refused to go on stage at the Augustalia public festival unless his performance fees were renegotiated upwards.[1] Clearly, star status and the opportunity for financial blackmail that goes with it are nothing new. But who were these stars of the imperial stage, and how did they and their fellow stage artists of the Roman mime and pantomime get their material?

Of course, the Roman mime was not mime in the modern sense, and the Roman pantomime was not pantomime in the modern sense either. Retention of these terms in modern books about the Roman theatre has only served to deepen confusion about what exactly was being presented on the Roman stage. The Roman mime was not mute, as is modern mime, and did not mime anything specific, as does modern mime, but life generally. It was a sort of general-purpose music-hall variety show or vaudeville that could be played in the theatre, at the street corner or in the *triclinium* (the private dining room of the well-heeled).[2] It mixed prose, verse, speech, song, dance, music, jugglers and animals, was part of 'oral Rome', performed by teams of (very vocal) actors, male and female, in comic dress and without masks. Some rich people, such as the Ummidia mentioned disapprovingly by Pliny,[3] kept a large private troupe of such actors. The performers were in general slaves or ex-slaves, known colloquially as 'flatfoots' (*planipes*), because they did not wear the traditional tragic actor's high platform boot, the *cothurnus*. The mime goes back far into Roman history.

The Roman pantomime of the imperial period was a more recent import from the Greek east. It was not a Christmas entertainment for children. It was dance theatre, with a masked dancer being the star player supported by other players who supplied the music or the spoken or sung libretti.[4] And it did mime things. Perhaps ballet dance might be an appropriate but not exact analogy. It was part of 'visual Rome' but also of 'oral Rome', with the star performer enacting famous roles from Roman and Greek mythology or deriving grand themes from the plays that the Romans called 'tragedies', in other words, serious plays. For fuller treatment of these topics than is possible here, *Silent Eloquence* by Ismene Lada-Richards gives a fascinating and comprehensive account.[5]

Livy tells us that Livius Andronicus in the 240s BCE began the practice

of separating the roles of music, singing and acting on stage – but with all three performed in unison.[6] So the basic format of the pantomime goes back a long way into Roman history and had a sound republican ancestry. What is true is that the particular expression of this format as pantomime appears (according to Roman authorities) to have arrived in Rome in the latter part of the first century BCE, at the hands of immigrant Syrian and Alexandrian artists trained in a long established Hellenistic stage format, and then swiftly rose to great popularity at Rome, provoking a xenophobic hostile reaction in some quarters. The introduction of pantomime to Rome from the east was specifically attributed to one Pylades, for solemn dance, and to one Bathyllos for more comic dance. The swift rise to fame of Pylades, and of pantomime, is shown by the story that Pylades gave a special performance of *Hercules Furens* (The Madness of Hercules) at a banquet given by Augustus.[7]

The hostile press

Until recently, both the mime and the pantomime have had a bad press, the former as obscene, the latter as effeminate. 'Effeminate' is the common accusation against Roman actors, pantomime actors in particular, among Roman critics, echoed by modern ones.[8] Thus the Roman stage generally, but particularly that of the imperial period, has been viewed through a set of mutually reinforcing hostile prejudices. Certain upper-class writers of the Roman period itself deplored the antics of the popular theatre as beneath their (sometimes assumed) aristocratic dignity. Aristocrats purported to despise the theatre of grand spectacle, as against the 'theatre of text', a view articulated for them by Horace, who talks of the *plebecula* (the 'little people', a derogatory diminutive for the *plebs*) calling for a bear or boxers in the middle of the *carmina* (poems? plays?) while true writers might as well be talking to the proverbial deaf ass (*asello surdo*). But maybe, *pace* Horace, it might have been in the middle of a bad play.[9] Tacitus in particular is very critical of the theatre, referring to:

> foreign laxity … now they are compelling the Roman elite to disgrace themselves as orators or stage singers … does even informed attention to effeminate music and songs contribute to justice?[10]

Earlier, Cornelius Nepos had famously written:

> Almost everywhere in Greece … even to appear on the stage and exhibit oneself to the people was never regarded as something to be ashamed of. Among us, however, all those acts are regarded either as disgraceful or as base and inconsistent with respectability.[11]

Pliny in his Panegyric to Trajan refers to the 'effeminate arts and efforts unworthy of our time', describing the pantomimes of Nero's reign.[12] The

law reflected this attitude, placing stage actors effectively outside the law and treating them as the lowest form of life short of slavery. Actors and pantomime artists could not become Roman citizens, vote, serve in the army, or stand for public office, and their descendants for four generations could not marry into the senatorial class. They had little if any protection against physical violence. Augustus twice had actors publicly flogged: both he and Tiberius sent them into exile.[13] Yet at the same time some actors were intimates, in several senses, of aristocrats and emperors.[14] Pantomime in particular seems to have been associated with periodic outbreaks of disorder in the theatre, bringing retaliation from the emperors and exile (or worse) for the actors – but this is also a tribute to the actors' popularity. Actors were often equated with gladiators – two sets of performers who were both the lowest of the social low, and capable of gaining immense and enviable popularity. For a member of the upper classes, writing for the stage might be acceptable, but acting on stage was a different matter. It was *infamis*, a legal and social disgrace.[15]

Later, the lips of both the early Christian church and of many modern commentators have curled at the notion of female nudity on stage, dirty jokes, male dancers in flimsy diaphanous silk robes, and the dancer-lovers of (in modern terms) bisexual Roman autocrats. Tertullian, not surprisingly, was among the most vocal of the many Church critics. He refers to the 'evil' of the theatre and to Pompey's theatre in Rome as 'the 'citadel of all uncleanliness' with its 'effeminacy of gesture and body'. But some pagans took a similar view. Dio Chrysostom criticised the Alexandrians for their 'disgraceful and laughable' addiction to the theatre, and deplored the fact that to get public support for office, the candidate must sponsor 'flute players and mimes and harpists and jugglers'. Thus did pagan and Christian propagandist agree.[16] As have modern writers, among whom the following prejudice is not untypical:

> utterly unrestrained by any considerations of technique or decency, yet capable of adopting on occasions the most sententious style, the mime came nearer than any other forms of drama to the real tastes of the Roman populace'. [Under the empire, the theatre] descended to the lowest depths of the disgusting and the obscene.[17]

This prudish distaste for the actors of mime and pantomime (or the more notorious of them) has however been allowed to get in the way of proper appreciation of the positive social and cultural role of the mime and pantomime.

A reassessment

One might begin with the famous story so often used to establish the alleged vulgarity of mime and therefore of the Roman theatre audience,

concerning the famously upright Cato, who was at the Floralia festival when the audience grew reticent about demanding that the woman on stage strip off while he was still there. So Cato obligingly left. But the point of the story seems to me to be, not the alleged stage indecency, but that Cato was there at the theatre in the first place, and that the audience showed him such courtesy.[18]

A fundamental mistake (apart, perhaps, from prim attitudes to female stage nudity and the Roman equivalent of 'men in tights') has been to privilege spoken theatrical versions of serious themes above dance versions. As any enthusiast for the ballet and the dance can testify, these are alternative ways of expressing the essential drama. In today's era of mass entertainment, musical theatre and popular dance, it is perhaps easier than it used to be to accept that Roman dance theatre was an equally valid, if different, way of interpreting the classics of Roman literary culture. Seneca appears to agree with this. He says that the stage performances and readings are places where similar emotions are aroused by great events in Roman history.[19] Perhaps fortunately, this is not the place for a large-scale revision of the history of the Roman stage, one that is freed from the judgemental attitudes that once coloured so much comment on the Roman theatre.[20] That revision is anyway well in hand in recent works about the Greek and Roman stage. To quote one authority:

> One of the most exciting developments within Classics over the past twenty-five years has been the rediscovery of the important truth that many of the masterpieces of ancient literature were originally designed to be appreciated not by isolated individual readers but by spectators grouped at performances. Scholars have been casting off the prejudices against the performative dimension of ancient literature which they inherited from Plato, the Christian fathers and (for different reasons) Aristotle … recent publications have demonstrated the extent to which ancient authors were creating words whose meaning had to be realised and transmitted through the voices and physical movements of performers – orators, rhapsodes, chorus members.[21]

The concern here therefore is a limited but important one, to establish the evidence that there was, throughout the 200-year period in which we are interested, a continuing and culturally vital link between Roman authors of literary works and either writing for the stage or being performed on the stage. The scrappy evidence, even worse here than for many aspects of Roman history,[22] has tended to obscure this link – or was it that there was a reluctance to associate the authors of the great Latin classics with the allegedly sordid world of the theatre? In a perceptive 1988 article, Elaine Fantham calls the Roman mime 'the missing link in Roman literary history'.[23] She argues that Roman mime, far from being merely the vulgar and indecent display of bawdy humour and female strippers on the public

stage designed to placate the mob as part of a bread-and-circuses policy of Roman imperial times,[24] in fact borrowed themes and stories from the serious narrative and dramatic genres. She therefore argues that there were literary mimes as well as the bawdy stuff and that there was also traffic in the other direction, in that serious narrative and dramatic writers borrowed styles and stories and dramatic effects from the popular stage. In other words, there was a two-way cultural exchange between mass-audience theatre and what we are pleased to call the 'literature' of the Roman elite. Mime may have burlesqued serious plays and themes, but it was part of the same common cultural vocabulary.[25]

It is my contention that it was the Roman stage generally, and in particular the pantomime rather than just the mime, that was the 'missing link in Roman literary history'. It is this theatrical link that demonstrates the essential continuity of Roman cultural life between the oral-written culture of the literate upper-class minority, and the oral-visual culture of the rest – or much of the rest – of the semi-literate or illiterate Roman populace. Thus the Roman 'book' has to be seen not just as an elitist toy, though it had aspects of that, but also as a contributor to the larger 'theatre' of Roman life generally. It also raises, yet again, as in the discussion of the *recitatio*, the question of what a Roman written text was actually <u>for</u>.

Throughout the period under investigation, the literary elite maintained a close connection with the mass audience theatre in all its forms, not just the 'serious' theatre of tragedies and history plays[26] but also the mime and (from the time of Augustus) pantomime; and that the theatre, in particular the pantomime, provided the main cultural escalator by which elements of the common culture shared by all classes at Rome shuttled between the upper floor and lower floor of the same cultural building. Roman show-business was business for all classes of society.[27] The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* remarks that the pantomime was:

> essentially serious … a highly sophisticated art, demanding much from both performers and spectators [with the dancer in] a graceful silk costume and a beautiful mask.[28]

Lada-Richards is even more enthusiastic:

> The very fact that this type of entertainment [pantomime], unique as it was in the ancient world, did succeed in carrying thousands of different bodies on the wings of a single dancer's electrifying narrative of fleshly sensuality speaks volumes with respect to the genre's real nature, namely its subliminal function as a cultural adhesive or a common psychic coinage, cutting across socio-political and educational divides, as well as any other form of audience stratification.[29]

The theatre audience

Cicero identified the theatre with the people – *theatrum populusque Romanus* – an apparently natural connection, in the context of Roman politics.[30] His brother Quintus wrote up to five tragic dramas, based on Sophocles.[31] There is no suggestion that Quintus' plays were ever performed. But the theatre had been an integral part of Roman society for generations before Cicero's time, if in temporary structures, dating back to the earliest years of Roman history.[32] Theatrical performances formed the major part of the *ludi*, often unhelpfully translated as 'games' but really the public festivals that took up an increasingly large proportion of the days of the Roman year as the empire progressed. The statistics show how popular, and how increasingly popular, the theatre was at Rome, and how theatre days outnumbered other types of festival days, in the arena or on the horse track.[33] Nor should one underestimate the size of the Roman theatre audience. Rome's first permanent theatre, the theatre of Pompey, built in 55 BCE, held an estimated 10,000 people, a huge crowd by any theatrical standard, and by the turn of the century the three main theatres of Rome, all newly built, held 30,000-40,000 people between them.[34] There were of course theatres outside Rome as well, for example at Pompeii, where the famous *pantomimus* Pylades (it was probably him) performed in about 20 BCE. The stars played the circuit.

The Roman theatre was certainly a noisy, populist place. Horace speaks of 'the din you get in a Roman theatre'.[35] To add to the noise, there were theatre 'claques', organised groups of paid clappers and applauders, also to be found in the law courts.[36] Tacitus for example tells us about one Percennius, who was once 'a leader of theatre operations' i.e. claque leader or boss. But that does not mean that the audience was to be dismissed as an uncritical or boorish audience. Far from it. Strabo tells us that poetry can fill theatres.[37] The critical and educated ear of the Roman theatre audience is well attested. Cicero himself, no populist, bears witness to the acute hearing given to lines of Accius in the theatre.[38] Cicero also tells us that:

> if an actor makes a movement that is a little out of tune with the music or recites a verse that is one syllable too long or too short, he is hissed and booed off the stage.[39]

Ovid tells us that at a festival the audience 'sing whatever they have learned in the theatre, and move their hands easily to the words'.[40] Livy speaks of the theatre crowd's attention to 'words, maxims, rhythm and song'.[41] Elsewhere, and in a later century, Lucian of Samosata reports that the people of Antioch were keen observers and hecklers of the dance theatre. Lucian describes how, when a tall dancer performed on stage an assault on the walls of Thebes, the audience shouted 'step over the walls,

you don't need the ladder', and to a fat dancer they shouted 'spare the stage' – a lively if not exactly sophisticated response.[42] The theatre played a direct day-to-day political role as well. Cicero asks Atticus to test out popular opinion by going to the theatre.[43] Later, under the Roman emperors,

> the voice of the people was above all heard in the theatre … the theatre became one of the few places where popular demands could be voiced … in the collective chantings of the popular will.[44]

Where you sat – in the theatre, in society

At least some members of the aristocracy took part in dramatic performances, at least if Juvenal is to be believed, and that despite aristocratic conventional contempt of the theatre and laws against senators taking part in plays.[45] Tacitus records that in 15 CE senators were forbidden from entering the houses of pantomimes, and knights from escorting them in public – this was after civil disturbances and deaths triggered by (it appears) rival fan clubs.[46] Nero had a troupe of 5,000 *Augustiani*, paid clappers organised in three sections each with its own style of applause – the 'bees', the 'tiles' and the 'potsherds'.[47] The mere fact that laws were needed to curb senators' and knights' association with stage performers, and sometimes not obeyed, is illustrative of the tension that the Roman upper classes felt about the theatre. On the one hand, they were drawn to it and to the popularity it could convey. On the other hand they were repelled by the fact that acting was by and large the occupation of slaves and freedmen (or women), the very class from whom Roman citizens were desperate to distance themselves.[48] The repeated legislation, the riots and the severe reaction to them, and the development of the concept of *infamia* (disgrace), may have been due to the heightened anxiety of the aristocracy about its own social status under the Principate.

The fact remains however that after Augustus' reorganisation of the Roman theatrical space, the upper classes had their reserved seats at the theatre, and we have no evidence that they did not fill them. One may argue therefore for 'double standards' in the attitude of the aristocracy towards the theatre. Interestingly, the Latin word *ordo* came to denote both a row of seats at the theatre, and a class of society (one of the two upper classes, the senatorial class and the equestrian class, or knights) and public order and correctness. Under the Lex Julia Theatralis of 18 BCE, Augustus reorganised the seating plan of the theatre to ensure that each social group had its allotted and proper place – senators, knights, visiting foreign dignitaries, women, children, slaves, and of course the emperor himself.[49] This may have been part of his programme to reassure the upper classes of their rightful and visible place in society under an autocracy. But it also meant that, more than ever before, the theatre became and looked like a microcosm of the social stratification of Roman

society generally. Perhaps Nero, Pliny's *scaenicus imperator*[50] ('theatrical emperor'), was not quite as stupid as some maintain, if his doomed and politically unrealistic agenda really was 'to unite patricians and plebs through poetry'.[51] Some later emperors, such as Commodus and Elagabalus, also took to the stage. But the main point surely – and it is the main point of this chapter – is that at the theatre all these constituent elements of Roman society, however diverse in all other respects, were both present and watching the same play. What might they be watching?

Virgil and the theatre

Virgil provides what is perhaps the clearest example of the close link between Roman upper-class writers and popular culture. He had an intimate connection with the Roman theatre, although we do not know how far he actively organised that. But he must have at least expected and anticipated it. Suetonius tells us that Virgil's *Bucolics* were often performed in the theatre by singers (*cantores*).[52] Tacitus tells us that Virgil was actually present at a performance of his work in a theatre, and was wildly applauded 'as if he was Augustus'.[53] Servius tells us that a woman called Cytheris, a *meretrix* (literally, a 'courtesan', but also an actress, or in some Roman and more modern eyes both[54]) would sing (*cantasset*) Virgil's work in the theatre after Virgil himself had given a *recitatio* (*recitata*).[55] Cytheris was something of a celebrity in her own right. Her other name was Volumnia, and she was at various times the mistress of Brutus, Mark Antony and possibly Cornelius Gallus, who may have directed his love poems to her. Cicero found himself dining with her at the house of a certain knight, Volumnius, somewhat to his discomfort, perhaps because she occupied a privileged position sitting (or rather, reclining) next to the host. 'I assure you I had no idea *that woman* would be there', he sniffed.[56] She could evidently also sing well and bring Virgil to life on stage.[57]

It would be fascinating to know the artistic or professional relationship between Virgil and Volumnia Cytheris, but we do not. The evidence does however show that Virgil, in today's common perception a writer of books of pastoral poems and a written epic, the *Aeneid*, not only gave readings of his works to assembled audiences but was to the Romans also (or mainly?) a theatrical text for sung performance to music in the popular theatre. His epic was also material for dance. Nero said that he would dance the part of Turnus, the Aeneid's warrior anti-hero, on stage,[58] suggesting that there was a pantomime (in the Roman sense) version of at least part of the *Aeneid*, and there is evidence that Book 4 of the *Aeneid* (about Dido and Aeneas) was adapted into both ballet (Roman style) and so-called *tragoedia cantata*, a sort of tragic opera.[59] Much later, Augustine complains that most people know Virgil, not from his books but from the theatre (*pauci in libris, multi in theatris*).[60] We have now lost that entire

performative aspect of Virgil, both sung and danced. But overall, it is quite possible that the main experience of Virgil for the average Roman throughout the Roman Empire was through the theatre, and not as a book – except perhaps, for the better-off minority able to afford an education for their (male) offspring, in the schoolroom, where Virgil quickly became a standard text. Virgil's *Aeneid* becomes

> 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 [including] full membership in Latin culture, the culture embodied by the language.[61]

Nor is Virgil alone in this. Ovid tells us that his poems were performed in the theatre, and not just performed, but danced.[62] Unfortunately he does not tell us which poems.[63] He did however compose a tragedy *Medea*, but we do not know whether it was ever actually staged, or whether it was just a 'closet drama'. The play was praised by Tacitus and by Quintilian[64] – but is now lost except for two fragments. Ovid seems to have drawn much material from the theatre for his *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*.[65] The theatricality of Virgil and Ovid may also remind us of the time that Aulus Gellius witnessed a stage performance of Book 7 of Ennius' historical epic poem *Annales* in the theatre at Puteoli, performed by a 'not uneducated' man in a 'knowledgeable and song-like voice' to thunderous applause.[66] Ennius of course was a famous playwright, author of 20 or so plays. But the point here is that it was his epic poem that was, like Virgil's, being performed by a skilled stage artist. The poet Statius himself read his own epic poem the *Thebaid* to large audiences, presumably in theatres, and read his epic *Achilleid* in Domitian's new theatre, the Odeon. Juvenal refers to Statius' 'pleasing voice' which the crowd are eager to hear. The Odeon in Rome was a roofed structure, holding perhaps 5,000 to 7,000 people, and part of Domitian's two-edged patronage of – or imperial control of – the arts. Domitian also founded the Capitoline Games at which poets, among others, performed their works on stage. Statius, son of a famous poet-father, having carried off the first prize for poetry at the Alban Games of 90 CE, was disappointed not to win at the Capitoline Games (probably) later that same year. Juvenal remarks that 'he broke the benches with his voice'. Statius read to friends and family, in the recitations halls, at the competitions, before senators, to the emperor's family – a truly performative context for his works.[67]

Virgil, Ovid, Ennius and Statius as authors of scripts for performance or dance or song in the theatre surely give pause for thought about what the Roman theatre was about, and how it 'acted' in Roman cultural affairs. Catullus gives a further pause for thought. Did the famous poet of love elegies go on to become in later life a famous writer of mimes for the stage? Someone called Catullus certainly did write story boards for mimes,

notably one called *Phasma* (The Ghost) and another famous mime called *Laureolus*, about a notorious bandit.[68] A scholiast tells us that this Catullus was a mime writer[69] but does not say that he was the same man as the poet: neither does he say that he was not the same man. Wiseman maintains[70] that the two Catulli were one and the same. Fantham in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* remarks cautiously that this cannot be proved.[71] Or of course disproved. I agree with Wiseman that the general context of the Roman theatre makes the identity at least plausible. Let us now look in more detail at that context, for the three branches of the Roman theatre that held the stage from late republican times to the end of our period of investigation.

Tragedy

A conventional view is that expressed by H.M. Currie, who argues[72] that 'after Accius,[73] tragedy seems no longer to have been written at Rome except as an amusement by noble dilettanti'. In part, this is a barely disguised political statement. The Roman Republic (a good thing) nurtured great plays on serious themes: the Roman Empire (a bad thing) produced dilettanti with nothing better to do than amuse themselves. Anyway, the statement is not strictly accurate. It is true that Augustus himself had a go at writing a play, *Ajax*, as did his adoptive father Julius Caesar, a play called *Oedipus*, and that Augustus suppressed both efforts, no doubt wisely. As we have seen, Ovid wrote a tragedy, *Medea*, but we cannot be certain whether it was performed or not. But there are at least two cases where we know that a new tragedy was both written and performed in imperial times. One was the *Thyestes* written by Varius Rufus and performed in 29 BCE (so at the very beginning of the imperial era) at the festival to celebrate Augustus' final victory at the battle of Actium.[74] Varius got a million sesterces from Augustus for his play, and it was praised by both Tacitus and Quintilian.[75] He also wrote a long poem on death, and was one of the two men who prepared Virgil's *Aeneid* for public distribution after Virgil's death. His was not dilettante stuff.

The second and in some ways more interesting case is that of Publius Pomponius Secundus, who was consul in 44 CE and legate of Upper Germany at a time of hectic border warfare. He also wrote, among other efforts, a history play (*praetexta*) entitled *Aeneas*. The elder Pliny refers to him as 'the consular poet'[76], and the younger Pliny calls him a *scriptor tragoediarum* (a 'writer of tragedies') who, when criticised, said 'I appeal to the people' (*ad populum provoco*).[77] How much he 'appealed' to the people may be arguable.[78] The reason that we know that his plays were actually performed in the theatre is that the emperor Claudius reacted angrily when in 47 CE Pomponius' lines were booed and hissed at during a performance.[79] So here we have at least two cases of pukka aristocrats who also wrote plays and had them performed in the theatre. If they were

performed, then why not others? Why not, for example, his contemporary Seneca, with whom he famously had a dispute about word usage? Quintilian says that Pomponius was 'by far the greatest of the poets he had personally seen' – presumably performed on the stage, so Quintilian did go to the theatre.[80]

The case of Seneca

Seneca's eight tragedies (eight if you exclude the doubtful *Hercules* and *Octavia*[81]) are the only Roman tragedies whose texts have survived in full. As a result, Seneca's theatrical texts have been picked over in minute detail, in part to try to establish from internal evidence whether or not they were ever actually staged, or whether they were written for, say, private declamation by the author at a *recitatio* (or similar). The full argument cannot be rehearsed here. For long it was conventional to conclude that they were not, and were not meant to be, staged.[82] But recently opinion has swung the other way. After all, Seneca's plays have in fact often been performed, for example in the French, English and Italian theatres of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There were performances in the twentieth-century theatre as well, if infrequently.[83] Also, the idea of private declamation at a *recitatio* runs head on into the problem that proper presentation of the plays typically requires three or four different speaking voices for the separate parts. At the minimum, Seneca's plays seem to require theatre-like presentation, if not actually in a theatre.[84] But in my judgement, if Pomponius was performed in the theatre, as we know for sure that he was, why not his contemporary Seneca?

There are two other cases where we know that a tragedy was both written and performed, both from the earlier years of our period. One author was Atilius, whose *Electra* was performed at Caesar's funeral games. The other was Cornelius Balbus, whose history play called *The Journey* was performed at Gades (i.e. not in Rome itself) in 43 BCE. Balbus later paid for, and bestowed his name upon, Rome's second permanent theatre, to mark his military triumph in Spain. We also know the names of over a dozen other people who wrote tragedies or history plays during our period. One of them was Asinius Pollio, whose tragedies were praised by Virgil and Horace.[85] Another was Cassius, one of the assassins of Julius Caesar. Later there was Persius, author of the satires.[86] But such is the poor state of the evidence that we do not know whether any of their work was actually staged. It must be a presumption either way. Some of the dozen are mere names.[87] Some are more than that. Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus was impelled to suicide by the emperor Tiberius because of what he was alleged to have implied about the emperor in his tragedy *Atreus*. Tiberius remarked grimly 'I will make him Ajax' (in Homer, Ajax kills himself after a bout of madness) and enforced the suicide: a lethal literary

game.[88] Sempronius Gracchus, from an old aristocratic family, also killed by Tiberius,[89] wrote tragedies.

Also much more than a mere name was M. Curiatius Maternus, who figures largely in the *Dialogue on Orators*, attributed to Tacitus. Maternus wrote at least two plays, tragedies entitled *Medea* (again) and *Thyestes* (again), and figures in the *Dialogue* as someone whose writings had caused offence in court circles (Vespasian was emperor at the time) but who refused to change his words to avoid the offence. We do not know if his plays were ever actually performed on the stage – in the circumstances, it seems unlikely. But the evidence does seem to show that tragedies were still being written at least up to the end of the first century CE, and that at least some of them reached the stage, or were at least read out at a *recitatio*, on themes that were common to both books, stage and (as we shall see) pantomime. Dupont, noting that 'pantomime is the imperial tragedy', remarks that

> it is difficult for us today to judge how far an imperial tragedy was in fact a text for a pantomime.[90]

Mime and pantomime writers

The evidence for participation by author/writers in the composition of mime and pantomime events is thinner than that for 'serious' plays. We have no surviving Latin texts or libretti for either. But the evidence is there.[91] At the time of Sulla, a certain Gnaius Matius, a 'learned man' according to Gellius,[92] wrote mimes on the Alexandrian model, but not certainly for the theatre as opposed to private performance. There was the Catullus, already discussed, who composed mimes, at least a name even if not the same man as the poet. At about the same period (mid-first century BCE) we have two names of famous mime writers, Laberius, who was a knight, and Publilius Syrus, a freedman from Syria.[93] Laberius was especially famous for being forced by Julius Caesar actually to act one of his mimes on stage. Writing for the stage was OK, but acting on stage was a different matter. Mime actors were in the main slaves or freedman, and by acting on stage Laberius would lose his rank as a knight. But he got the better of Caesar (and his status and money back as a knight) by his pointed delivery of some of his own lines. 'On, citizens! We lose our liberty!', he declaimed, dressed as a Syrian slave, and was met with such wild applause that he had to repeat the lines. Laberius was among those dramatists recommended by Fronto to the emperor Marcus Aurelius as worthy of study, alongside great names like Plautus, Ennius, Accius. Neither a passive audience, nor a bawdy mime, one may guess.[94]

The elder Seneca speaks of a certain Silo, son of an Augustan-age poet, who wrote for the pantomime stage, thus 'profaning rather than neglecting his great talent' – a real put-down.[95] Later, there was the case of the

younger Helvidius Priscus, put to death by Domitian for the criticism of the emperor that could be inferred in an *exodium* that Priscus had composed for the stage. The *exodium* was a short piece performed after the main play, perhaps a mime.[96] Even Pliny, despite his superior attitude to the theatre, tells us of a friend Vergilius Romanus who wrote comedy dramas – but read them to a small audience. Pliny however praises his *mimiambos*, just as he praises the mimiambs (but using the equivalent Greek word) of an ex-consul Arrius Antoninus.[97] What these were, we cannot be certain. But in the mid-third century BCE Herodas had written Greek mimiambs, which survive, and the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* remarks that 'the onus of proof falls on those who deny that some at least were acted by a small troupe of players'.[98] So these Roman 'iambic mimes' were probably mimes of some sort, but perhaps literary imitations rather than playable.

For the pantomime, we know that the prolific poet Lucan, Seneca's nephew, (39-65 CE) wrote libretti (*fabulae salticae*) for the pantomime stage – no fewer than 14 of them.[99] Indeed, Lucan's contribution to public performance is very striking. In addition to writing his pantomimes, Lucan performed a panegyric of Nero on the stage at the new Neronian games of 60 CE – not just before the Senate, as Pliny did for Trajan. He gave a *recitatio*, or maybe more than one, of his great poem on the civil war between Pompey and Caesar.[100] The 'orality' of Lucan makes it less surprising that the poet Statius also wrote a libretto entitled *Agave* for the pantomime dancer Paris to perform on stage, although we do not know whether or not it was actually performed. Juvenal says that the sale of this libretto to Paris saved Statius from starving, since Statius' own popular readings earned him nothing. Paris was later executed by Domitian in 83 CE.[101]

But what is most striking about the Roman pantomime is the continuity of theme and subject between the 'serious' Roman plays (tragedy and history plays) and the dance theatre of imperial times. Lucian of Samosata gives us our only detailed glimpse of the world of Roman dance in his informative essay *On the Dance*, written in the later second century CE and cast in the form of a dialogue between a Cynic philosopher Crato, who regards stage dance as 'unworthy and effeminate' (much like many other Roman and recent observers), and a champion of dance, Lycinus.[102] In refutation of Crato, Lycinus first enumerates the technical skills of the good dancer, his 'silent language'. He then remarks that 'the themes of tragedy and the dance are common to both'. He then lists the many stories and themes that a good dancer has to know in order to apply his skills on stage.[103] It is like a roll-call of all the great themes and scenes of Greek and Roman mythology and mythical history, the common coinage of Roman poetry and theatre. Lucian actually enumerates something over 150 different themes, ranging from Prometheus to Oedipus to Aeneas, summing it up as 'everything told by Homer and Hesiod and the best poets, and

above all by tragedy'. A huge repertoire. Lucian's list is backed up by an inscription found at Tivoli dating to the late second century CE.[104] This lists the parts played, or danced, by a pantomime dancer, Aurelius Apolaustus Memphius, in competitions. These are *Heracles, Orestes, Tympanistae, Trojan Women, Bacchae, Hippolytus* – classic themes, and nearly all adaptations of the great Greek playwright Euripides.

You do not need to be a dance aficionado to see from these lists the tight thematic continuity between Roman poetry and tragedy and stage dance. Despite Lucian, we cannot exactly recapture what the Roman dance theatre was like, or why exactly it became so popular. But rather than sneer at it as 'degenerate' or 'effeminate', we must surely accept that, just as for most people the main experience of Virgil was through the theatre, so too for most people the main experience of Greek and Roman mythology and popular history during this period was through the skills of the (dance) theatre. Horsfall remarks that:

> pantomime clearly contained far less text than traditional tragedy and comedy, but that reduction entailed no corresponding loss of the ability to arouse (and to satisfy) strong collective emotional reactions or to take root as strongly as the old plays had done in the social memory … The popularity of the genre lasted half a millennium … that entailed the mass diffusion of the mythological stories retold and the general memorisation … of the songs.[105]

The common heritage

The three permanent imperial theatres at Rome had a seating capacity, between them, of about 48,000 at a time – on the one hand, a huge number, on the other hand, small compared to the suggested one-million or so population of the city.[106] But there were many theatre days in the Roman calendar, and theatres in the other towns of Italy, as well as private theatrical performances and street players. Theatre was everywhere, and most could experience it somewhere.[107] It was the theatre in all its aspects that most obviously and efficiently expressed the common cultural heritage of Rome, the heritage of stories and dramas that was the feedstock for both 'books' for the highly literate elite and the pleasures of the less literate but far from uncritical mass of the population.[108] This is not to suppose that all the books of the literate elite necessarily ended up (also) on the stage. For poetry and epics, whether Greek or Latin, the transition is easy enough to envisage. For history works, like those of Tacitus, or reference works like the elder Pliny's *Natural History*, it is hard to envisage.[109] Basically, we just do not know how far the *recitationes* of history works, that are so well attested, may have extended to larger gatherings. Some works were intended for and consumed by the elite alone, but many others were not, or not necessarily.

This is consistent with arguing that it was the theatre above any other

Roman institution or practice that created a sort of base-level equality between people and created a common cultural vocabulary.[110] The paradox therefore is that a Roman literary composition was or could be at the same time a private entertainment for elite gatherings at a *recitatio* or dinner-party, and (at least potentially) the equivalent of a draft film-script to appeal to the general public – not unlike many a modern novel. Writing two centuries after our period of interest, and at Antioch, Libanius wrote:[111]

> While the race of tragic poets was flourishing, they came into theatres as universal teachers for the people. But when they were extinguished, some god, taking pity on the illiteracy of the ordinary people, brought on dancing as a substitute kind of instruction for the masses about deeds of old; and now the goldsmith will keep up a decent conversation with the product of the schools about the house of Priam or Laius.

Exactly. They had all been 'watching the same play'.

15

A unitary culture: elite self-definition and *Romanitas* for all

At the end of this investigation, we arrive at a paradox that takes the Roman 'book' to the heart of Roman society and culture. Because the Roman book was both a written object and an oral object, the product of a society which was both heavily dependent on the use of writing and an oral society in which the spoken word reigned supreme, the Roman 'book' came to be both a marker *sans pareil* of upper-class status and self-justification as rulers of an empire and (if indirectly) a key player in the common culture of shared stories and implied values that helped to underpin the empire and to define what 'being Roman' meant. Rome was an empire in which the use of writing was widespread for multiple practical purposes in administration, in the military, in religious affairs, in correspondence, as well as in literary activity and teaching. The empire could not have functioned without writing. The written word affected practically everyone, whether or not they were literate, as taxpayer, as participator in religious or civic ceremony, as reader of wall graffiti or of official notices posted up in the forum. Literary composition itself was an interactive process between the written and the spoken.

On the other hand, that use of writing developed within a predominantly oral and aural/visual society in which the book was not the end-product of a literary endeavour, as in modern society, but an aide-memoire of an oral event, a quasi music score from which future oral events could be generated, future readings or other performances using the human voice both at gatherings and when alone. In these respects, the written text as committed to papyrus scroll was little more than an enabling device, like the pen it was written with. Of course these Roman texts could also be read silently to oneself, as today, like a modern book, and that was simply another facet of their great flexibility in use – and of the Roman reluctance to abandon their traditional scroll format that served them so well. Since the loss of the oral and performative aspects of Latin literature, the surviving texts have enjoyed that other after-life as supple readable printed codex books. But in their own time, the dialogue between the spoken and the written was profoundly different from today, with the priorities reversed. This creative duality between voice and text meant that a Roman writer was at almost all times aware of the need to be spoken and heard rather than, or as well as, written and read, and

therein, I have argued, lies the unique and enduring character of Latin literature – its inherent adaptability dating back to its multi-mode origins.

The various similes and analogies used to explain the orality of the typical Roman book – as music score, as *aide memoire* – are useful insofar as they shake us out of the idea of the written text as a 'book' which is the definitive objective of the creative exercise. But they are nonetheless similes. Better to recognise that the written texts handed out by *editio* after a *recitatio* served a wide variety of functions, some illuminated, some obscured by those seductive analogies. Those functions included:

– written text as script for private *recitatio*
– written text as tribute or gift to patron and/or dedicatee, in the context of Roman social bonds of *amicitia*
– written text as gift to friends and peer-groups, perhaps reciprocal
– written text to accompany gifts
– written text as prestige object, as work of art, as cultural icon, if well copied and 'bound'
– written text as self-advertisement
– written text as meal-ticket (finding a patron)
– written text as entry ticket to and membership ticket of the elite
– written text as entry-ticket to adulthood
– written text as after-dinner entertainment
– written text as walking companion
– written text as tool of education
– written text as *monumentum* to the writer's life and work
– written text as basis for theatrical performance and dance
– written text as entry in a public theatrical poetry competition
– written text as sent to libraries (if and when they were)
– written text as vehicle for repeat renderings by professional readers
– written text as vehicle for repeat renderings by later generations
– written text as collector's item, e.g. by Aulus Gellius and friends
– written text for private reading, aloud to oneself or silently to oneself.

Some of these functions are familiar from today's book. Some are not. Most, but not all, involved or relied upon the human voice. The mix is very Roman.

The first term of the paradox – the book as social glue of the upper-class

For the class of the elite, command of both writing and the 'orality' of oratorical education and practice were aspects of their political power and social authority, and a means for securing and maintaining them. As a physical object, the Roman book, the papyrus scroll, came to embody and symbolise the elite aspect of Roman literary activity. In its better exam-

ples it was a prestige artefact or art object, with finely painted knobs on the end of each of the two rods onto which the sweetly scented papyrus was rolled, kept in elegant cylindrical purple leather covers with colourful title-labels in leather book boxes**,** with the text presented in such a way – as crafted pages with an calligraphically elegant river of letters written out in neat left- and right-justified blocks – that deliberately ensured that only highly trained people, the rich, the powerful and their agents could make use of it.

Publication by means of a *recitatio* to which only members of that same urban elite were invited, the low rate of literacy (contrary to what it is still a common presumption that all Romans could read), the rejection or neglect of lexical aids to reading such as punctuation, and the long-lasting Roman presumption that the scroll format was superior to the codex format as a prestige vehicle for texts – all these were aspects of an elite minority activity that could afford to buy, train and use slaves to be the 'enabling infrastructure' of literary pastimes. There was no incentive to simplify reading by developing methods of text presentation that made the job of the reader easier. On the contrary, by reserving the complex art of reading either to an educated elite who could afford the arduous training, or to the professional slave readers that only such rich people could afford to employ, or to professional teacher/grammarians who also had a vested interest in keeping reading a difficult art, it confirmed reading and the texts which supported reading as a status symbol signifying social prestige or at least social aspiration. It also confirmed the *recitatio* as the central event in the life of most types of Roman literature, as the real 'act of publication', rather than its subsequent distribution (as far as there was one) on papyrus scroll copies.

The low rate of literacy was itself a social and cultural construction or *de facto* political decision. The Romans knew full well what literacy was, and knew how to teach it, and could, had they wished, have taken steps to promote it much more widely. But they did not (as far as we know), and one is forced to the conclusion that limited literacy – literacy confined to certain sections of society, defined by wealth, class and military service – suited the rulers of Rome and chimed in with their top-down model of society. The point about literacy rates is not so much the exact calculation thereof, as the use to which literacy was put – or not put. Literacy is 'a culturally determined variable'.[1] Roman books were perhaps not so very different from medieval books in the era before printing, possibly all books up to the nineteenth century, that long period when heavy leather-bound tomes in the library were the hallmark of an upper-class gentleman and aristocrat, or at least a learned cleric.[2] But it was a world and time away from today's mass-production of the democratised book.

It is this prestige status that largely explains why the Romans maintained for so long the format of the scroll, or book roll, in preference to the ultimately successful codex format, and why they discarded spaces be-

tween word and retained texts as river-of-letters without any system of punctuation, in the Greek manner. It was all part of keeping the book as a specialist upper-class possession, to be mastered only by the few. 'Reading a literary text was hard work and meant to be so'.[3] The prestige of the physical object lay precisely (as prestige so often does) in its non-practical aspects, sanctioned more by tradition and social and cultural associations than by functionality. It was not merely the force of tradition that caused the Romans for so long to postpone the general use of the codex format of the book, with which they were quite familiar. It was a deliberate retention of a more difficult physical format in order to maintain the elitist position of writing and reading, and the social differentiation of those who could master both the physical medium (the scroll or book roll) and the undifferentiated letters written on it.

In other words, it was not merely the (negative) absence of certain modern motivations that caused this lack of interest in making texts easier to read, but a (positive) desire to maintain the elite upper-class status of writing and reading skills, and their intimate link with the traditional Roman upper-class educational system that revolved so insistently around oratorical and oral skills to which written texts were an adjunct. Saenger says that:

> for the literate, the reaction to the difficulties of lexical access arising from *scriptura continua* did not spark the desire to make script easier to decipher, but resulted instead in the delegation of much of the labour of reading and writing to skilled slaves, who acted as professional readers and scribes. It is in the context of a society with an abundant supply of cheap, intellectually skilled labour that ancient attitudes towards reading must be comprehended.[4]

If the Romans had wanted an easy-to-use book format – say, for use as a place to store and retrieve information – they would surely have instituted one, probably in the codex format with which they were familiar, and with at least breaks between words, with which they had been familiar but which they discarded, with apparent perversity. But they did not want ease of use, still less (apparently) ease of reference. To the contrary, it was a mark of the accomplishment of the elite individual that he (or she?) could master this non-user-friendly object – and/or could afford to pay someone else to do so for him/her. Roman literature was anyway written in such a way – learned, allusive, constant cross-reference to other literary compositions, obscure synonyms – as to exclude from its readership many of those who might otherwise, being adequately literate, have read it. Woolf describes how Roman literary modes acted as markers of cultural distance and refers to

> the capacity of Latin literature to induce a sense of cultural alienation, to induce in its readers a sense of a community divided by hierarchies of

> cultural competence … Latin literature was written in such a way as to … culturally disenfranchise most of those whom literacy might be thought to have empowered.[5]

The *recitatio* itself was part of that process of social bonding that knitted upper-class society together in Rome, part of that daily process by which the elite of the empire both created and fulfilled obligations towards each other, judged each other, competed with each other, and elaborated a common culture whatever and wherever their original place of birth and even whatever their status at birth.[6] It is not that upper-class Rome can be defined solely as a 'textual community' – it was a community of wealth, of power, of status, of ancestry, and much else. But its aspect as 'textual community' is a way of trying to understand the social and ultimately political role of books and publishing at Rome. Rome may have been a big city by the standards of the ancient world, and indeed by the standards of Europe right down to the mid-nineteenth century. But its upper social reaches were small, where everyone knew everyone else, and where many activities, including the sharing of new works of poetry and prose, were part of that social glue that held the upper-class together, and were indeed part of the self-definition of the upper-class as a whole and of individuals within it.

In this context, the *recitatio* could also be some sort of rite of passage into that elite, as described for example by Pliny in his letter[7] about the debut *recitatio* given by the young Calpurnius Piso of that ancient family. It is only in the small, hot-house world of upper-class Rome that the events and practices surrounding authorship of, and audiences for, books make sense. Pliny's letters give a vivid picture of how these men at the top level of Roman society – aristocrats, generals, professional lawyers, businessmen and civil servants of substantial means – attended each other's literary soirees, whether out of interest or social obligation or both, worried about what reactions they might get to their new oeuvre from their social peer-group – for the *recitatio* was, in essence, a system of 'peer group review' – and worried about whether or when to take the fatal last step (fatal, because irrevocable) of sending out some copies of the finished article to friends and dedicatees, for copying.

There has been a supposition among some critics that the world of reciprocal literary give-and-take portrayed by Pliny in his *Letters* is not only idealised, but also a sign of the decreasing political significance and increasing leisure of the Roman upper class as the imperial bureaucracy increasingly took over the business of government. But upper-class literary activity had set in well before the Principate was institutionalised, and it is the continuity between Republic and Principate that is most evident in this, as in many other respects. 'Publication', Roman-style, became more formalised through the *recitatio* of the imperial era, but there was no fundamental shift in the incorporation of literature into the habits of the Roman elite. Woolf however suggests that:

> we should be cautious before concluding that literary activity played a central part in the self-definition of the Roman imperial aristocracy … Literature always had to compete with other potential markers and activities of the Roman leisure class.[8]

But properly interpreted, literary activity did play just such a role, perhaps not exactly of class self-definition, but of class self-justification.[9] That did not mean that all upper-class Romans necessarily 'did literature' or that those who did, did it all the time. Their tastes might (also) be for hunting, feasting, politics, art collection, poetry or prose, philosophy, money-lending, estate management, or any combination. Their power rested on ownership of land, capital and slaves, on control of the military and of the processes of government. Philosopher-kings the Romans were not. But poetry and prose were at least part of the 'Zeitgeist'. While satirical, the story of Trimalchio's dinner in Petronius' *Satyricon*[10] illustrates the role of literature as an important (but not sole) signifier of class aspiration.

In the middle of the gargantuan feast that Trimalchio lays on for his guests, at which the carving of the meat is done to music, Trimalchio boasts that he has two libraries, one Latin, one Greek, in the aristocratic manner, then calls for a notebook (*codicillos*) and composes on the spot an epigram in bad verse – all this in between entertainments by acrobats, actors and trumpeters. Everything is gross and tasteless, because grossly overdone, and so satirical. But to be satirical, it must have held up a mirror to some reality.

> Language was crucial as one of the primary means of self-evaluation, external validation, and commentary. It was properly the sphere of the language professional, the grammarian: but the basis of his influence lay in the wide acceptance of his premises and their usefulness in determining social status and social integration.[11]

Thus the Roman book was intimately bound up with the image-making of the upper classes and rulers of the Roman world, with their self-justification (at least to themselves) for being the rulers in the first place. The mixed and integrated use of the written and the oral that we have described in this investigation enabled these top persons, and their sons, to study and absorb (to one degree or other) the classics of Greek and Latin poetry and philosophy so as to attain, or to aspire to attain in their own eyes, that degree of mastery of self which was both the Roman humanist ideal of 'autonomy' and defined those who attained this mastery as the natural and rightful rulers of the empire, at least in their own eyes and to their own satisfaction. Much like the rulers of, say, the former British Empire, the Roman upper class needed some idealised self-image behind which to shelter and mask the harsher realities of power, and study of oratory and literature (insofar as these two were different) provided that – just the same function that (perhaps ironically) study of this same Latin

and Greek literature performed for the British Empire's proconsuls and their staff.[12]

Study of the literary canon was part and parcel of the oratorical training beloved of the Romans, who saw oratory as not just a talent for public speaking, but as a rounded education that distinguished the civilised man from the barbarian – and by extension, the elite from the commons, the rulers from the ruled. This type of intensive and possibly life-long study was only open to the elite and the rich, and their sons, and so appeared to justify the tight nexus that existed at Rome (as elsewhere in many eras) between culture, wealth and power. This was also a situation which conferred a degree of power upon the writer himself.

> Within the pyramidal structure of Roman society, the writer himself had power, and his words and texts became part of the circulation of favour and power that defined the operation of upper-class Roman society. Martial … was hugely aware … of his own place in Flavian Rome's gift exchange culture. [Literary activity] was an area where power was negotiated.[13]

The power of the writer was therefore exercised within, and circumscribed by, that important aspect of Roman society, the system of *clientela* and *amicitia* that governed relations between unequals in the upper reaches of the city and the empire. Poetry, unlike history, was not, or not so often, what very top people did.[14] The poets, while certainly not from garrets where they starved – they must have had an expensive education to get that far, and many were men of property, maybe knights (*equites*) in their own right[15] – tended nevertheless to attach themselves to the households or retinues of top persons. They were ornaments to these grander households, able by their talent to improve the leisure time of such grandees, and the grandees in turn were supposed to promote and reward the reputations of their chosen ornaments. This was all part of the social system of *amicitia* that bound one to the other (and not only poets, of course, but many diverse people in the *clientela* of the grandee) in a web of mutual if asymmetrical obligation.[16] Thus literature was not simply part of the self-definition/self-justification of the elite, but (at least as importantly) a contributory part of that system of two-way obligations among unequals that was the warp and weft of the Roman social structure and power relations. This again found its expression in satire. In Lucian of Samosata's second-century skit *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses*, the poor intellectual co-opted into the house of a rich man finds himself in the company of 'ignorant and petty-minded athletics trainers and parasites', at the mercy of snotty door-keepers and butlers, doled out a mere pittance and relegated to a table in the far corner at the end of the food queue when his amusement value runs out. Once again, for the skit to have force, this situation must have been familiar over much of the empire (Lucian was a Syrian writing in Greek).

Given the place of writing and writers in this 'gift-exchange culture', it is not surprising that the central political authority, the emperor himself, the patron of first resort, became involved in literature. What became evident under the early Principate was how the princeps in many cases not only 'did literature' but actively saw himself, for better or worse, as a patron (and so also censor and controller) of literature. Thus literature and practical politics became further intertwined, and the political role of books emanated from the very power centre of Roman society.

A remarkable if not often remarked-upon aspect of the Roman Principate was how many emperors indulged in literary pursuits, either before they came to supreme power, or even while in power. Julius Caesar wrote at least one tragedy, Augustus composed verses, Nero performed on stage, Claudius wrote learned works and delivered them to audiences,[17] Titus wrote poems, as did Domitian. Hadrian wrote things, and Marcus Aurelius pursued literary studies with Cornelius Fronto.[18] Gibbon tells us that in the later empire the younger Gordian was a writer, and had 22 acknowledged concubines and a library of 62,000 volumes. Gibbon, being Gibbon, remarks 'the former as well as the latter were designed for use'.[19] The emperor Julian, known as 'the Apostate' (who died in 363 CE) wrote several books as well as numerous letters later issued as a collection.

The close identity of emperors and literature, imperial patronage and imperial self-justification, is the main reason why, in that hot-house atmosphere of upper-class Rome, history-writers in particular were, or felt they were, in danger of banishment or worse. History writers, unlike poets, tended to be men who had themselves taken part in politics or government. The writing of their personal memoirs merged into the writing up of great events in which they had participated or had witnessed, which merged in turn into accounts of the deeds of their forebears or ancestors. History writing was contemporary affairs by another name, and by the same top persons. Writing history was no mere academic exercise but often a metaphor for contemporary political discourse – and therefore sometimes very dangerous. Against that background, it was thoroughly justifiable for Pliny to see the *recitatio* in a political context, as a sign and symbol of the new, or hoped-for, freedom of speech for the aristocracy under the new emperor Trajan. How literature was written was both a commentary on, and an extension of, contemporary politics. Thus books and power met at the centre of the empire.

The second term of the paradox – *vox populi* and *Romanitas*

Some have supposed that Roman authors, out of mutual self-interest, in effect entered into a tacit but conscious conspiracy with Rome's elite to retain the book as an elite preserve by emphasising its performative (i.e. oral) aspect, when 'commodification' of the book through the 'literary

marketplace' might have created a 'liberating effect' for the 'potentially free reader of the widely circulated written text'.

> Written literature thus contributed powerfully to the amalgamation of Roman identity to subject status … of an imperial regime.[20]

The problem with this otherwise powerful argument is that there was no developed marketplace, no substantial book trade, no technology, no high rate of literacy through which written texts could have been 'commodified'. In the Roman context, the elite use of texts did not imply that there was any practical alternative. Some have therefore supposed, on the basis of this upper-class 'textual community' at Rome, that there were in effect two languages used at Rome, one an elite language, one a popular language.[21] This theory in turn implies that what we have is largely the surviving examples of the elite language in which literature was expressed, and that the popular language is lost and/or may or may not be recoverable. The French scholar Hervé Inglebert however argues against this two-level linguistic model. Instead, he argues in favour of a common language and culture which were however mastered in different ways by different groups. Thus there was, he suggests, a social and geographic (in the western empire) unity in the use of the Latin language, so that the fragmentation (or 'creolisation') into the dialects that were the forerunners of today's so-called romance languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, and of course modern Italian), did not occur until the seventh or even eighth centuries.[22] It will be evident that I agree with this unitary theory of language – and literature.

The systematic use of writing may have been a distinguishing feature of the elite. But the oral dimension of Latin literature meant, not that it was denied to the 'potentially free reader of a widely circulated written text', but that, on the contrary, it was part of a shared Roman oral culture that was experienced in different ways by different people of different social grades. What all Romans of whatever class had in common, whether in private or in public places, whether through theatre, street-corner storytelling by a *circulator*[23] or aristocratic post-prandial entertainment, was a common heritage and fund of references and stories. Inglebert remarks that:

> by the end of the Republic, one must distinguish, not between a popular culture and an elite culture, but between a public culture, oral and visual, for everyone, and a private, written culture for the elites (the Roman aristocrats and those in control of the cities). This aristocratic culture brought together the 'classics' studied at school, contemporary poetry, but also certain novels by and for the well-read and the eloquence used in government. It was based on the same references to mythology and history as the common culture, but its rules of style and hermeneutics were different, because literary, based on allusions to written works.[24]

Provided only that Inglebert's reference to aristocratic written culture and written works is taken to mean a culture and works in which the use of writing was the distinguishing element, his formulation works well. Orality was not a conspiratorial tool of social and political class division and suppression of readers' freedom – under an autocratic regime there were other tools for that – but provided a degree of commonality and cohesion across classes. Just because a Roman heard (for example) Virgil in the theatre rather than reading him, as we do, as a text in a book, it does not mean that his/her theatrical experience of (for example) Virgil was any less meaningful or legitimate than a private or communal reading-aloud. Each is an equally valid experience of, and participation in, literary life. It is or was a sort of snobbery, characteristic of certain generations of modern scholars, to suppose otherwise, projecting backwards their own social prejudices. Literary production involving writing may have been the preserve of the literate elite and its co-optees, and some elite literary productions, such as books on agricultural management or architecture, were presumably not designed for mass audiences. But to suppose that literature was therefore entirely an elite occupation is as crude a mistake as assuming (as many once did) that all Romans could read. The example of Virgil shows us that the situation at Rome was much subtler and more interesting than either simplification can allow for. Literature was both elite and shared, each in its own fashion.

Resolving the paradox

The pivotal paradox therefore is that books and book publication, in the Roman manner, were both elite-driven activities and derived from and actively contributed to a common culture that was an essential component of the unity and durability of a multi-cultural empire – only the military had a comparable, unifying force. It appears that a Roman author composed his material in the full knowledge and awareness that he was creating a set of words for multiple potential purposes – in modern terms, in a multi-media environment. Writing, like the slaves that did the writing (and attended the theatre) was an enabling technique for conveying the material from one application to another. It is modern society that has turned this material (not illegitimately, provided the process is recognised) into a set of 'books' which were 'published' so as to form Latin 'literature'.[25]

It was the sheer orality of Roman life that provided the context for the movement of styles and stories to and from and between elite and popular cultures. So on the one hand literature, Roman-style, infused with the use of writing, was an essential bonding mechanism for the Roman upper class. But at the same time the themes, stories and moralities that informed that literature spanned all classes and indeed all or most of the many ethnicities within the empire. Those themes and stories acted as a

'glue', a *glutinator* not only of the elite governing class of the Roman empire, but also of the commons of the empire – a widespread standard reference system for people of different origins and backgrounds.

The city of Rome itself was an entity with increasingly multi-cultural origins as immigrants arrived in the city, willingly or otherwise, but by these means it constructed a shared and pooled culture that emanated outwards, in ways which we can only dimly discern but included education and the theatre, to the other major cities of the empire. It was in the theatre that the shared set of references – to Greek and Roman mythology, to alleged Roman history, to a common fund of well-known plays and stock characters – was most evident. We do not know what proportion of the people who went to the Roman theatre or who attended the poetry competitions such as those instituted by the emperor Domitian, could actually read to the standard needed to read a complex literary text. Probably not a large proportion. But they could listen, and it is not correct to dismiss the Roman stage of the imperial period as just a sop to the plebs, full of animals, farces, obscene on-stage acts and whatever else of a 'degraded' nature. Who after all were the people who attended and cheered the public performances of the poet Statius? They appear to have understood his allegedly obscure references. There is therefore as much evidence of a continuum of literary culture, as of a sharp division between an elite and 'mob'. It was all part of a shared, common, oral culture.

But within that culture, under the increasing impact of Greek models, the upper class increasingly sought its own separate way of expressing that culture, by literary means that involved writing and written texts. Thus Roman literature and the ability to 'do literature' in the Roman manner early became a marker of upper-class status, an entrance test to the inner circles of the empire, and part of the definition of those who were entitled to rule. But at the same time the narratives adopted by that literature, and to which that literature contributed by 'trickle-down', were also the *lingua franca* or *koine* (common language) of both ruled and rulers, a marker for any individual (or crowd) of being in and part of the empire. I am tempted to suggest that this corpus of common stories and references persisted until it was largely replaced by that equally all-pervasive set of common stories and references drawn from the Bible and other Christian writings, as are to be found represented in, for example, the stained-glass windows of the great medieval cathedrals of Europe. Books at Rome may therefore be seen as both absolutist, for the few, and democratic, for the many, all at the same time. Today's world of mass media, particularly radio, television and the internet with their mass delivery of oral, aural and visual content, much of it deriving from written sources ('the book of the film', 'as serialised on TV') brings a startling sense of familiarity to the oral, aural and visual Rome of the theatre, the street-corner story-teller, the after-dinner entertainment narratives, and the love of music and song that seems to have permeated Roman society.

Perhaps, until quite recently, we in the so-called West, particularly in Great Britain and Europe but also in the USA, have been too prone to read back into Roman society the elitism of our own pre-1950 class-divided society, in yet another act of retrospective anachronism, rather than see the strikingly fluid nature of Rome's unique amalgam of the oral and the written, the specialist and the common, the aristocrat of letters and the artisans of speech and letters, whose unity lay, not in the shared ability to read and write (as in a modern Western society) but in the shared ability to enjoy the same stories embodying the same morality and same world view – in short, to talk to each other as well as live in the same cities, attend the same theatres, arenas and temples, and (sometimes) live in the same apartment blocks but on different and socially differentiated floors.[26]

But arguably it was that very physical proximity that drove the moneyed and leisured classes to employ writing, and therefore texts and Roman-style books, as one prime mode or 'social ritual' of differentiation from the humbler man-next-door/man-upstairs/man-in-the-outer reception room – and as a or the prime self-justification for being the rulers of the empire. The literate upper classes differentiated themselves from the so-called *plebs* by developing certain specific types of orality and by then associating these with, and enabling them by, the active use of writing – the one thing that was not available to the other, lower, illiterate or semi-literate classes of society. At the same time there was in the background a shared public culture, common to all classes and expressed in particular by the active contribution made by many writers of literary texts to that most public of all Roman cultural institutions, the theatre. What were common to Rome's elite and popular cultures were an all-pervasive and durable common fund of stories and references – and the power of the human voice. The sound of books merged with the sound of the people of the Roman empire.

Postscript(s)

Dio Chrysostom, the Man with the Golden Mouth, famous orator whose speeches have come down to us as part of Roman literature, was one of the philosophers exiled by the emperor Domitian, and was perhaps lucky it was not worse. He was later recalled by the emperor Trajan. One day, Trajan invited Dio to sit beside him in his triumphal chariot. As they rattled along, Trajan turned to Dio and said:

> I don't understand a word you say. Never mind, I love you as I love myself.

After his experience of Domitian, Dio may have been more relieved than offended by this gentle but firm put-down of the famous intellectual by the great soldier.

– anecdote told by Philostratus in *Lives of the Sophists* 1.488

> Hey, that's quite enough, little book. We've got to the rod at the end of the roll. The reader's complaining and faltering, and the copyist is saying it too 'hey, that's quite enough, little book'.
>
> – Martial 4.89

Appendix A

Roman shorthand: a note on Tiro

There is no proof that the Greeks devised a system of shorthand before Roman times, but the Romans certainly did use a system of shorthand.[1] It was a specialised skill employed by the specialist stenographers known as *notarii*. These stenographers were slaves or freedmen, some of whom took notes in the law courts and were alternatively called *actuarii*. It has been claimed since at least late antiquity that the inventor of the Roman system of shorthand was Cicero's secretary Tiro, whom Cicero freed in 53 BCE, and that is why the system was called *Tironianae notae* – 'Tiro's notes'. If true, this means that shorthand was one of the means for literary composition and part of the process of authoring. Shorthand was also widely used in imperial administration. By the later empire it became a fully organised system, with a mixture of both a syllabary (syllables substituted for complete words according to an understood convention) and conventional signs standing for one word or a set of words, according to context.

But did Tiro invent Roman shorthand? Some have doubted it. Alternatively, what exactly did he invent? The view that Roman shorthand does indeed date back to Ciceronian times itself goes back to – when and where else? – the Germany of the 1870s, specifically to a book by P.G. Mitzschke,[2] where Mitzschke concluded that 'we have to consider Tiro … its [shorthand's] inventor'. This view has often been repeated, for example in a recent German specialist work on the subject of Roman shorthand,[3] and as a passing comment in a more recent (2000) work on slavery in Rome.[4] But the connection between Tiro and Roman shorthand has been challenged. W.C. McDermott concluded that 'much erudition and paper have been wasted on the illusion that Tiro invented shorthand'.[5] R.A. Coles remarked that 'the connection of Tiro with Latin shorthand is perhaps a later tradition'.[6]

The reason for this doubt is that the surviving association of shorthand with Tiro goes back only as far as St Jerome (347-420 CE), who remarks that Tiro *primus notas commentus est*, which may reasonably be translated as 'Tiro was the first man to devise a system of shorthand'.[7] Writing even later, Isidore of Seville (*c.* 600-636 CE) says that Tiro's system only applied to prepositions, which (if true) must have limited its usefulness.[8] But Isidore adds that other people then elaborated on Tiro's beginnings.

McDermott however maintains that any such connection with Tiro is

false, since the only apparently solid bit of evidence for it – St Jerome and Isidore aside – is a statement by Plutarch[9] that a speech to the Senate delivered by M. Porcius Cato (demanding the death penalty for the Catiline conspirators) on 5 December 63 BCE was taken down in shorthand by a team of specially trained men sent into the Senate by Cicero. This could imply that there were trained shorthand writers by that date. But McDermott argues that Cicero himself contradicts this implication elsewhere, in his speech in defence of Sulla (not the dictator). There he says that he persuaded a group of senators to take down the statements made by some of the alleged conspirators brought before the Senate – learned men who could write fast i.e. not stenographers at all.[10] So Plutarch, allegedly, did not know what he was talking about.

I am not so sure about this argument. The first reference is a reference to the actual speech of Cato, the second to evidence being given by men on trial before the Senate. It was the same trial, but different parts of it. So both statements could be true. Moreover, Suetonius tells that the available version of a speech made by Julius Caesar was probably not written by himself but was probably taken from the notes made at the time by stenographers but was inaccurate because, in Augustus' view, they could not follow Julius' words properly.[11] So Suetonius is another who thought that shorthand was in use at this pre-imperial date, even if imperfectly.

Thereafter, for the imperial period, there seems to be little problem. Suetonius tells us that the emperor Titus himself used to write shorthand at great speed and for fun would compete with his secretaries.[12] Under the empire, references to shorthand and shorthand writers become relatively common. Quintilian refers to young men taking down his lectures *notando*, which could mean in some form of notes or shorthand, and Galen tells us that one of his talks on medical matters got into writing because he dictated it to a man *celeriter notis scribere exercitato* – a man well-used to writing swiftly in note-form or shorthand.[13]

Such skilled men even warranted an epigram to themselves penned by Martial.[14] Elsewhere Martial refers to a *notarius velox* – a speedy speed-writer.[15] Pliny tells us that his uncle used to dictate his voluminous notes to a *notarius*, without actually specifying shorthand – but it seems likely.[16] There is also the case of Xanthias, the slave stenographer whose charming epitaph was found at Cologne.[17] He was, says the inscription, 'skilled in abbreviating so many letters and words, he could transcribe with fluent pen what the fluent tongue had said.' In the fourth century, Ausonius actually wrote three poems about two *notarii*, one of whom, a certain Pergamus, was incompetent at the job, whereas the other is credited with an uncanny knack of anticipating his master's thoughts.[18] We may doubt whether all Roman stenographers were as good as that. But their existence has implications for those authors who, like Cicero or Pliny, 'published' after the event speeches that they had previously delivered in court or in the Senate. These 'published' versions are compositions rather

than transcripts. Cicero himself says that most speeches were committed to paper after, rather than before, delivery.[19]

Overall, it is reasonable supposition that the habit of upper-class Romans of dictating to slave-scribes must have impelled the development of some type of shorthand, so that this became a necessary skill in the entourage of a would-be writer/author, or of a busy emperor or senator, or a military officer. I see no good reason to discard the accepted wisdom that this skill was developed around the time of Cicero, perhaps building on beginnings made by Tiro, one of the non-vocal skills that could be wielded on the author's behalf by the servile *instrumentum vocale* (implement with a voice) on the author's (or aristocrat's) staff, and thus a virtually seamless extension of the author/owner's own set of compositional skills.

Appendix B

Poetic postures: *toto notus in orbe*?

Latin authors regularly claim to have a wide readership across the known world. Whether or not you choose to infer an empire-wide book trade may in part depend on whether you believe them – whether you think that literature itself was widely used and read across the Roman empire, thus perhaps implying an equally wide supply of, and access to, books. Kenney, for example, states that

> by the time of Pliny and Martial Latin literature was widely disseminated in the Western Empire[1]

and cites Sherwin-White's commentary on Pliny's letters as evidence for this.[2] Marshall usefully lists the main literary sources which are taken as evidence for widespread provincial readership (and so perhaps sales) of books.[3] This evidence is to be found, he says, in both Plinys, Martial, Horace, Ovid, and Sidonius. But that evidence is not very substantial.

The case of Sidonius is a vague (and late) reference that shows that Sidonius was not at all sure whether or not there was a bookshop in what is now Rheims (France), so hardly counts.[4] The younger Pliny's reference to a bookshop in what is now Lyon (again in France) is fine as far as it goes, but is not firm evidence for a widespread book trade.[5] The elder Pliny, in his *Natural History*, says that Varro put portraits of 700 famous people in a set of his books, so that 'he not only bestowed immortality [on them] but dispatched it all over the world'. Similarly Martial says that he is known 'all over the world'[6] and that his verses were read as far afield as what he calls 'Vienna' i.e. modern Vienne, south of Lyon.[7] This may or may not chime with Pliny's roughly contemporary reference to a possible bookshop in Lyon itself. But Martial does not say 'bookshop', and does add *si vera est fama* – 'if rumour is true'. He presumably wasn't sure.

Then there are the references in Horace and Ovid. Horace claims that 'Colchians, Dacians … and remote Geloni shall come to study me, [and] by glossing me Spaniards and drinkers of Rhone [wine] grow wise'.[8] His firmest statement comes in the *Ars Poetica*, where Horace says that his book 'earns the Sosii money, and crosses the ocean, winning fame for the author and ensuring a long survival'.[9] Ovid claims that 'whatever I say shall pass to the setting sun from its rising, and the East shall bear

witness to the West'. Elsewhere he says 'throughout the world I am read most of all'.[10] There was probably some substance to these claims. Equally, however, they can be taken as conventional poetic flourishes and pretensions. The frequent copycat references to being read all over the world are striking (Pliny, Martial, Ovid). Such claims are best taken as formulaic boasts dressed up in grandiose poetic language.[11] As far as they go, it is at least as likely that these references in all three poets are to people taking these books with them from Rome, say, on military or provincial government postings, or sending them to friends outside Rome, as to any other explanation.

Horace's reference to old books in Rome being left to the maggots or sent off in bundles to North Africa or Spain, is sometimes taken as a reference to an export trade.[12] But it could as easily be a trade in waste-paper, or rough paper for schools, or for recycling – who knows? In short, the literary evidence is too flimsy a base upon which to make claims for geographically widespread purchase of and easy access to literature.

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Notes

1. Myths and anachronisms

1. W. Berry, *Roman Handwriting* (Mellon Press, 2001), 2. He contrasts the Japanese character set, in which mastery of 5,000 characters is, he states, necessary for full command of the language.

2. The substantial existing corpus of literature on these subjects stretches as far back as the 1880s and goes forward to the present. The most notable works which wholly or partially deal with Roman book publishing are: Theodor Birt's *Das Antike Buchwesen* (1882), L. Friedlaender's *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire* (German editions 1888-1890, English tr. 1907-13), F.G. Kenyon's *Books and Readers in Ancient Rome and Greece* (1951), T.C. Skeat's article 'Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production' (1956), A.N. Sherwin-White's *The Letters of Pliny* (1966), J.P.V.D. Balsdon's *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (1969), T. Kleberg's *Buchhandel und Verlagswesen in der Antike* (1969), L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson's *Scribes and Scholars* (1974), O.A.W. Dilke's *Roman Books and their Impact* (1977), R.J. Starr's article 'The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World' (1987), H. Blanck's *Das Buch in der Antike* (1992), E. Valette-Cagnac's *La Lecture à Rome* (1997) and W.A. Johnson's two recent contributions, 'Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity' (2000) and *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (2004); with sections in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, the *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation,* and the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature.*

3. Johnson, writing as recently as 2004, can still lament (*Bookrolls*, 3) that 'a host of basic questions remain unanswered' about the detail of Roman books. These he lists as (I abbreviate slightly, but I hope fairly):

What was the book 'industry' like?

What was the relation of scribe to book owner and to reader in the production of texts?

Were there changes in production methods and design of the bookroll over time?

Was there a relationship between format and content?

Did the design of the Roman bookroll reflect its use by the reader?

4. See Martial 10.38.

5. See W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard, 1989), 271.

6. See Bernard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography* (Cambridge, 1990), 20.

7. See Harris, *Ancient Literacy*; M. Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World* (*Journal of Roman Archaeology* Suppl. 3, 1991); and A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1994).

8. See M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: an Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley, 1993).

9. e.g. Martial's reference to a parchment book that has Virgil's face on the first page (Martial 14.186). H. Blanck's discussion of Roman-era illustrated books (*Das Buch in der Antike*, 1992, 102-12) relies mainly on late codex-style books. There are some papyrus fragments with small drawings apparently inserted – by whom?

Varro produced a book of 700 portraits of famous people, each with an epigram attached (Pliny *Natural History* 35.11), but this seems to have been highly exceptional.

10. See N. Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', *Greece & Rome* vol. 42, no.1 (1995), 49.

11. See Galen's *De Libris Suis* (About My Own Books) an attempt to put the record straight about what were, and were not, his authorised works, and Aulus Gellius' browsing in the antiquarian bookshops of Rome in the hunt for 'better' texts – and the learned discussions that took place in those shops e.g. Gellius *Attic Nights* 5.4.1, 9.14.3, 16.8.2, 18.5.11, 18.9.5.

12. J. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (Arno, 1981), 233.

13. Because I and others are strongly critical of Birt, let it be said that Birt's two books *Das Buchwesen in der Antike* (1883) and *Die Buchrolle in der Kunst* (1911) are serious and detailed works of scholarship in which the sheer volume of evidence adduced and marshalled on this and many other related topics is testimony to Birt's industry and dedication. More is the pity that Birt mistook what he saw.

14. For example, J.P.V.D. Balsdon in *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London, 1969), 148, says that 'educated men … bought books from the bookshops'.

15. For example, T. Kleberg in *Buchhandel und Verlagswesen in der Antike* (Darmstadt, 1969) perceived a 'flourishing book trade in Brundisium' on the basis of Aulus Gellius having found and bought a bundle of old books there (quoted in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2, 45). Gellius (4.1) indeed bought books there but does not mention a bookseller, and there is no reference elsewhere to books at Brundisium. See Chapter 6 below. A.J. Marshall in 'Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome', *Phoenix* 30 (1976), 252ff., says that 'by Pliny's day bookstores could be found far afield in the provinces'. He also cites Birt as his authority.

16. For example, the Lewis and Short *Latin Dictionary* that dates back to 1879, under 'Tryphon', says that Tryphon, referred to by Quintilian and others, was 'a publisher of Rome', when clearly he was a copyshop/bookseller.

17. For example, E.J. Kenney, in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), 22, says that 'by the end of the first century AD the book trade in Rome had developed to the point here it was normal for new books to be made available through trade channels'. But 'trade channel' is itself an anachronistic term. A 'trade channel' is a predetermined route taken by a product within a structured industry, which the Romans did not have. The evidence cited by Kenney is A.N. Sherwin-White's discussion of Pliny's letters (*The Letters of Pliny*, Oxford, 1966), which itself relies on Birt, e.g. at p. 91. Kenney also discusses (21) the idea, proposed by Birt, that a lump sum was paid by booksellers to authors for the right to copy, along with 'author's copies', and while admitting that there is no evidence of this, says that 'maybe' this happened. But he asserts nevertheless that booksellers were granted or sold 'exclusive' use of an author's text. Dilke in *Roman Books and their Impact* (Elmete, 1977), 22, says that authors received 'a number of free copies', while admitting that 'no mention is made of publishers paying authors a lump sum for the privilege of publishing their work'. As discussed below, I find no evidence at all for any part of this anachronistic picture of a commercial relationship between author and bookseller.

18. For example, Sherwin-White in *The Letters of Pliny*, 91.

19. T.C. Skeat in his 'Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 42 (1956), 179 discusses the theory that 'books, when

produced on a commercial scale in the ancient world, were … commonly produced by means of a number of scribes copying simultaneously from dictation'.

20. A German contemporary of Birt's, Karl Dziatzko, wrote in 1892 in a private pamphlet (quoted by Skeat, 181) about the 'large publishing firms' of antiquity, complete with their 'proofreaders' who corrected the texts to be published. The slaves referred to by the Greek term *anagnôstês*, used to denote a slave who read aloud to his master on demand, were pressed into service as 'proofreaders', with some ignorance of what a modern proofreader actually does and where he or she fits into the printing process. For there to be proofreading, there have to be proofs, themselves the product of the era of mechanical printing when the wood or metal type has been set and a 'proof' can be pulled from it for checking before the presses roll. The one text cited to support the idea that there were proofreaders is Strabo's reference in his *Geography* 13.1.54 to certain booksellers (*bibliopolae*) who reproduced books from Aristotle's library (carried off to Rome by Sulla) in poor copies which were flawed because they used bad copyists who were not *antiballontes* – i.e. not (it is alleged) 'proofreading'. The Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*, however, says that this Greek verb simply means to compare, with the noun *antibolê* indicating the making of a comparison between two texts. Thus the activity referred to by Strabo is not, in any proper modern sense, proofreading by a separate proofreader, but simply means careful checking as you go along, quite likely by the copyist himself. Skeat criticises Dziatzko for his 'uncritical dogmatism', but himself refers to 'reputable publishers in the ancient world' – as we shall see, erroneously.

21. Kurt Ohly, quoted by Skeat, *Dictation*, 187, considered whether these copyists would be paid on piecework – per *volumen*, presumably – or by timework – *per diem*, presumably. But if they were slaves, the matter of payment would hardly have arisen.

22. Skeat, *Dictation*,185-9 refers to the 'mass production scriptoria of the big publishers of the ancient world, such as Atticus'.

23. Pliny *Natural History* 13.74 refers to 'Fannius' clever workshop' at Rome, which might be taken as evidence for manufacture in Rome. But it seems on more careful reading to have been some sort of a re-processing plant for upgrading types of papyrus paper to a better grade.

24. See discussion in N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1974), passim.

25. For example, 'By the time of Pliny and Martial Latin literature was widely disseminated in the Western Empire' – Kenney in *Cambridge History of Latin Literature*, 20 – again citing Sherwin-White's *Letters of Pliny* as the evidence. Dilke in *Roman Books*, 21, says that 'Atticus became such a famous publisher that his copies were in demand all over the Roman world' and adds on p. 28 that 'it took up to 10 years for a literary work to develop from its embryo planning to reach wide circulation in Italy and the Roman Empire'. How does he know all this?

26. 'The term "literature", which I shall use for convenience, describes a category which did not exist in the ancient world. It enters the English language in the early nineteenth century in company with a number of romantic claims about the nature and place of literature in society' – T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 90. I too have to use the term 'literature' for convenience.

27. *Romanitas* is a late term. It first appears in the surviving literature in Tertullian's *De Pallio*, written about the turn of the third century CE. So, strictly, it is anachronistic in this context. But I concur with W.J. Dominik's comment: 'I

use the term *Romanitas* to refer to the idea of Roman-ness, that is … as belonging to the *mores et instituta Romanorum* – the customs and institutions of the Romans – … it usefully describes the concept of belonging to a culture associated with the Roman people and its empire' – see his 'Hannibal at the Gates', in A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (eds), *Flavian Rome* (Brill, 2003), 474 n. 8.

2. Format wars

1. Finely-drawn pictorial narrative scrolls from eighteenth-century China, but not made from papyrus, were displayed at an exhibition at London's Royal Academy in winter 2005/6. Catalogue ISBN 1-903973-69-4.

2. The oldest surviving Egyptian inscribed papyrus text is of temple accounts of *c.* 2540 BCE – see H. Maehler in *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation* (Oxford, 2004), s.v. 'Greek and Roman Books', 120. The plant in those times grew in profusion in the marshy Nile delta in Egypt and along the Nile river. Papyrus had many uses, such as making boats, rope, baskets or sandals. Interestingly, genuine papyrus paper is now, just as it probably was in Roman and pre-Roman times, a government monopoly, or, if not an actual monopoly under Rome's more relaxed rule compared to the Ptolemies, was at least carried out under close official supervision in privately owned factories – see discussion in N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1974). Sadly, the papyrus plant no longer grows in the Nile delta, indeed there is no longer a delta, but is found in small quantities only in the upper Nile, under government control, and it is used to make tourist souvenirs, if, that is, the alleged papyrus papers are in fact made from papyrus and not from banana leaves.

3. Livy refers to *libri lintei*, books preserved in the temple of Moneta (Livy 4.7 and 4.13).

4. e.g. Martial 14.5 *pugillares eborei*, ivory tablets.

5. '*Pugillares*', 'a set of writing tablets small enough to be held in the hand' (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*). Martial 14.7 refers to *pugillares membranae* – notebooks made of parchment.

6. As found at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall – see Alan Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier – Vindolanda and its People* (British Museum, 2003), and Alan Bowman and J.D. Thomas (eds), *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets* (British Museum, 2003). See also Martial 14.3 *pugillares citrei*, citrus-wood tablets.

7. Pliny *Natural History* 13.21.

8. Bernard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1990), 8.

9. The so-called Luxeuil codex – see Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 8.

10. See Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*, esp. 90.

11. e.g. '*papier*' both in French and in German: note also '*papyrosa*' in Russian, meaning a (rolled) cigarette.

12. See W.A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto, 2004), 150.

13. The blank papyrus paper roll was referred to as the *charta*, but once written on it was referred to in Latin, often interchangeably, as *volumen* or *liber* or *libellus*. The Latin terms *liber*, *volumen* and *tomus* were later taken over from the scroll to the codex. The term *codex* apparently originally meant a set of wooden tablets bound together, with a wax coating on the wooden surface to carry the writing, and the name *codex* was carried over to the sets of parchment or vellum pages similarly

bound together. See W. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London, 1890) s.v. '*codex*'. Cicero uses *codex*, naturally in the former sense, in his speech against Verres 2.1.36.

14. The rods were called *umbilici* in Latin. But this Latin term could have two meanings. It could either mean the actual rod itself (e.g. Seneca *Suasoria* 6.27 refers to *librum usque ad umbilicum revolvere* – 'to unroll the book as far as the rod' i.e. to the end [see also Horace *Epistle* 14.8 and Martial 4.89]); or it could mean the two ornamental and decorative ends of the rod that stuck out beyond the roll at each end (e.g. Statius *Silvae* 4.9.8 refers to *noster [libellus] binis decoratus umbilicis* – 'our book with double decorative knobs'), in which case its meaning is apparently the same as that of *cornua*, lit. 'horns', as at Martial 11.107. Martial 1.64.11 refers to his book-roll as *umbilicis cultus*, 'with decorative rollers', and later (at 3.2.9) to a scroll *pictis umbilicis*, 'with painted rollers', both of which could be interpreted either way. Tibullus 3.1.13 says *pungantur cornua* – 'let the knobs be painted'.

15. Known to papyrologists as the 'protocol' and the 'eschatacol', or those terms in their full Greek form.

16. The *subscriptio*.

17. Perhaps called the *paenula*, meaning literally a hooded cloak but also meaning any protective covering. Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary* recognises the latter meaning, which might be applied to the book wrapping, but cites no examples of it for books; the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* does not recognise the second meaning.

18. See Martial 1.66.11 for purple wrapping. See also Martial 11.1 for a book *cultus Sidone non cotidiana* – 'decked out in striking purple'.

19. Known in Latin as an '*index*', or by the equivalent Greek word. Cicero in his letter *To Atticus* 4.4a.1 says that the *index* is what the Greeks call *sillubos*, and says it is a *membranula*, a small piece of parchment. Many examples have been found. See T. Dorandi, '*Silluboi*', *Scrittura e Civilita* 8 (1984), 185-99.

20. *scrinium* or *capsa* in Latin.

21. The papyrus known as 'Papyrus Harris 1', according to O.A.W. Dilke, *Roman Books and their Impact* (Elmete, 1977), 10, which is also B.M. Papyrus 10053.

22. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 149. This is a detailed study of 317 papyri from Oxyrhynchus, all Greek but of the Roman era, with a comparison group of 96 papyri from elsewhere.

23. See for example Dilke, *Roman Books*, 10.

24. Pliny *Natural History* 13.11.

25. 'Absurd … disproved by the facts' – F.G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 1951), 52.

26. Over 100 books, according to his nephew (Pliny *Letters* 3.5), but of course books of the Roman (smaller) size.

27. See Dilke, *Roman Books*, 10 and Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 52.

28. See the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, which clearly defines *scapus* as primarily meaning 'stalk' and by extension other sorts of similar upright structure, such as a door-post: there is no mention or reference to any meaning such as 'book-roll'.

29. Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 52 points out that some Egyptian rolls exist with the number 20 marked at the end of each twentieth sheet.

30. Pliny *Natural History* 13.74-82.

31. Pliny and Theophrastus (*Historia Plantarum* 4.8.3) tell us that the plant, now classified as *Cyperus papyrus*, grows in two metres of water or less, and can grow to a height of around 4-5 metres, with a root as thick as a man's wrist.

32. Papyrus was made 'from the vertically ribbed pith of the triangular papyrus stalk' – Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 7.

33. The individual sheet was called the *kollêma*, and the join between two of them the *kollêsis*.

34. Pliny *Natural History* 13.77.

35. 'Discussion of the relative merits of papyrus, parchment and paper has, at least since the seventeenth century, frequently dismissed papyrus as rougher, darker, and more brittle than the other two materials' – Lewis, *Papyrus,* 57.

36. Martial 14.37 refers to 'moths and savage bookworms', so keep your books packed tight to keep them out.

37. Pliny *Natural History* 13.3 refers to use of cedar oil as a preservative, as does Martial 3.2.7 (*libellus cedro perunctus*). See also Horace *Ars Poetica* 331: 'poems fit to be coated with cedar and stored in polished cypress'.

38. See Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 16.

39. 'When documents are first uncovered, the ink is often surprisingly black and that made from soot and gum does not fade' – A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield, 2000), 32 – but referring to Egypt and Israel. In Egypt, cakes of ink have survived.

40. Galen tells us that a papyrus roll could last 300 years (Galen in the foreword to his Commentary on Hippocrates' book on a doctor's surgery). The elder Pliny talks of seeing papyrus documents 100 or 200 years old (*Natural History* 13.83). Aulus Gellius speaks of finding in Rome's bookshops books of great age, such as one by Ennius edited by Lampadio (Gaius Octavius Lampadio, second-century BCE scholar who also arranged Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* into seven books: Suetonius *Grammatici* 2), and a copy of Livius Andronicus of *verae vetustatis*, 'true age', in a library at Petra (Patras). Gellius 2.3.5, 5.4.1, 9.14.3, 18.5.11, 18.9.5.

41. e.g. in the Fayyum depression and at Oxyrhynchus, well described by Peter Parsons in *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish* (Weidenfeld, 2007).

42. See C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *Birth of the Codex* (Oxford, 1983), 7.

43. Lewis, *Papyrus*, 61.

44. Pompey had made a start to this in 67 BCE, but it was the imperial regime from Augustus onwards that had the military resources to reduce piracy to a minimum. See P. de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 1999).

45. See G. Cavallo, 'Between Volumen and Codex' in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (eds), *A History of Reading in the West* (Polity Press, 1999), 83.

46. The price of a quire of eight pages is given as 40 denarii, in a restored reading – see M. Giacchero, *Edictum Diocletiani et Collegarum de Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, vol. 1 (Genoa, 1974), where the edict is partially restored from Latin and Greek fragments, and where the price of parchment is numbered as item 7.38 (277), and papyrus as item 33.3 (306), but with no reading for its price.

47. Lewis, *Papyrus*, 133.

48. See Giacchero, *Edictum*, 278, items 7.39, 7.40 and 7.41.

49. W.A. Johnson, 'Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity', *AJP* 121 (2000), 612 says that 'almost all literary books qualify for the best or nearly best categories, thus are the most expensive use of a scribe. The format squanders papyrus … with upper and lower margins much larger than function demands.'

50. R. Reed, *Ancient Skins, Parchments and Leathers* (Seminar Press, 1972), provides a detailed technical description of the treatment of animal skins over the ages for writing purposes. There is no absolute dividing line between 'leather', 'parchment' and 'vellum' as a support for writing, but there is a clear implication about relative grades of quality. But it makes it hard, for example, to know how

best to translate the Latin term '*membrana*', which simply means an animal skin used for this purpose – but how good was its quality at the time of, say, Martial? We can't know. Reed's book makes it clear that making good vellum is a skilled and complex process, starting with the stretching and drying of the skins, via getting the hairs out, to preparing the surface to accept (and retain) ink, both black and (of some importance for Christian gospels) coloured, for illustrations and ornamentation. Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 7 suggest that the time it took to develop this skill across the Roman empire was one reason why parchment/vellum took so long to displace papyrus.

51. Cavallo, *History of Reading in the West*, 83.

52. Martial 4.10 says he is sending a sponge along with his poem so that it can be easily rubbed out.

53. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 86.

54. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 16 points out that 'columns are sometimes numbered' and cites various surviving examples. D. Sider, *The Library of the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum* (J. Paul Getty Trust, 2005), 30 points out that in some scrolls found there the scribes provided at the end of the text a line count and/or a *kollêma* count and/or a column count. In other words, the scribes were quite capable of keeping a careful check on how much they had written, in what units of text.

55. What exactly the scribe copied when he copied from his exemplar, i.e. words, or words and style, or words and style and text marks, seems to me a question that cannot be answered for lack of evidence. My point is that, given their level of skill, scribes could surely have numbered their columns, if required to do so, and conformed their column lengths to their exemplar.

56. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, shows in plate 39 a papyrus roll of Herodias a mere 120 mm in height, including upper and lower margins, with 15-19 lines to the column, and says that this was 'a format often found in the early Roman period for poetry'. On show at the Turkish Art exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in the winter-spring of 2005 were small-scale Islamic portable prayer scrolls which rolled up into tiny containers about the size of a digital camera – surely as easily hidden as a small codex of Christian texts.

57. There are 13 separate references to *membrana* in Martial. See Martial 1.2.3, 3.2.7, 14.7.1, 14.184, 14.186, 14.188, 14.190 and 14.192, and also see Tibullus 3.1.9, where the poet refers to the *membrana* that wrap his roll: plus also Martial 1.66.11, where the word refers to the purple outer wrapping. The weight of these cumulative references leaves little doubt that *membrana*, parchment, was a familiar item in the poet's day. But in what format?

58. Suetonius *Augustus* 101.

59. The full quotation (Martial 1.2.3ff.) reads:

Hos eme, quos artat brevibus membrana tabellis:
Scrinia da magnis, me manus una capit

My slightly free translation of which is:

'Buy these verses, which parchment gets into fewer pages:
Give over your book-boxes to big stuff: one hand can hold this lot'

60. Discussed by W. Allen in W. Allen et al., 'Martial; Knight, Publisher and Poet', *Classical Journal* 65 (1970), 353. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 182 says that 'the oldest surviving remains of a parchment codex, the *Fragmentum de Bellis Macedonicis*, is probably almost contemporary with Martial'. He suggests that it came originally from Italy, though found at Oxyrhynchus (known as P.Oxy. i.30) and now in London (known as P.Lit.Lond. 121).

61. This fragment was originally ascribed to the third century CE because it is a parchment codex. But the great French papyrologist Jean Mallon, in his *Paléographie Romaine* (Madrid, 1952), 77-80 revised this dating, partly on the basis of the style of lettering – but partly on his (and my) interpretation of Martial. What Mallon says is that 'The material form of the manuscript … therefore furnishes us with a "terminus after which" [for the parchment codex], but it is not what used to be thought. This manuscript, all of whose graphic characteristics are of the first century, cannot have been executed … before the last 30 years of that century. The fragment is debris from one of the Latin codices of this first epoch.'

62. Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 94-5, from which the quotations are taken.

63. Allen et al., 'Martial; Knight, Publisher and Poet', 352. See also Ludwig Friedlaender, *Roman Life and Letters* (Routledge, 1909), 4.299, who also recognised that Martial's reference is to a 'parchment edition'.

64. 'As early as the second century, Egyptian Christians used papyrus in folded sheets for books' – Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 8.

65. Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 5.

3. Don't mess up the aesthetics

1. M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: an Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley, 1993), 11.

2. R.P. Oliver, 'Tacitus and the Titulature of Ancient Books', *TAPA* 82 (1951), 242.

3. Paul Saenger, *Space between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, 1997), 10.

4. C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (Oxford, 1983), 73.

5. To be noted here is that the 'river of letters' long outlasted the Roman Empire of the West. Around the year 735, a copy of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* was written out by a scribe at Wearmouth-Jarrow. It is now in Cambridge University, and is a 'river of letters', with no word breaks or illustrations, only line after line of text. But 'the script is masterly: fluent, rhythmical and regular' (P. Campbell in *London Review of Books*, 18 August 2005). Much like, one may assume, a good Roman text.

6. W.A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes* (Toronto, 2004), 92, asks 'is the notion of an upright column anachronistic for Roman times? … The tilt creates a vigorous forward movement along the extent of the scroll.'

7. E.G. Turner and P.J. Parsons, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1971), 8 said that 'oratory is often written in narrower columns than history or philosophy', but Johnson, 52, disagrees.

8. The quotations in this paragraph are from Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 8 and 36.

9. T.C. Skeat, 'Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production', *Proceedings of the British Academy, London* 42 (1956), 183. Skeat's picture is supported by P. Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish* (Weidenfeld, 2005), 157 – 'the posture must have been strenuous'.

10. This discussion refers to English and other Western European language conventions. I cannot comment on other language groups such as Arabic, Chinese, Urdu etc.

11. See again Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 73.

12. Saenger, *Space between Words*, 11.

13. ibid.

14. i.e. antedating the volcanic eruption that destroyed Pompeii in that year.

15. Quoted and reproduced by James Franklin in 'Literacy and Parietal Inscriptions of Pompeii', in *JRA* Suppl. 3 *Literacy in the Roman World,* 83.

16. Suggested by Saenger, *Space between Words*, 13.

17. Forced into suicide by Augustus in 26 BCE. Dedicatee of Virgil's tenth *Eclogue*, he was one of Augustus' leading generals and first imperial governor of Egypt, but allegedly let it go to his head.

18. See R.D. Anderson et al., 'Elegiacs by Gallus from Qasr Ibrim', *JRS* 69 (1979). There are those who believe that this fragment is a forgery, because too good to be true. For comparison, Anderson et al. reproduce an uncial manuscript of a portion of Livy written in the first half of the fifth century CE, which has no word breaks or punctuation, and alongside this, the same bit of Livy written out in Tours about the year 800 CE with word breaks and use of capital letters.

19. Seneca *Letters* 40.11.

20. As discussed by G.B. Townend, 'Some Problems of Punctuation in the Latin Hexameter', *Classical Quarterly* 19 (1969), 332.

21. Suetonius *De Grammaticis* 2. Crates visited Rome in that year, broke his leg falling down a manhole into the Cloaca Maxima sewer, and while recuperating gave lectures which aroused interest in the subject of literary study. He was the first head of the library at Pergamon.

22. These fragments are those of a papyrus roll of the period 21-14 BCE containing part of the second book of Cicero's second case against Verres (P.Iand. 90); of the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco* found at Herculaneum (P.Herc. 817); and of the *De Bellis Macedonicis* of about 100 CE (P.Oxy. 30).

23. Oliver, *Tacitus*, 241.

24. E.O. Wingo, *Latin Punctuation in the Classical Age* (The Hague, 1972).

25. *Latin Punctuation,* 132.

26. This comment I owe to Townend, 'Some Problems of Punctuation', 332.

27. In his *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus*.

28. J. Scheid, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007).

29. P. Cugusi, *Corpus Epistolarum Latinarum* (esp. vol. 1) (Florence 1992).

30. Vol. 1, Plates 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8.

31. Vol. 1, Plates 9-17.

32. Vol. 1, Plates 18-21.

33. P.Ianda. V 90. See R. Cavenaile, *Corpus Papyrorum Latinorum* (Wiesbaden, 1958) Item 20, p. 70. A section of this text, showing clear spacing and interpuncts, is reproduced in A. Calderini, *Papyri Latini* (Milan, 1945).

34. BL Pap. 1532, also known as P.Oxy. 4.668 – see H.J.M. Milne, *Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum* (1927), Item 120. Milne says the text itself is 'extraordinarily corrupt', but that need not affect the use (or otherwise) of dots.

35. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 341, defines the *paragraphus* as 'a horizontal line placed below a line of text at the left margin to signal a notional division e.g. change of speaker or end of period'.

36. See Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 15.

37. David Sider, *The Library of the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum* (J. Paul Getty Trust, 2005), 30, states that sometimes the scribe did a line count or a column count at the end of the text and/or a marginal dot every tenth line: and sometimes placed a *paragraphus* at the end of each epigram, or to mark sections of poems, the beginning of a quotation, or (in drama) a change of speaker.

38. Quintilian 1.8.1.

39. Saenger, *Space between Words*, 6.

40. Saenger, *Space between Words*, 14.

41. Quintilian 1.2.15, plus 2.5.4 where he says that the purpose of the *praelectio* was to enable pupils to follow the writing with their eyes easily and clearly.

42. See Chapter 11 for the central importance of the *recitatio* in Roman 'publishing'.

43. Suetonius *Virgil* 26. 'The success of the Bucolics was such that they were even frequently rendered by singers on the stage.' See Chapter 15 below.

44. Phrase used by E.J. Kenney, *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1982), 17.

4. Did the medium shape the message?

1. O.A.W. Dilke, *Roman Books and their Impact* (Elmete, 1977), 10.

2. i.e. *Das Antike Buchwesen* (Berlin, 1882), 286-341.

3. J. Van Sickle, 'The Book Roll and Some Conventions of the Poetic Book', *Arethusa* 13, no. 1 (1980). Van Sickle wisely concluded that 'the material and the manufacture of the papyrus roll were not so restrictive of content, still less prescriptive, as might have been expected'.

4. Birt, *Das Antike Buchwesen*, 288-9.

5. Isidore *Origines* 6.12. The full Latin reads *Quaedam genera librorum certis modulis conficiebantur; breviori forma carmina atque epistulae; at vero historiae maiori modulo scribebantur*. The translation given here is from S.A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006).

6. F.G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Rome and Greece* (Oxford, 1951).

7. Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 64.

8. Catullus 22.4-8.

9. C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *Birth of the Codex* (Oxford, 1983), 18.

10. See R.H. Martin and A.J. Woodman (eds), *Tacitus Annals Book Four* (Cambridge, 1989): 'The division of the Annals into numbered chapters goes back no further than an editor at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the subdivision of each chapter into numbered sections belongs to our own [twentieth] century.'

11. 'Veranius' edition of 1564 was the first modern scholar to divide and title the works as we now have them' – C.S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians* (Oxford, 1997), 92.

12. Jerome *Commentary on Zachariah* 3.14 – *Tacitus qui post Augustum usque ad mortem Domitiani vitas Caesarum triginta voluminibus exaravit*.

13. See R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), vol. 2, Appendix 35 'The Total of Books', where Syme favours the division of Tacitus into hexads, in imitation of Ennius and the *Aeneid*, while mentioning the 14+16 option. Syme points out that the manuscript known as M2 refers to *Histories* Book 2 as *liber octavus decim* – the eighteenth book – presumably of the supposed 30-volume consolidated edition.

14. See R.P. Oliver, 'Tacitus and the Titulature of Ancient Books', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1951), 260. 'We may provisionally assume that the rustic-capital hyperarchetype of the First Medicean manuscript of Tacitus was a codex which originally contained both the major works of Tacitus, that it was at least as old as the Fourth Century Palatinus of Virgil, and that there is a definite suggestion that it belonged to the Third Century … It may indeed have been produced during the brief reign of the emperor Tacitus.'

15. Emperor, briefly, 275/6 CE.

16. What might today properly be called chapters.

17. Suetonius *De Grammaticis* 2. Aulus Gellius (18.5.11) says he found a copy of Ennius almost certainly edited by Lampadio.

18. Interestingly for the discussion about Roman punctuation, Suetonius also tells us that the original Naevius text was in a single volume with continuous writing.

19. Virgil became one of several Roman authors whose work was apparently issued by their executors – Lucretius and Persius were others, the latter's editor being Lucius Ammaeus Cornutus, honoured in Persius *Satire* 5. One wonders what exactly these literary executors did.

20. At 6.1 and 6.85. Other such references are in and to his 'fifth book' (5.15), his 'seven books' (7.17), and his '10th and 11th books' (12.4.5).

21. W. Fitzgerald, *Martial: the World of the Epigram* (Chicago, 2007) also views them as having a unity of structure and composition.

22. Guy Lee, *Poems of Catullus* (Oxford, 1990), 13. W. Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations* (California, 1995), 33 remarks that 'there is a copious literature on whether Catullus himself ordered the collection as we now have it, whether it was published as a single book … I do not believe that a definitive answer can be given.'

23. e.g. by David Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian* (Routledge, 1999), 25.

24. Appian 2.1.1.

25. M. Beard, 'Ciceronian Correspondence: Making a Book out of Letters', in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress* (Oxford, 2002) – an essay whose possible implications in my view range far wider than Cicero's letters but are too wide to explore here.

26. i.e. edition by R.Y. Tyrrell and L.C. Purser, published over the long period 1879 to 1933, and the editions by D.R. Shackleton-Bailey, notably *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* (Cambridge, 1965-70).

27. The evidence for this is well discussed by Beard, 'Ciceronian Correspondence', 116-19.

28. Beard, 'Ciceronian Correspondence',131.

Atticus and co. – Roman publishers?

1. L.D. Reynolds and N.D. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford, 1974), 24.

2. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds), *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation* (Oxford, 2004), 124, s.v. 'books'. The entry is by Herwig Maehler.

3. K.S. Staikos, *History of the Library in Western Civilisation*, vol. 2 (Oak Knoll, 2005), 161-4.

4. P. Jones and K. Sidwell (eds), *The World of Rome* (Cambridge, 1997), 266.

5. E.J. Kenney, *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), vol. 2, 4.

6. All the citations from Birt in this chapter are taken from ch. 7 of his *Buchwesen in der Antike* (Berlin, 1882), 342-70.

7. By Cornelius Nepos in his *Life of Atticus* 13.3, *plurimi librarii*.

8. Staikos, *History of the Library*, 96 and 173.

9. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* (Cambridge, 1966).

10. e.g. A.N. Sherwin-White, in *Letters of Pliny* (Oxford, 1966), 51, takes the 'trial run' approach.

6. Bookshops and copyshops

1. Ludwig Friedlaender, *Roman Life and Manners in the Early Empire* (Routledge, 1907-13), vol. 3, 36.
2. Cicero *Philippics* 2.9.21.
3. e.g. L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford, 1974), 23.
4. Strabo 13.1.54.
5. Aulus Gellius was born about 125-8 CE, and his *Attic Nights* dates to about 180 CE. He lived mostly at Rome, having possibly come from Africa, and knew Cornelius Fronto, with whom he shared the passion for 'grammar', i.e. literary and textual criticism.
6. Catullus 14.17-19 says that he, Catullus, will run to the bookshelves (literally 'book-boxes') of booksellers to buy books of bad poetry to send to a friend in retaliation for the bad poems sent to him by his luckless correspondent.
7. e.g. Martial 1.2, 1.3, 1.117, 4.72.
8. Aulus Gellius 2.3.5, 5.4.1, 18.4.1.
9. Aulus Gellius 2.3.5 and 5.4.1.
10. Aulus Gellius 18.4.1.
11. Sulpicius Severus *Dialogue* 1.23.4ff. Sulpicius Severus was a Latin historian from Aquitania who lived between roughly 360 and 420 CE, and wrote a life of his contemporary Bishop (later Saint) Martin of Tours, supplemented by some letters and a dialogue.
12. Catullus 14.17.
13. Seneca *De Beneficiis* 7.6.1.
14. Aulus Gellius 5.4, 13.31 and 18.4.
15. Pliny *Letters* 1.2.6.
16. Martial 4.72.
17. Referred to at Martial 4.72.2 and 13.3.4.
18. Referred to at Horace *Epistle* 1.20.2 and *Ars Poetica* 345.
19. Seneca *De Beneficiis* 7.6.1.
20. Martial 1.2.7.
21. Martial 1.117.10.
22. For Demetrius, see *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 18, no. 2192 (London Egyptian Exploration Society, 1941) discussed by R.J. Starr, 'The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World', *Classical Quarterly* 37, 218.
23. *Ars Poetica* 245 – *his meret aera liber Sosiis.*
24. Horace *Epistles* 1.20.2 – *Sosiorum pumice mundus.*
25. Martial 1.117.10
26. Martial 1.3.1 also refers more generally to the shops of the Argiletum as places where his books may be found once they leave the safety of his own bookcase. The Argiletum 'led out of the Roman Forum to connect with the imperial forums of Caesar, Augustus and Nerva' (A. Claridge, *Oxford Archaeological Guide: Rome*, 65) and so would have been thronged with people. The street was also full of cobblers, and had brothels and a synagogue. L. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary of Rome* (Johns Hopkins, 1992) remarks that it was 'one of the most populous and active districts of Rome, busy, noisy, dirty, and wet'.
27. This is a slight extrapolation of Martial's actual words *scriptis postibus … totis, omnes ut cito perlegas poetas*, but I suggest not an unfair one. This passage, about one shop, is the only evidence for Friedlaender's assumption that all bookshops were similarly decked out with copious advertising material. However,

as at Pompeii, it must have been common for shops, bookshops included, to have signs on the walls outside.

28. *purpura cultum* (Martial 1.117): *purpureum libellum* (Martial 5.6).

29. Seneca *De Beneficiis* 7.6.1. Seneca's words are taken by some to imply that Dorus had acquired some publishing rights over books by Cicero and Livy, and that he had acquired those rights by payment. But it seems to me that Seneca is making a rather laboured linguistic point about different forms of ownership, between being the *dominus* (master) of something and having the *usus* (one might say, the usufruct) of it, rather than giving us a trade description. His words are *Alter rei dominus est, alter usus*. Seneca says that Cicero's books are Cicero's because Cicero is the author (*auctor*), while Dorus can call Cicero's books 'his own' (*suos*) having been an *emptor* (buyer) of the said books. It is the Budé French translation of *De Beneficiis* which usefully translates *usus* as 'usufruct', i.e. a quasi-legal term implying rights to the gainful use of something.

30. It is not clear from the texts – and maybe it does not matter – whether he was called Trypho or Tryphon.

31. Martial lived *c.* 40-104 CE, Quintilian *c.* 35-95 CED.

32. Martial 4.72.2 and 13.3.4.

33. W. Ker, *Martial: Epigrams* (Loeb edition, 1919), 44.

34. M. Vitorius Marcellus, praetor 85 CE, suffect consul 105, also addressed by Statius in his *Silvae*, well-known for his interest in literature. Quintilian says that he wrote his books on oratory to help educate Marcellus' son Geta.

35. Strabo, Cicero and Seneca all attest to bad copying. Strabo (13.1.54) says that the booksellers who seized upon some of Sulla's library loot from Athens used bad copyists, without proper checking, 'as happens with other books made for sale, both here [Rome] and in Alexandria'.

36. Whether this can be taken as evidence for what we might nowadays call proofreading, and/or specialist proofreaders of the type spied in the Roman 'publishing world' by e.g. Skeat, must be very doubtful. In his 'Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production' *Proceedings of the British Academy, London* 42 (1956), 180, Skeat says that the Greek word *anagnôstês*, used by Cornelius Nepos about some of Atticus' slaves, can, like *lector* in Latin, mean (among other things) 'a reader helping to proofread a recently prepared text, like a reader to the press'.

37. See R. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982) for a fascinating analysis of *amicitia*.

38. E.J. Kenney, *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), vol. 2, 21.

39. A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (Oxford, 1966), 91.

40. Martial 13.3.4: Tryphon is a *bibliopola* who *faciet lucrum*.

41. Horace *Ars Poetica* 345.

42. A.J. Marshall, 'Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome', *Phoenix* 30 (1976).

43. The Argiletum as referred to by Martial, while Horace refers to the Vicus Tuscus, the Street of the Etruscans (Horace *Satires* 2.3.228). The Vicus Tuscus was also associated with low life and prostitution – not a wonderful place for a work of Horace to end up. Horace refers to its *impia turba* (rude crowd) with fishmongers, fruitsellers, poulterers, perfumers, cooks and parasites.

44. Kenney, *Cambridge History*, 22. Kenney cites Martial and Pliny for this generalisation, further citing Sherwin-White's discussion of these matters in his commentary on the letters of Pliny.

45. Pliny *Letters* 5.10.3.

46. Pliny *Letters* 1.2.6.
47. Sherwin-White, Letters of Pliny, 91.
48. Marshall, 'Library Resources', 252.
49. O.A.W. Dilke, *Roman Books and their Impact* (Elmete, 1977), 28.
50. Pliny *Letters* 9.11.2.
51. Augustine *Retractiones* 2.58 and *Epistulae* 118.2.9.
52. Sidonius Apollonaris *Epistulae* 9.7.1, written around about 500 CE. This I read as a courteous get-out offered by Sidonius to his correspondent, since the alternative possibility, stated by Sidonius, is that a *scriba* (scribe) on the bishop's staff had taken money (a bribe?) to hand over copies of these declamations illicitly, which Sidonius then read and transcribed. This alleged 'bookshop' may never have existed, although Sidonius must have supposed that, in principle, it might have. But it does read a bit like making excuses for cribbing the good bishop's work without his consent or knowledge (Roman 'breach of copyright'), and is not a context that shouts reliability.
53. Plato has Socrates remark that the books of Anaxagoras could be bought in the *Orchêstra*, a semi-circular recess in the Agora at Athens (Plato *Apologia* 26) and Xenophon (*Anabasis* 7.5.14) refers to books as part of the cargo of ships wrecked off Thrace in 399 BCE. Was this an Athenian export trade? Maybe. Additionally, Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us that in the fourth century BCE there were itinerant booksellers selling bundles of the speeches of Isocrates (Dion. Hal. *Isocrates* 18). What all that implies for Athens in the Roman period, one can only speculate.
54. Strabo 13.1.54 refers to books being made for sale both in Rome and in Alexandria.
55. A.F. Norman, 'The Book Trade in Fourth Century Antioch', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 80 (1960), 125-6 – his title is misleading since he concludes that there virtually wasn't one.
56. i.e. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 18, no. 2192 already referred to (in n. 22).
57. Papyrus fragment referenced as P.Petaus 30.
58. Discussed by W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard, 1989), 274-82.
59. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton, 2005), 146.
60. *res inauditae, incredulae, scriptores veteres … squalebant et habitu aspectuque taetro errant* – Aulus Gellius 9.4.
61. e.g. T. Kleberg, *Buchhandel und Verlagswesen in der Antike* (Darmstadt, 1967), 45 says that there was 'a flourishing book trade' at Brundisium, apparently on the strength of this single passage in Aulus Gellius.
62. J. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (Arno, 1981), 59.
63. Pliny *Natural History* 7.2.9ff.
64. Aulus Gellius 9.4.7.
65. Starr, 'Circulation of Literary Texts', 220: booksellers 'were the owners of small shops that dealt in luxury items'.

Books for looks

1. Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 112 refers to libraries as 'having the primary function of a status symbol and symbol of acculturation … it is possible that a professionally produced text of Homer existed as much as something to have on one's shelf as something actually to read'.
2. Principally, for Roman libraries, Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient*

World (Yale, 2001) and the entry 'Libraries' in the *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation* (Oxford, 2004), by P.J. Parsons. Also see R. MacLeod (ed.), *The Library of Alexandria* (I.B. Tauris, 2000): Konstantinos Staikos, *The History of the Library in Western Civilisation*, vols 1 and 2 (Oak Knoll, 2004-5): J. Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: the Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (Macmillan, 2004), and L. Canfora, *The Vanished Library*, tr. M. Ryle (Hutchison, 1989). This latter group are mainly about the great (Greek) library of Alexandria, and so only marginally relevant here. Canfora's famous book about Alexandria is dismissed as 'like a detective novel … parts of it are pure fiction' by R. Barnes in 'Cloistered Bookworms in the Chicken-Coop of the Muses: the Ancient Library of Alexandra', in the book edited by MacLeod cited above.

3. See Plutarch *Aemilius Paulus* 6.5 and 28.6 and following.

4. See Isidore of Seville *Origines* 6.5.

5. Cicero in his letters refers often to obtaining copies e.g. *To his brother Quintus* 3.4.5 and *To Atticus* 2.20.6.

6. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 65.

7. e.g. Trimalchio's library is in Petronius *Satyricon* 48: also see Seneca *Dialogues* 9.9.4-7.

8. Martial 14.190 – less in number than the 142 volumes of Livy's complete work – maybe a self-deprecating remark.

9. Suetonius' *Life of Persius Flaccus.*

10. Pliny *Natural History* Preface 17.

11. Staikos, *History of the Library*, vol. 2, 227.

12. Casson systematically calls them 'public' libraries, but I prefer the term 'imperial' as less misleading.

13. Suetonius *Caesar* 44 says that Julius' intended library, of both Greek and Latin books, was to be 'for public use', interestingly using the Latin verb *publicare*, also used of individual books by individual authors, to denote putting something into the public domain. Thus Julius Caesar did perhaps see a distinction between his proposed 'public' library and the existing private libraries. The question is rather, how to interpret that distinction.

14. Suetonius *Augustus* 29. His agent for setting up this library was Gnaeus Pompeius Macer, a historian.

15. His agent here was Gaius Maecenas Melissus, an ex-slave. See Suetonius *De Grammaticis* 21.

16. Lucullus' son died fighting for Brutus and Cassius at Philippi; Faustus Sulla died fighting against Julius Caesar in Africa: Mark Antony had plundered Varro's library.

17. Vespasian's new Temple of Peace had two flanking halls that were libraries (Suetonius *Vespasian* 9.1 and Josephus *The Jewish War* 7.158-62).

18. See B. Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne* (Cambridge, 1994), 7, Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 92 and *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn, *s.v.* 'Libraries' (entry by P.J. Parsons). None of these provide the reference, but it is presumably to the co-called *Curiosum* and *Notitia*, two lists of buildings in the regions of Rome compiled under Diocletian and Constantine. See L. Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Johns Hopkins, 1992).

19. Recorded in an inscription, *CIL* (= *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions*) 5.5262.

20. Discovered during excavation of the site. See H. Pfeiffer in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* (1931), 157-65.

21. Apuleius *Florida* 18.8.

22. See discussion in S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Methuen, 1977), 157-8.

23. See Strabo 6.1.5.

24. Tacitus *Agricola* 4.2-3.

25. Suetonius *Caligula* 20.

26. See J-M. Pailler and others, *Que reste-t-il de l'éducation classique?* (Mirail, 2004), 145, and H.I. Marrou, *Education in Antiquity* (English tr., Wisconsin, 1956), 297.

27. 'Both transmission of a text and its interpretation rested with a teacher' – R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton, 2001) 130, referring to antiquity generally.

28. See J. Packer, *The Forum of Trajan in Rome*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, 1997), 454, for the calculation.

29. See R.S. Bagnall, 'Alexandria: the Library of Dreams' in his *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Ashgate, 2006), 353. Also, Roman imperial libraries were still huge by medieval standards – the Cambridge library of 1424 had a mere 122 volumes, and the individual college libraries were about the same size. The French royal library in 1373 had only 188 volumes. See C.F. Buhler, *The Fifteenth Century Book* (Philadelphia, 1960).

30. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 99.

31. Ovid *Tristia* 3.63.

32. Ovid *Tristia* 3.1.65-72. He is not in the Palatine library, or Pollio's, or the one in the Porticus of Octavia. But the texts could still be in private circulation.

33. Pliny *Natural History* 7.30.115.

34. Suetonius *Caligula* 34.2 and *Tiberius* 70.2. The Greeks were Euphorion, Parthenius and Rhianus, all of the Hellenistic period.

35. Martial 5.5.

36. Galen *De Locis Affectis* 3.

37. *Historia Augusta*: *Tacitus* 10.3.

38. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 99.

39. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 102.

40. 'We should perhaps not underestimate the extent to which the libraries of Rome served as reference institutions and to which works were written for deposition in them' – A.J. Stevenson 'The Roman Antiquarian Tradition', in L. Holford-Strevens and A. Vardi (eds), *The World of Aulus Gellius* (Oxford, 2004), 132.

41. Gellius tells us that he found Lucius Aelius' *Commentary on Axioms* and the letters of Sinnius Capito, an Augustan-age scholar who wrote about '*syllaboi*'. See Gellius 9.14.3, 16.8.2, 18.5.11 for his visits to libraries.

42. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 100.

43. R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons* (Brill, 2002), 135.

44. N. Horsfall, 'Empty Shelves on the Palatine', *Greece & Rome* 40 (1993).

45. *Procurator bibliothecarum*. For example, Tiberius Claudius Scirtus was a freedman of Augustus who became *procurator bibliothecarum* (*CIL* 10.1739 / *ILS* 1587) and Tiberius Julius Pappus was 'in charge of all the libraries of the emperors from Tiberius to Claudius' according to his tombstone (discussed in *American Journal of Archaeology* 63 (1959), 384). Other later names are also known.

46. *Bibliothecarius* – the title is used in a letter from Marcus Aurelius to Fronto (*Epistle* 4.5.2).

47. Called *a bibliotheca*. One such was Antiochus, slave of Claudius, on the staff of the Latin section of the library in the temple of Apollo (*CIL* 6.5884). Many others are also known from gravestones etc.

48. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 102.

49. 'The great Roman libraries provided reading rooms' – *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation*, 415. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 82: 'Roman libraries were like modern reading rooms.'

50. 'We have no iconographic sources that show scenes of reading inside a public library' – G. Cavallo, *A History of Reading in the West* (Polity Press, 1999), 70.

51. 'The public libraries' potential readers were in large part the same people who could afford (or who did in fact have) a private library' – Cavallo, *History of Reading in the West*, 70 – i.e. a limited class.

52. Horace *Epistle* 1.3.15.

53. Ovid *Tristia* 3.1.67.

54. e.g. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 102 – the library 'indirectly aided the buyers of books, for when they ordered a title from a bookseller that he did not have in stock he could sent his scribe to make a copy'.

55. Quintilian 10.1.57. But Quintilian confirms his own use of libraries, if negatively, when he denies that in his preparations he has been searching whole libraries (10.1.104).

56. J.P. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind* (Routledge, 1997), 42-71, casts doubt on whether the Romans made, or could make, lists either alphabetically or numerically. That would dispose of the notion of cataloguing altogether.

57. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 106.

58. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 88.

59. Small, *Wax Tablets of the* Mind, 150 and 136. Medieval libraries, she points out, did not have tables either. Small also asserts (45) that 'the precise arrangement of books in a classical library is virtually unascertainable'.

60. Discussed by Cavallo, *History of Reading in the West*, 70.

61. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, 46.

62. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 107.

63. Fronto 4.5. From the library of Tiberius.

64. Aulaus Gellius 19.5: *Promit e biblioteca Tiburti … Aristotelis librum eumque ad nos adfert.*

65. Martial, Preface to Book 12: *bibliothecas, theatra, convectus*.

66. e.g. Aulus Gellius 9.14.3, 11.17, 13.20, 16.8.2, 18.5.11, 18.9.5, 19.5.4.

67. A reference at *Tristia* 1.7.1-4 seems to imply this.

68. Ovid *Tristia* 3.1.79-80. He expresses the same hope at *From Pontus* 1.1.5-10.

69. A.J. Marshall, 'Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome', *Phoenix* 30 (1976).

70. Marshall, 'Library Resources', 262.

71. e.g. Tiberius' 50-foot statue (Suetonius *Tiberius* 74).

72. 'Such libraries … when founded by the emperor, [were] an attempt on the part of the power structure to concentrate and appropriate written culture' – Cavallo, *History of Reading in the West*, 70.

73. 'It seems probable that the transmission of Latin literature as it has come down to us was to some degree dependent on copies conserved in libraries – E.J. Kenney in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1982), 25. 'From where else would the monks of northern monasteries … have bought their manuscripts?' – T. Shippey, reviewing *The Anglo-Saxon Library* by M. Lapidge (Oxford, 2006) in *London Review of Books*, 8 June 2006, 34.

8. Slavery as the enabling infrastructure of Roman literature

1. Seneca at one point refers to Cicero as an *auctor* of books: *De Beneficiis* 7.6.1.

2. e.g. Livy 10.46.7 *apud neminem veterem auctorem invenio* (I cannot find it in any older author); Cornelius Nepos *Themistocles* 10.4. *Thucydidem auctorem probamus* (we like Thucydides as an author).

3. Sextus Pompeius Festus, hardly a front-line author, uses *scriba* in this way in the late second century (Festus p. 333M).

4. Orellius *Collection of Latin Inscriptions* 243.7.

5. e.g. Cicero *Orator* 29 *venustissimus ille scriptor ac politissimus Lysias* (Lysias, that most graceful and polished author); Cicero *Brutus* 48 *auctor Thucydides* (the author Thucydides).

6. e.g. Tacitus *Annals* 15.36 [*Seneca*] … *advocatis scriptoribus pleraque tradidit* (Seneca called in his writers and dictated a lot of stuff).

7. Horace *Ars Poetica* 354.

8. e.g. Ovid *Tristia* 3.1.2 *lector amice* (dear reader); Cic. *Ad Familiares* 5.12.4 *nihil est aptius ad delectationem lectoris* (nothing is more suitable for pleasing the reader).

9. Quintilian 2.5.6.

10. e.g. Pliny *Letters* 9.17.3 *cum lector aut lyristes inductus est* (when a reader or lyre-player is called in); Suetonius *Augustus* 78.2 *lectoribus aut fabulatoribus arcessitis* (when the readers and story-tellers come in) – an interesting social equation of the 'reader' with the 'story teller'.

11. Cicero *De Oratore* 1.136.

12. Cornelius Nepos *Atticus* 13.3.

13. Also referred to by Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 1.12.4 and Aulus Gellius 18.5.5 (where Gellius refers to an *anagnôstês* (reader) whose interpretation of a text is contested by Gellius' friends – again, an interesting comment on the skilled task that a professional – if possibly slave or ex-slave – reader was expected to perform).

14. See Chapter 1 and N. Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', *Greece & Rome* 42 no. 1 (1995). (Not about Roman public entertainments.) The Latin term is *lippitudo* – see for example Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 8.13.1.

15. *Letters* 9.17.3.

16. G. Hendrickson, 'Ancient Reading', *Classical Journal* 25 (1929), 190. For example, Horace *Ars Poetica* 100 says that wherever his poems fly, they will excite the *animum auditoris* – the mind of the reader: Varro in *De Lingua Latina* 6.1 says that he will give more weight to the relationship between words than to the *auditori calumnianti* – readers' complaints.

17. Cicero *Letters to his Friends* (*Ad Familiares*) 16.21.

18. e.g. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 12.40.1.

19. e.g. Livy 38.55.8 where Livy refers to an error made by the *librarius* rather than the *scriptor* – an interesting distinction of Latin usage. 'The secretary, whether in shorthand or not, was an instrument of the active life', says Horsfall ('Rome without Spectacles', 51).

20. Orellius no. 2997.

21. Suetonius *Claudius* 28.

22. See A.K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier* (British Museum, 2003), passim.

23. Pliny *Letters* 3.5 and 9, plus Martial 14.208 and 10.62.

24. Quintilian 7.2.24.

25. This is particularly clear in the words of the digest of Iulius Paulus 29.1.40

– *miles notario suo testamentum scribendum notis dictavit* (the soldier dictated his will to his secretary in note form, to be written out).

26. Martial 5.51.2.

27. e.g. Quintilian 10.3 talks about the pros and cons of dictating to an *amanuensis*.

28. For a perceptive account of Roman-period slavery in general, see K. Hopkins, 'Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery', *Past and Present* 138 (1993), analysing the *Life of Aesop*, 'the only full-length biography of a slave surviving from classical antiquity … but a fiction'.

29. '*Lectores* were slaves or freed slaves, as was the rest of the support staff for literary activity and research (note-takers, clerks, copyists)' – R. Starr, 'Reading Aloud: Lectores and Roman Reading', *Classical Journal* 86 (1990-91), 338-9.

30. 'Lector and notarius mean that 24 hours per day are available for work, if their owner so wishes' – N. Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', 54.

31. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 1.12.

32. Cicero *Letters to his Friends* 5.9.2 and 13.77.3.

33. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 4.4.

34. Cornelius Nepos *Atticus* 13.4 – *pueri literatissimi* (very literate 'boys') – all of whom were born as slaves in the house and trained in the house in these skills.

35. Cicero *Letters to his Friends* 7.1.

36. Pliny *Letters* 8.1.2.

37. According to Fronto *De Feriis Alsiensibus* 3.1, where Niger is called in and told to fetch the emperor's books.

38. Suetonius *Virgil* 34.

39. See Mary Beard, 'Ciceronian Correspondences', in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress* (Oxford, 2002). Tiro is also the central narrator in Robert Harris's best-selling novel *Imperium*, published by Hutchinson in 2006, about Cicero.

40. Beard, 136.

41. Beard, 136-8.

42. Seneca *Epistle* 27.5.

43. Suetonius *Augustus* 78 records how Augustus summoned servants to read to him. The younger Pliny describes dinner readings (*Letters* 3.1 and 3.5).

44. Dio Chrysostom 18.6, where he gives advice on reading Menander and Euripides.

45. 'For aristocratic readers, lectores provided the ultimate experience of literary texts: a polished rendition in which the auditor (the hearer) could focus on the literary work and not the hard work of reading' – Starr, 'Reading Aloud', 343.

46. See Y. Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (English tr., Cornell, 1988), 62.

47. Explored by W. Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, 2000). For example, Martial 5.18 can refer to books he wrote as *libellos vernulas* (books wholly conceived by me) – *verna/vernula* being the Latin words for slaves born into the household, as opposed to bought in the slave market.

9. Getting into circulation

1. Vitruvius was a military engineer under Julius Caesar, and his work *De Architectura* is addressed to Augustus.

2. Marcus Porcius Cato, known as Cato the Elder or Cato the Censor, 234-149 BCE: his work *De Agri Cultura* survives intact, and he is regarded as the virtual founder of Roman prose writing.

3. Throughout this chapter the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G.W. Glare

(1976-82), is mainly relied upon, but supplemented by the late Victorian Lewis and Short *Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879).

4. Some of the many examples of 'writing' in the sense of composing are Juvenal 1.30 *saturam scribere* ('to write a satire'): Ovid *From Pontus* 4.13.19 *Getico scripsi sermone libellum* ('I have written a book in the local language'): Cicero *Archias* 25 *ei praemium tribui, sed ea condicione ne quid postea scriberet* (about a bad poet – 'I gave him money on condition he never wrote again').

5. e.g. Horace *Epistle* 1.6.50 *mercemur servum qui dictet nomina* – 'buy a slave to recite the names'.

6. e.g. Horace *Satire* 1.4.10 *saepe ducentos … versus dictabat* ('he often dictated 200 lines of verse'); Cicero *Letters to Quintus his brother* 3.1.19 *hoc inter cenam Tironi dictavi* – Cicero composed his letter over his lunch by dictating it to Tiro his secretary. Ovid says he lacks strength to dictate (*vires dictandi*) – *Tristia* 3.3.86. 'Dictation became so common that *dictare* came virtually to mean "to compose" as well as "to dictate" ' – R.J. Starr, 'Reading Aloud: *lectores* and Roman Reading', *Classical Journal* 86 (1990-91), 337. Quintilian 10.3 refers to the 'delights of dictating' (*dictandi deliciis*).

7. e.g. Ovid *Tristia* 4.10.128 *In toto plurimus orbe legor* ('I am the most widely read poet in the world'); Cicero *Archias* 23 *Graeca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus* ('Greek stuff is read in almost all countries').

8. For reading aloud, see e.g. Cicero *Brutus* 191 *convocatis auditoribus legeret eis … volumen suum* ('he read his book to his assembled listeners').

9. These Greek terms are analysed convincingly by B.A. van Groningen in 'Ekdosis', *Mnemosyne* 16 (1963), to which I am much indebted.

10. Horace in *Epistles* 1.20 warns his new book that 'when, having been through numerous dirty hands, you lose your attraction, you'll be left unnoticed, gathering maggots, or [worse still?] be banished to Utica'. A terrible fate, no doubt.

11. See Symmachus *Epistle* 1.31.

12. Suetonius *Claudius* 32.

13. Cicero *Letters to Friends* 7.33.

14. Preface to Book 1 of his treatise on oratory.

15. Pliny *Letters* 9.1.15.

16. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 12.40.1.

17. Quintilian's *Letter to Tryphon* 2.

18. Horace *Ars Poetica* 389.

19. Quintilian Loeb edition (Harvard, 2001), tr. D.A. Russell.

20. See for examples Tacitus' *Dialogue on Orators* 3.3 where Tacitus' friend Maternus is hurrying to bring about the *editio* of his book, its 'giving out'), Pliny *Letters* 1.2.5 (*ab editione non abhorrere* – 'not averse to letting people see it') 2.10.6 (where Pliny interestingly makes some distinction between *editio* and the later act of *emittere* – presumably between some informal handing round and a more formal issue of a finished text), 3.15.1 (checking to see if some books are *editione digni* – 'worthy of handing around') and (again) 9.1.15 (where he refers to *editionem paratam*, which I take to mean 'ready for distribution').

21. Quintilian 5.11.40.

22. Quintilian 12.10.55.

23. Seneca *De Beneficiis* 4.28.4.

24. Loeb edition (Harvard, 1935), tr. J.W. Basore.

25. Statius *Silvae* Preface to Book 4.

26. Loeb ed. (Harvard, 2003), tr. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey.

27. See n. 9 above.

10. *Effecte! Graviter! Cito! Nequiter! Euge! Beate!*

1. Quoted from Martial 2.27: roughly 'Masterly! Impressive! Fast pace! Wicked! Good stuff! Excellent!'

2. In preparing this chapter, I fully acknowledge my debt to E. Valette-Cagnac's *La Lecture à Rome* (Belin, Paris, 1997) with whose analysis of the *recitatio* I largely agree. I am also indebted to Florence Dupont's chapter 'Recitatio and the Reorganisation of the Space for Public Discourse', in T. Habinek and A. Schiesaro (eds), *The Roman Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, 1997), 55, and I have also consulted Dupont's book *The Invention of Literature* (English edn, Johns Hopkins, 1999). References to Dupont are to the chapter, unless the book is specified.

3. In 'Pour une histoire de la lecture', *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 16 (1977), 585, quoted by Cavallo (see next note).

4. G. Cavallo, *A History of Reading in the West* (Polity Press, 1999), 75.

5. L. Friedlaender, *Roman Life and Manners*, vol. 3 of English translation, 39-40. Friedlaender also says that the *recitatio* was 'reminiscent of the theatre' (41), which is much nearer the mark.

6. J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (Routledge, 1941), 195 and 200-1.

7. The 1970 edition (ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard) repeated almost verbatim the text of the 1949 edition, and the authorities cited for this view are, predictably, works of 1864, 1888, 1893, 1907 and 1922, mainly by German scholars. The author of the entry is Charles Favez.

8. The author of this entry is Michael Winterbottom.

9. A.N. Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny* (Oxford, 1966), 51. Similarly, E.J. Kenney in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1982) refers to the *recitatio* as 'preliminary publication', and suggests that what he calls 'professional writers' (another anachronism) used the *recitatio* as 'primarily a form of advertisement or puffing' (12).

10. C. Newlands, *Statius Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge, 2002), 277.

11. D. Markus, 'Performing the Book: the Recital of Epic in First Century Rome' (*Classical Antiquity* 19, 2000) quotes Horace *Ars Poetica* 438 as authority for this. But all Horace tells us is that, if you were to read (*recitares*) something to one Quintilius, he would demand corrections and, if not done, advise you to delete it. This could easily be just an informal exchange between friends.

12. O.A.W. Dilke for example in *Roman Books* (Elmete, 1977), 20 asks whether recitations did not actually 'thwart the sale and circulation of book' on an analogy with the view, current in the 1960s and 1970s, that television would kill off the book. Of course, it has not, though it may have changed the nature of the book market.

13. Raymond Starr, 'The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World' *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1987).

14. Seneca *Controversiae* 4 preface 2. Seneca's words about Pollio are *Primus omnium Romanorum advocatis hominibus scripta sua recitavit* ('He was the first of all the Romans to read aloud to an invited audience').

15. Macrobius *Saturnalia* 2.4.21.

16. Pliny *Natural History* 7.115.

17. Julius Caesar planned it, but was interrupted by assassination.

18. Horace *Satires* 1.4.71ff.

19. Juvenal *Satires* 1.17-18 'When you find hordes of poets on each street crossing, it's misplaced kindness to refrain from writing'.

20. Horace *Ars Poetica* 474.

21. See A. Dalzell 'C. Asinius Pollio', *Hermathena* 86 (1955).
22. Suetonius *Augustus* 89.3.
23. e.g. Pliny *Letters* 7.17, but he often does not specify.
24. Suetonius *Grammatici* 2.
25. A.E. Austin, *Cato the Censor* (Oxford, 1978).
26. A.S. Gratwick, in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2, 153.
27. The only secure reference to this college is Valerius Maximus 3.7.11. The analysis and comment are by N. Horsfall 'The Collegium Poetarum', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 23 (1976), 79-98.
28. See *Index Verborum Ciceronis Epistolarum* (Illinois, 1938) – an astonishing pre-computer exercise, listing all the words used in Cicero's letters.
29. e.g. several refs in *De Domo Sua*, such as (at 9) *litteras in contione recitasti* ('you read the letters out loud in a court') and *in contione recitari* ('to be read in a court').
30. Horace *Satires* 1.4.73, perhaps dating to 35 BCE.
31. Cicero *De Officiis* 11.47 – 'the poets all want their work to be tested on the crowd, so they can correct anything widely disliked'.
32. Cicero *Ad Atticum* 16.11.1 and 15.14.4 – Cicero says he awaits the bits of wax with trepidation.
33. e.g. Horace *Satires* 1.4.73 again, where he also says he does give readings, but not just to anyone, but only to friends – but that was the point of the *recitatio*.
34. Suetonius *Life of Virgil* 27 and 32. Aulus Gellius 6.20.1 refers to verses that were *recitatos atque editos* by Virgil – 'read out and issued'.
35. Ovid *Tristia* 4.1.89-94, where Ovid says that there is nobody to whom I can recite (*recitem*) my verses, or who can receive my words *auribus suis* – with their ears. Ovid also says that in exile he is 'almost a Getic poet', having written a small book in the Getic language which he then read out to local people, and when he got to the end, they nodded and murmured i.e. it was at least a quasi-*recitatio*. Earlier, he moans that there is nobody *cui recitem* – nobody he can give a *recitatio* to except these 'yellow-haired Coralli' (Ovid *Letters from Pontus* 4.2.27ff. and 4.13).
36. Pliny 3.7.5 – Pliny says that Silius wrote with greater care than talent.
37. Pliny 1.13.
38. Pliny 5.17. Pliny gives the poem a Greek title, '*katestêrismôn*' – 'Of things among the stars'.
39. e.g. Martial 2.6.5. See discussion in R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons* (Brill, 2002), ch. 2.
40. e.g. Statius *Silvae* 5.2.160-3 and Juvenal *Satires* 7.82-6.
41. The Athenaeum was 'an assembly hall for rhetorical and poetical declamations … attached was a large library' – L. Richardson *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Johns Hopkins, 1992). Its location is unknown. It is mentioned by the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (*SHA*) as still there in the mid-third century, so it had a long-ish life in use.
42. See Benjamin Todd Lee, *Apuleius' Florides – a Commentary* (De Gruyter, 2005) on Philemon and this story. Other Roman writers say that Philemon died of laughter. There is no evidence that the plays of the New Comedy by Menander, Philemon etc. were ever recited by the poet in an auditorium, so Apuleius was probably adapting the story to the norms of his own day, no doubt to further his own claims as a *recitator*.
43. Contribution by Charles Favez, under '*recitatio*'.
44. The standard if much criticised 1830 edition by Kühn, in Greek and Latin, is 20 thick volumes.

45. See again Charles Favez in the 1970 *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

46. See S. Hoffer, *The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger* (Scholars Press, 1999) for a discussion of the political context of Pliny's letters.

47. 'Latin authors did not write books, but texts which became works at the end of a journey' – Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 58

48. 'All this was a far cry from the romantic vision of the solitary creator' – Dupont, *Invention of Literature*, 227.

49. This schema of stages is adapted from Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 144. Valette-Cagnac in turn acknowledges her debt to Starr's discussion in 'Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World'. I acknowledge my debt to both.

50. By T. Dorandi in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 87 (1991), 11-33.

51. Catullus 42 and 50.

52. Quintilian 10.3.

53. Horace *Ars Poetica* 293.

54. Cicero refers to the *stilus* as 'the best and most excellent creator and teacher of speaking' – Cicero *De Oratore* 1.150.

55. Pliny *Letters* 8.9.

56. Pliny *Letters* 3.18. See also *Letters* 8.21 for a two-day *recitatio* and 4.27 for a three-day session.

57. A.N. Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny*, comments on the above letter (3.18) that 'usually two sessions seem to be the most that could be endured [*sic*] … If he read the Panegyric in its present form in three sessions, he can hardly have taken less than 1.5 to 2 hours for each, though others allow only 3 hours for the whole job, and conclude than an hour was the normal length of a recitation. They underestimate the toughness of the Roman audience.' Elsewhere, on *Letters* 6.17, Sherwin-White says that Pliny split his own recitations into short sessions of two or three hours. Syme says (*Tacitus*, 94) is that the Panegyric would have taken three hours to declaim in its present form: 'three hours of intensive glorification would be an inhuman ordeal for the most patient of rulers'. But of course Trajan only sat through the first, shorter version. How tactful of Pliny.

58. Quintilian Preface to Book 1.

59. Quintilian uses the verb *efflagito* to 'ask for insistently'.

60. As supposed by one editor: P.T. Eden, *Apocolocyntosis* (Cambridge, 1984), 8 and 13: he also supposes it to have been a 'miming recital'.

61. Pliny 2.3.8.

62. Pliny 5.8 says that 'oratory and history have much in common'. Aristides in the second century CE remarked that 'historians fall between orators and poets' (Aristides *Orations* 49) and in the sixth century Agathias said that 'there is no great gulf between poetry and historiography' (Agathias *Preface* 12). See A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (Croom Helm, 1988).

63. Seneca *Letters to Lucilius* 95.2 – '*recita, recita*'.

64. Suetonius *Claudius* 41.

65. Pliny *Letters* 9.27.

66. Lucian *Historia* 10.

67. R. Mayer (ed.), *Tacitus' Dialogus de Oratoribus* (Dialogue on Orators) (Cambridge, 2001).

68. Pliny *Natural History* Book 1, Preface 6.

69. See Tacitus *Dialogus* 9.3, where Tacitus describes a poetry recital by Bassus, and the costs associated with it.

70. Persius *Satire* 1.1.15-23. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* tells us that the

lumbus ('loins') was regarded as the 'seat of sexual excitement', while *scalpo* means 'scratching or drawing the nails across – even amorously'. No wonder, according to Persius, the sons of Rome could be seen to *trepidare* – go all a-tremble.

71. Pliny *Letters* 9.34.

72. 'It is likely that some *recitationes* were in effect 'doubled-up' by an actor (pantomime) whose purpose was to facilitate comprehension … [this] reproduced the "doubling" that characterised the theatre of that time' – Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 119. She recalls the example of Nero, who sang and played the lyre – but an actor (*hypocrita*) mimed the action.

73. What he says is: *Ipse nescio quid illo legente interim faciam, sedeam defixus et mutus et similis otioso, an ut quidam, quae pronuntiabit, murmure oculis manus prosequar*.

74. Pliny *Letters* 2.19.

75. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 118.

76. See Persius *Satire* 1.1, as above, and Pliny *Letters* 5.17 for Pliny's very physical reaction, as part of the audience, to Piso's *recitatio*. 'The reader of literary texts imposed himself physically' – Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 117.

77. Suetonius *Virgil* 29.

78. 'The "recitatio" needed the body of the listener in order to resonate' – Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 133.

79. Plutarch *De Audiendo* 45.

80. Pliny *Letters* 2.10.6.

81. *Clamor* – clamour? – see Pliny *Letters* 1.13.3.

82. Pliny *Letters* 1.13, 2.14 and 6.17.

83. See n. 1.

84. Pliny *Letters* 6.17.2.

85. Juvenal *Satires* 1.1-18.

86. Pliny *Letters* 2.14.

87. Quoted by Charles Favez in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1949 edn, under 'recitatio'.

88. Pliny *Letters* 2.10 refers to both the *clamor* and the *silentium* of the event.

89. Pliny *Letters* 1.13.3.

90. Suetonius *Claudius* 41.

91. 'Audiences were 'more eager for immediate gratification than attentive to larger questions … or desirous of food for thought' – E.J. Kenney in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2, 12.

92. Pliny *Letters* 5.17.

93. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 153. 'The Literature of antiquity, which functions entirely on the principle of imitation, does not hold originality as a virtue.'

94. See Pliny's description of his uncle's working method (Pliny *Letters* 3.5). The elder Pliny bequeathed 160 notebooks full of passages selected from other authors. A critic might describe Roman authors (prose ones, at any rate) as 'cut-and-paste merchants'.

95. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 167 and 164, respectively.

96. 'Reading out loud [at a *recitatio*] and publication are just two aspects of one and the same act' – Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome*, 123.

11. Literature of the voice

1. Petronius *Satyricon* 89-91 and 124. I am indebted to F. Dupont, *The Invention of Literature* (Johns Hopkins, 1999), 237ff. for drawing attention to this illustrative

story. In preparing this chapter I am much indebted to F. Dupont and to the following authors: W.A. Johnson, 'Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity', *AJP* 121 (2000); J. Svenbro, *Phrasiklea: an Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (Cornell, 1993); R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992); E. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome* (Belin, 1997); H. Inglebert et al., *Histoire de la Civilisation Romaine* (Presses Universitaires de Paris, 2005).

2. Lucian *The Ignorant Bookcollector* 29 – written around 170 CE. Lucian was by then a leading intellectual of his day, but his sneering at a (presumably) recognisable victim hardly does him credit.

3. See *Time Out* guide to Marrakech 2007. The Place is one of UNESCO's 19 'masterpieces of the oral heritage of mankind', and UNESCO is trying to preserve the art of the halakis by recording many of their stories and offering them on the Internet.

4. Horace *Satires* 1.4.

5. Juvenal *Satire* 1.17-18.

6. Dio Chrysostom 20.10.

7. Suetonius *Grammatici* 2.4: *in magna frequentia.*

8. Gellius 3, 4, 13, 18 and 20.

9. Pliny *Letters* 2.20. The words are sometimes taken to be a cross-reference to *The Golden Ass.*

10. See discussion by T.P. Wiseman, 'Poets and Patrons in Late Republican Rome', in B.K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Texas, 1982), 36-8.

11. Seneca *Letters* 33.9: *Quid est quare et audiam quod legere possum? Multum … viva vox facit.*

12. G.L. Hendrickson as long ago as 1929 (in *CJ* 25 – 'Ancient Reading') pointed to 'the apparent use of the word "to hear" (*akouein, audire*) in the sense of "to read" – in Latin *auditor* is often "the reader" with the same possibility of ambiguity … as to whether the reader hears his own voice or the voice of another'.

13. E. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rome* (Belin, 1997), 161 and 166.

14. See Aulus Gellius 3.19, 2.22; Martial 3.50; Pliny *Letters* 9.17.3.

15. Gellius 3.1.

16. Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992). It all began with the famous 'Parry-Lord thesis' based on research by Parry and Lord among illiterate bards in former Jugoslavia, which showed how these men could both recite and compose huge tracts of verse from memory, and it shattered the previous idea of a highly literate early Greece – see Thomas, 29, and Milman Parry, *L'Epithète Traditionelle dans Homère* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1928). Since then there has been a vigorous half-century or more of research that has demonstrated that Greece was a profoundly oral society which did not need writing as a precondition of creating its great poems and plays, from Homer onwards, and Plato's denunciation of writing in *Phaedrus* (247A-248E) has become famous. Even so, some have tried to date the point at which (allegedly) writing gained at least equality with the spoken word in Greece (sometime soon after Plato?) and perhaps as a result of that, the question of oral v. written has been left comparatively open, or unproven, in regard to Rome.

17. *On Interpretation* 1.

18. Svenbro, *Phrasiklea*, 45 and 2-4.

19. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 3 and 5. See also G. Woolf, 'Power and the Spread of Writing in the West', in A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient Wor*ld (Cambridge, 1994), 84, where he remarks that 'for the

Greeks writing was invented and imported by barbarians, and most Roman accounts followed in that tradition. Even if *litterae* were thought in some contexts to be connected with civilised knowledge, barbarians were distinguished from civilised men by language.'

20. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 158-9.

21. See W.V. Harris in *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard, 1989) and in J. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Suppl. 3 (1991).

22. e.g. on a tile found at Silchester, bearing Virgil's words *conticuere omnes* (everyone fell quiet) – the opening of Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, or *arma virumque cano* (I sing of arms and the man – the opening of Book 1) found as a graffito on a wall of Pompeii – both memories of schooldays?

23. F. Dupont, *L'Acteur Roi* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), 115.

24. Third revised edition 2003, under 'Music', contributor A.D. Barker.

25. N. Horsfall, *The Culture of the Roman Plebs*, 37.

26. Quintilian 1.10.9-33.

27. The use of acclamation is thoroughly discussed and illustrated by G.S. Aldrete in *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, 1999).

28. See D. Potter, 'Performance, Power and Justice in the High Empire', in W.J. Slater (ed.), *Roman Theatre and Society* (Michigan, 1996), to which I owe the following observations.

29. Potter, 'Performance, Power and Justice', 138; Suetonius *Caligula* 6.1.

30. Potter, 'Performance, Power and Justice', 138; Josephus *Bellum Judaicum* (The Jewish War) 7.71 and 7.126.

31. Dio 72.20.2, 73.2.3 and 78.18.2 for these acclamations.

32. Dio 75.4.4.

33. Dio 78.20.2.

34. Ovid *Fasti* 1.6.13.

35. Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 48.10.

36. For example, Pliny's panegyric to emperor Trajan.

37. See Cicero *Pro Sestio* 120-3.

38. See Cicero *Pro Roscio* (speech in defence of Roscius charged with fraud), and Cicero *De Natura Deorum* (On the Nature of the Gods) 1.79, where he tells us that Roscius had a bad squint – no drawback for a masked Roman actor, it seems.

39. *Philologus* 82 (1927), in German, but previously published in 1921 in Hungarian, and drawing on evidence published by E. Norden in 1915 in Berlin (I like Balogh's title, if not the argument).

40. Augustine *Confessions* 6.3.

41. Augustine was son of Patricius, a modest town-councillor of 'pagan' beliefs who lived in Thagaste in what is now Algeria.

42. The various explanations offered are discussed by W. Johnson, 'Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity', *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000), 593ff.

43. e.g. G.L. Hendrickson, 'Ancient Reading', *Classical Journal* 25 (1929); W.P. Clark, 'Ancient Reading', *Classical Journal* 26 (1931); A.K. Gavrilov with M.F. Burnyeat, 'Techniques of Reading in Classical Antiquity', *Classical Quarterly* 47 **(**1997). Gavrilov adds the interesting idea that reading aloud itself necessitates an ability to read silently, because to make proper sense of the text-as-river-of-letters you had to read ahead (silently) while reading aloud the preceding words.

44. Bernard Knox, 'Silent Reading in Antiquity', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* (1968), esp. 435.

45. Svenbro goes further. Speaking about Greece, he says, 'It seems logical to

assume that reading aloud was the basic form of reading and that silent reading was derived from it at a later date' (*Phrasiklea*, 47).

46. Quintilian 1.8.

47. Quintilian 1.8.1-3.

48. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1003b.

49. Plutarch *On Music* 1131D.

50. 'The syllable remained the major operative unit for reading in antiquity' – J.P. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind* (Routledge, 1997), 62.

51. See *Oxford Latin Dictionary* under 'sententia'. This dictionary allows as a possible meaning 'a self-contained group of words, a sentence or clause': but the examples given relate, not to a grammatical structure, but to a matter under review by the author/speaker.

52. Small, *Wax Tablets*, 24.

53. Quintilian 1.10.

54. Cicero *Orator* 56.

55. Quintilian 11.3.

56. *Ad Herennium* 3.15.26. See Loeb edn (Harvard, 1954), tr. H. Caplan.

57. Quintilian 11.3.92.

58. See again G.S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, 1999).

59. T. Habinek, *The World of Roman Song* (Johns Hopkins, 2005), 211.

60. Quintilian 1.5.33. For a discussion of 'right language' and its connection with truth, see T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 169-82.

61. Quintilian 11.3.60.

62. See *Oxford Latin Dictionary* under these (somewhat slippery) Latin terms.

63. Quintilian 9.4.61.

64. Quintilian 10.1.31.

65. Discussed by Habinek, *World of Roman Song*, passim. 'The Latin language differentiates between everyday speech and speech made special through metre, diction, accompanying bodily movement or performance in a ritual context … it is useful to think in terms of a systematic distinction between everyday and ritualised speech … even writing … will at times serve as a mode of ritualisation … the boundary between oral and written … ends up being less important than the ongoing negotiation between the everyday and the special' (1-2).

66. Cicero *Orator* 27 – *ululanti voce*.

67. Pliny *Letters* 4.19.4 and 7.4.

68. Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 3.45.

69. E.J. Kenney, *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1982), 12.

70. Quoted by Quintilian 1.8.2.

71. Suetonius *Life of Virgil* 16 and 29. Dionysius Thrax *Ars Grammatica* (The Art of Grammar) 2.

72. Memory is discussed in three surviving Roman texts: Quintilian, Cicero's *De Oratore* (About the Orator), and the anonymous (but once attributed to Cicero) *Ad Herennium*.

73. Seneca *Controversiae* 1 and 2 Preface.

74. Augustine *De Anima* 4.7.

75. See especially *Ad Herennium* 3.17-18.

76. Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987), 180.

77. See Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 159.

78. M. Carruthers, *Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990), 91 and 119 for these three similes.

79. Johnson, 'Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity', 620.

80. Habinek, *The World of Roman Song*, 3 – contrasted with literature as a 'free-floating system of signs and texts'.

81. The analogy with a music score was first (as far as I know) suggested by Hendrickson in 1929, but has been repeated by others, e.g. K. Quinn, *ANRW* 30.1 (1982), 90 and E.J. Kenney in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature,* vol. 2, 12. I am reminded here of a Russian poet whom I met who gave public readings of his poems in Soviet Moscow (a time when it was dangerous to do so) and read each poem twice, once 'for the music' and once for the sense.

82. What Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 126, calls 'the fluid relationship between written text and oral performance'.

83. Martial 6.60, 7.79 and 9.81.

84. I am grateful to Professor William Fitzgerald of Kings College, London, for pointing out to me this Virgilian effect.

85. Comment by L.P. Wilkinson in vol. 2, 323.

86. This is well discussed by R. Thomas in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn, repeated in the 2004 *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation*, under 'Orality'.

87. P. Saenger, in *Spaces Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, 1997), 122.

88. W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Methuen, 1982), views orality 'as the reverse of literacy – it engenders a warm communal, uncritical, non-rational society which lacks a sense of the individual or of individual thought, highly traditional' (quoted by Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 26).

89. Notably by Goody.

90. 'At the center of culture [Rome] placed the dead, deathmask-books that spoke through the breath of the living' – Dupont, *Invention of Literature*, 249. My disagreement with this striking formulation is not that the written text was alive rather than dead, but that the Romans precisely did *not* place the written-text-as-book at the centre of culture.

91. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 119; Ambrose *Commentary on Luke* iv.5.

92. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 109: well discussed by Dupont, *Invention of Literature*, 9ff.

93. Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 118.

12. The battle for survival

1. Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 10.2 refers to the *fama recitationum* – the reputation, or lack of it, arising from such readings.

2. See Horace's famous lines in *Odes* 3.30 *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* – 'I have sought [to create] a monument more lasting than bronze'. Pliny 2.9.4 refers to a work as a 'monument by which you can be freed from mortality'. F. Dupont, *The Invention of Literature* (Johns Hopkins, 1999), 58, says that this puts the literary work on a par with a tomb, but I think Pliny (and Horace) meant something more positive than that. The potential immortality bestowed on a writer by a successful composition – which became a *monumentum* to his life – is after all a commonplace among Roman authors. See also Martial 10.2.12, Ovid *Tristia* 3.3.78, and Statius *Silvae* 3.3.31-4. So much so that *monu-*

mentum became a virtual synonym for a book or work of history, e.g. at Cicero *De Oratore* 1.201.

3. Horace *Ars Poetica* 389-90.

4. Martial 1.3.

5. Catullus 36.1.

6. Martial 3.2 and 3.86.

7. Horace *Epistle* 1.13.

8. Horace *Epistle* 1.20: 'Having been through numerous dirty hands … in old age you'll be teaching children how to read in the outer suburbs.'

9. Well discussed in E. Valette-Cagnac, *La Lecture à Rom*e (Berlin, 1997), 146-7. See Martial 1.66 and Horace *Epistle* 1.20 (as if spoken to his book): 'Goodbye. When you've gone, there's no way back.'

10. In his article 'The Poet as Pimp: Elegiac Seduction in the Time of Augustus' (*Arethusa* 33: 2 (2000), 217-40), T. Fear considers a variant on this theme – the poem as prostitute and the poet as pimp under the imperial regime – 'prostitution serves as a powerful metaphor for patronized poets'. The idea that publication = prostitution is not unique to Rome. Wittmann refers to the 'necessity of self-prostitution on the market before an anonymous public' in relation to the eighteenth century (R. Wittmann in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (ed.), *A History of Reading in the West* (Cambridge, 1999) – quotation cited by W. Fitzgerald, *Martial: The World of the Epigram* (Chicago, 2007), 139.

11. Pliny *Letters* 2.10.

12. See Martial 3.2 *Faustini fugis in sinum? Sapisti* ('Are you taking refuge in Faustus' pocket? – how wise!'), and Martial 3.1. and 5.1. for *verna*.

13. Cicero *Letters to Quintus* 3.5.6.

14. Seneca *De Ira* (On Anger) 2.26.2.

15. Martial 11.1: also Horace *Epistle* 1.20.

16. Strabo 13.1.54. One wonders how much of Aristotle's library was left for Sulla later to carry off as war booty to Rome.

17. Pliny *Natural History* 13.3 and Martial 3.2.7.

18. Vitruvius *On Architecture* 6.4.1 and 6.5.2.

19. See Chapter 7 on Roman libraries and in particular, R. Barnes, 'Cloistered Bookworms in the Chicken-Coop of the Muses: the Ancient Library of Alexandra', in R. MacLeod (ed.), *The Library of Alexandria* (I.B. Tauris, 2000).

20. Anecdote in Galen's Preface to his *About My Own Books* (Galen XIX.8-48 in Kühn's edition).

21. In *About My Own Books.*

22. For shorthand see Appendix A.

23. This matter is discussed by Ann Ellis Hanson in 'Galen, Author and Critic', *Aporemata*, Band 2 (Göttingen, 1998), 22.

24. See Quintilian's letter to Tryphon at the beginning of his work, and Galen in *About My Own Books.*

25. Again, in *About My Own Books.*

26. Quintilian, Preface to Book 1.

27. e.g. at Martial 1.52. The *plaga* was a net, and the *plagiarius* one who wielded the net to catch things, as a hunter, kidnapper or bounty-hunter (as of runaway slaves): hence one who netted your work to make it his own.

28. Not once, but three times – see Martial 1.29, 1.38 and 1.72. But perhaps Fidentinus is a composite, symbolic figure, representing all plagiarists. He is discussed by Fitzgerald, *Martial: The World of the Epigram*, who asks (95) 'What were the conventions when you recited poems other than your own, or mixtures of the two?'

29. Martial 2.20.

30. Martial 1.66.

31. See Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 3.3. Varro's 21 are supposed to be the same as those preserved in the manuscript tradition.

32. See Fronto's enthusiasm for *verba inspirata atque inopinata* (inspired and unexpected words) and *multa veterum carminum memoria* (frequent recall of old compositions) as a way to find them (*Letters to Marcus Caesar* 4.3.4) and his shared passion with Aulus Gellius for *rariora verba* (quite rare words) – Gellius 19.8.

33. This periodisation of Latin literature by metals is criticised in Chapter 1.

34. Lived *c.* 330-395 CE – regarded as last great Latin historian of the Roman Empire.

35. Lived 354-430 CE.

36. Ammianus Marcellinus 28.4.18.

37. Consul in 226 CE and the author of lives of twelve emperors, following on from Suetonius.

38. Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire* (Fontana, 1993) attributes their interest to 'prurient content' and 'taste for the sensational' (19 and 158). But she adds that 'despite Ammianus' scorn, a number of these Roman aristocrats did interest themselves in the copying of earlier Latin literature, mainly the standard works by Virgil, Horace, Terence, Livy and Quintilian, but also the less commonly read Silver Latin authors Martial, Juvenal and Persius … we must certainly think in terms of a literary fashion' (158).

39. Changing taste in literature is discussed by, among others, D. Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian* (Routledge, 1999), 34; in L.D. Reynolds (ed.), *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford, 1983); by E. Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture from Cicero to Apuleius* (Baltimore, 1996).

40. See for example B. Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne* (Cambridge, 1994) 'Our study begins just as the transcription of literary texts from papyrus to parchment is coming to an end. It is well known how selective this process was, especially for classical Latin literature' (1).

41. L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford, 1974), 101. This slenderness is however not unique to Latin literature. The British Library contains the only surviving copy of the late fourteenth-century romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the sole extant copy of *Beowulf*. See F. Kermode, *London Review of Books*, 8 March 2007, 37.

13. Bookburning and treason

1. See Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power 1933-39* (Penguin, 2005), 158 and 170: 'Libraries and bookshops were being raided … rooting out books by Jewish pacifists, Marxists and other proscribed authors … by December 1933 over a thousand titles had been banned … after the book-burning in university towns on 10 May 1933, the book trade journal issued a blacklist of 300 titles from 139 authors in the field of literature … 4,100 different printed works were banned by a total of 40 different censorship bodies in 1934.'

2. 'The history of the intentional burning of books extends from the Fifth Century BC to the present day', remarked C.A. Forbes in 'Books for the Burning', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 67 (1936) a year when the Nazi scenes were fresh in his and many minds. The online Wikipedia (accessed August 2007) lists at least 40 well-known cases of book burning in history. Ovid's books were burnt (again) by Savonarola; 15 tons of 'lewd' books were burnt in New

York in the 1870s; in 1992 Serbian nationalists set fire to the Sarajevo Oriental Institute library – 'the largest single act of book-burning in modern history'.

3. Tacitus *Agricola*, tr. H. Mattingly (Penguin, 1948).

4. K. Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome* (Cambridge, 2001), 220. S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience* (Harvard, 1994), 106 agrees that 'Tacitus sometimes magnifies the role that the victims' literary production has played in ensuring their punishment'.

5. Varro as reported by Lactantius *Institutiones Divinae* (Divine Instructions) 1.60.10ff.

6. Tacitus *Annals* 6.124, Dio 54.17.2, Pliny *NH* 13.27.83.

7. Rutilius Numatianus *De Reditu Suo* (About My Return) 2.52.

8. Livy 39.16.8.

9. Livy 40.29 and also Pliny *Natural History* 13.84-7.

10. Suetonius *Augustus* 31.1.

11. Dio 57.18.5.

12. Dio 77.7.3.

13. Suidas under 'Diocletian'.

14. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 8.20.1 plus Suidas under 'Jovian'.

15. G.W. Clarke 'The Burning of Books and Catullus 36', *Latomus* 27 (1968), 576. Clarke also refers (578) to the 'contagious' powers of magic books. Not only magic books could be contagious.

16. Apuleius *Apologia* 10.

17. Suetonius *Virgil* 38 and Pliny *Natural History* 7.114.

18. Ovid *Tristia* 1.7.16 and 4.10.61-4. For a discussion of this, see J. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (Berkeley, 1964). S. Hinds, 'Booking the Return Trip: Ovid and Tristia 1', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 31 (1985), 21-4, suggests that the alleged burning was part of an elaborate literary device, or extended ring composition, so not to be taken too seriously. But that does not mean that it did not happen.

19. Elder Seneca *Controversiae* 10.5.22 and Seneca *De Ira* (On Anger) 3.23.6.

20. *Pluribus exemplis scripta fuisse reor* – I think it had been written out in a number of copies – he says (*Tristia* 1.7.24).

21. Dio 56.27.1.

22. Seneca *Controversiae* 10.pref 5-8. For both Labienus and Severus, see also Suetonius *Caligula* 16, where Suetonius only says that their books had been 'banned' – but how? See also *Caligula* 15.4 for burning of court records.

23. Tacitus *Annals* 4.34.

24. Seneca *Controversiae* 10 pref. 3 and Suetonius *Tiberius* 61.

25. Tacitus *Annals* 14.49-50.

26. Tacitus *Agricola* 2.

27. Suetonius *Domitian* 8.3.

28. Ammianus Marcellinus 29.1.41.

29. Tacitus *Annals* 4.35, tr. M. Grant (Penguin, 1956).

30. Dio 57.244.

31. Tacitus *Annals* 14.49.

32. See Ovid *Tristia* 3.67-72.

33. Suetonius *Vespasian* 17-19.

34. Suetonius *Domitian* 2.2, tr. C. Edwards (Oxford World's Classics, 2000). Presumably he gave *recitationes*. See also Quintilian 10.1 for these *recitationes*. Tacitus says that Domitian's literary activities were merely a cover to avoid his brother (and then emperor) Titus' suspicions (*Histories* 4.86).

35. Well discussed in C. Salles, *The Rome of the Flavians* (Perrin, 2002).

36. 'Literary patronage was not only a necessary form of control and appropriation, but was index too of a writer's social force', and the spur for Domitian's new festivals was 'appropriation and control' – A.J. Boyle, 'Reading Flavian Rome', in A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominick (eds), *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Brill, 2003), 23. Boyle also remarks (21) on how Martial's opening four epigrams (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4) address successively the issue of writing, reading, reception and censorship under Domitian.

37. The connection between literature and power was later symbolised when Diocletian, about to be proclaimed emperor at Nicomedia in 284 CE, personally stabbed to death his main rival, Aper, the praetorian prefect, in full view of the assembled troops – and quoted Virgil as he did so. See *SHA* (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*) *Life of Carus* 13.3. What Diocletian said, it is reported there, was *Gloriare, Aper, Aeneae magni dextra cadis* – 'be proud, Aper, that you fall by the right hand of the great Aeneas' – but Aper probably didn't appreciate the literary joke.

38. Ovid *Tristia* 2.103-4. *Cur aliquid vidi? Cur noxia lumina feci?* 'Why did I see something? Why did I make my eyes guilty?' Also at *Tristia* 3.5.49.

39. Tacitus *Histories* 1.2.1.

40. Horace *Odes* 2.1.6. See J. Henderson, *Fighting for Rome* (Cambridge, 1998), 108-62 on the Pollio Ode. 'The word "periculosa" labels the paradox of civil war's deceptively trivial "dice-box full of caprice" where every throw is lethal' (117).

41. Tacitus *Histories* 1.1.4.

42. Tacitus *Annals* 4.32-3. See J. Moles, 'Cry Freedom', *Histos* (online journal), vol. 2 (1998) on this passage. 'The Annals is a radically and profoundly libertarian text … Does this paper entail Tacitus' rejection of the principate? The answer is yes and no … but far more yes than no.'

43. Ammianus Marcellinus 26.1.

44. Pliny *Letters* 5.8.12. See also *Letters* 9.19 and 9.27.

45. Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 2-3.

46. Dio 67.12.5.

47. Pliny *Letters* 9.27.

48. Tacitus *Annals* 1.70.

49. Freudenburg, *Satires*, 220.

50. Suetonius *Tiberius* 61.3, tr. Catharine Edwards (Oxford World's Classics, 2000).

51. Tacitus *Annals* 4.34.

52. Tacitus *Annals* 6.28.

53. Tacitus *Annals* 38.

54. Suetonius' *Life of Lucan* 332-3. F. Ahl, *Lucan: an Introduction* (Cornell, 1976) says 'surely Lucan represented a political as well as a literary threat to Nero … the highly political nature of the Pharsalia, with its outspoken hostility to Caesarism, surely adds confirmatory testimony'.

55. For these cases, see Tacitus *Annals* 14.49, 15.46-70, 16.28.

56. See Tacitus *Agricola* 2 for both these victims of Domitian, plus Pliny *Letters* 3.11.

57. Suetonius *Domitian* 10.1.

58. Dio Chrystostom 13.1. He was, in the Greek, a *sumboulon*.

59. The suffect or 'substitute' consuls took over in the later part of the year, after the 'primary' consuls, who gave their names to the year in order to identify it, stood down.

60. For example, W. Fitzgerald, *Martial: the World of the Epigram* (Chicago,

2007), 33 suggests that Domitian was not totally paranoid in getting suspicious about an epigram by Euenus of Ascalon about a vine reminding the goat that is eating it that it will provide the wine when the goat is sacrificed.

14. Scripts for all classes

1. Story told by Dio Cassius 56.47.2.

2. R. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (Routledge, 1991), 138 suggests that a connection between Roman mime and the much later *commedia dell' arte* in Italy is 'not altogether whimsical'.

3. Pliny *Letters* 7.24.

4. The modern meaning of the terms 'mime' and 'pantomime' is quite recent, though drawing on much older traditions. Pantomime, as a Christmas show for children with two-way gender reversals and a panto-horse, dates to Victorian Britain, and modern mime no further back than 1927, when Jacques Copeau founded a mime school in Paris. See relevant entries in Wikipedia and A. Lust, *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau* (Scarecrow Press, 2000).

5. Ismene Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence: Lucian and Pantomime Dancing* (Duckworth, 2007).

6. Livy 7.2.8.

7. For Pylades, see Macrobius *Saturnalia* 2.7.17-18; Dio 54.17; Lucian *On the Dance* 34; and Jerome *Chronicle* 2.143. (Macrobius 2.7.17). Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 29 refers to the *histrionalis favor* – the favour shown to (pantomime?) actors.

8. But one must be careful about the Latin terminology. The common Latin words for it are (adjective) *mollis*, and (noun) *mollitia*, terms well discussed in C. Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 1993), 63ff. 'Roman writers associated effeminacy with political, social and moral weakness … Often the same men were accused of effeminacy and adultery' (Edwards, 65). Cowardice in battle could be 'effeminate'. Accusations of *mollitia* were the common coin of political in-fighting in the late Republic. But there was a separate Latin word *effeminatus* meaning pretty much 'effeminate', i.e. pejoratively, 'womanish', and I wonder whether the common (mis?)translation *mollitia* = 'effeminate' is not yet another Victorian sexual prejudice foisted upon the Romans. 'Unmanliness' might be better, or better still, 'soft' as in 'he's a softy' or (of a politician) 'he's soft on crime'. That is, after all, the simplest translation of *mollis/mollitia*. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* lists a range of (good and bad) meanings for *mollis*, much like the range of meanings for 'soft', among them: tender – flabby – sensitive – kindly – cowardly – smooth – effeminate in character or appearance.

9. Horace in *Epistle* 2.1.186-207.

10. Tacitus *Annals* 14.18-19. Also Tacitus *Histories* 1.4, where he says that it is the poor, the dregs of society, who spend their time at theatres and games. But Tacitus did nevertheless attend the games (Pliny *Letters* 9.23), so perhaps there is a hint of double standards here.

11. Nepos preface to *Lives of Foreign Generals* 5 (see *Cornelius Nepos* tr. N. Horsfall, Oxford, 1989).

12. Pliny *Panegyric* 46.4. Possibly a tactless remark? Trajan had a dancer-boy-friend called Pylades (Dio 68.10.2) – not, obviously, the same man as entertained Augustus. Stage names were recycled.

13. Suetonius *Augustus* 45. See also C. Edwards, 'Acting and Self-actualisation in Imperial Rome', in P.E. Easterling and E. Hall (eds), *Greek and Roman Actors*

(Cambridge, 2002), and in *Politics of Immorality* (above n. 8). There is a detailed discussion of the law relating to senators and knights on stage in B. Levick, 'The Senatus Consultum from Larinum', *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983).

14. e.g. Sulla's affair with actor Metrobius (Plutarch *Sulla* 3.31); Melissus, the toy-boy of Maecenas, Augustus' culture czar (Tacitus *Annals* 1.54); Mnester under Caligula (Suetonius *Caligula* 36); Paris under Nero (Suetonius *Nero* 54); another Paris, friend of Domitian and lover of his wife (Suetonius *Domitian* 3); and Trajan's Pylades (Dio 68.10.2). Caligula seems to have been obsessed with pantomime actors, and performed himself (Suetonius *Caligula* 54).

15. *Infamia* is discussed by Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 123-5 and by Levick, *Larinum,* passim. Edwards (123) says 'Sometimes actors are subject to the same restrictions as, for instance, prostitutes and gladiators. In other cases, they are treated separately'. See also Ulpian *Digest* 3.2.2.5 'Whoever goes on stage is *infamis*'.

16. Tertullian *De Spectaculis* (On Entertainments) 95-6: Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 32.94 and 66.8. They were following the example of Cicero, who several times had a go at stage nudity in his speeches *Against Catilina* 2.23.26, *Against Piso* 2, and *Against Verres* 2.3.23.

17. W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* (London, 1964),154. Similarly, L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955),18 says that 'the taste of theatre audiences had long been debased'. Fantham (see n. 23) also uses derogatory language about the Roman pantomime, calling it 'the degenerate popular offshoot of Roman tragedy'.

18. Valerius Maximus 2.10.18. 'What evidence do we have for the allegedly vulgar tastes of Roman spectators?' asks E.G. Gruen in his *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Duckworth, 1992), 210. The 'prime exhibit', he says, is the prologue to Terence's play *Hecyra*, where Terence complains of the audience calling for boxers in the middle of his play. Gruen dismisses this as hard evidence, pointing out that there are no parallels elsewhere – a view shared by N. Horsfall, *The Culture of the Roman Plebs* (Duckworth, 2003), 62. 'A single, Roman, public relished both the elevated and the horizontal', remarks Horsfall (61).

19. Seneca *On Anger* 2.2.3-6. Elsewhere (*Moral Letters* 114.6) Seneca shows his own familiarity with the popular stage when he refers to Maecenas being wrapped up in a cloak 'like the millionaire's runaway slave in mime'.

20. Even an informative account like Beacham's *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* is apt to bring in words like 'lascivious' (144), 'titillation' (151) and 'sordid and depraved instincts' (151). But he does affirm that 'it would be misleading to characterise the imperial audience as invariably unsophisticated and corrupt in its taste, or to believe that all its entertainments were entirely decadent and devoid of merit'. Faint praise perhaps.

21. Preface to P.E. Easterling and E. Hall (eds), *Greek and Roman Actors*.

22. Seneca's are the only Latin tragedies to have come down to us, and no complete comedies after the time of Terence.

23. E. Fantham, 'Mime: the Missing Link in Roman Literature', *Classical World* 82 (1988), 153-63.

24. The famous phrase is from Juvenal *Satires* 10.81 but is echoed by Cornelius Fronto, who says that 'the Roman people are held fast by two things above all: the corn dole and the shows' – Fronto *Principles of History* 20. This may have been an aristocratic convention or cliché. For Fronto also records (*To Marcus Caesar* 4.12.3) that the emperor Marcus Aurelius attended the theatre, but read books there (silently?), and that he himself spend his days at the theatre (*To Marcus Caesar* 2.10.2).

25. For burlesque, see J.T. Davis, 'Literary Burlesque in Ovid's Amores', *ANRW* (*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*) 2.31.4, 2460-2506.

26. Roman 'tragedy' in effect meant serious plays, usually but not necessarily 'tragic' in the modern sense, on the great themes of Greek and Roman mythology. Serious plays about Roman history were known as *fabulae praetextae*. This contrasts with comedy plays, known as *fabulae palliatae* or as *fabulae togatae* if based on Roman themes, and with dance performances, known as *fabulae salticae*.

27. The aristocracy may also have had a positive vested political interest in the theatre. 'The stage offered a convenient medium whereby to assert aristocratic ascendancy in the arts … The theatre provided a channel through which the ruling class could propagate aristocratic values by shaping the direction of popular culture' – Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, 221-2. This 'political interest' may be expressed in a different way. 'The contempt felt towards mimes in antiquity … may often be explained not only as intellectual snobbery but also as a reaction to the potential (and often actual) threat mime posed to the social and political status quo … the exclusion of even literary mimes from "serious literature" was both convenient and safe, because mime with its huge popularity could become an important political weapon' – C. Panayotakis 'Comedy, Atellane Farce and Mime', in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *A Companion to Latin Literature* (Blackwell, 2005), 145.

28. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn, contribution by Antony Spawforth.

29. Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, 17.

30. Cicero *Speech in Defence of Sestius* 116.

31. Many references in Cicero, including his *Letters to his brother Quintus* 2.15.3, 3.1.13, 3.6.7 and 3.9.6.

32. To 364 BCE, according to Livy 7.2.3.

33. F. Dupont, *L'Acteur Roi* (Les Belles Lettres, 1983) says that there were 55 days of *ludi scaenici* (theatre festival days) out of 77 festival days in total under the late Republic, and under the Empire 101 theatre days out of 175. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, s.v. 'Ludi' (contribution by S.R.F. Price) roughly supports these figures.

34. A.J. Boyle, *An Introduction to Roman Tragedy* (Routledge, 2006), 187. For Pylades at Pompeii, see *CIL* 10.1074.

35. Horace *Epistles* 2.1.201.

36. See Pliny *Letters* 2.14 and Tacitus *Annals* 1.16.3.

37. Strabo 1.19.

38. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 2.19.

39. Cicero *Stoic Paradoxes* 3.26: written about 50 BCE.

40. Ovid *Fasti* 3.535-6.

41. Livy 7.2.

42. Lucian *On the Dance* 76. Lucian's essay may contain material deriving from the manual on dance written by the dancer Pylades, now lost.

43. Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 16.2 and 5. 'Roman theatre audiences in the last century of the Republic were politicised to a remarkable extent' – C. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (Batsford, 1980), 372.

44. W.J. Slater in Preface to *Roman Theatre and Society* (Michigan, 1996), viii.

45. There was a ban in 38 BCE on senators going on stage or into the arena (Dio.48.43.2), then around 19 BCE L. Domitius Ahenobarbus as praetor forced knights and married women to appear in mimes (Suetonius *Nero* 4), while in the same year there was (again) a senatorial decree against members of the upper-class appearing on stage – see Levick, 'The Senatus Consultum from Larinum'.

Juvenal *Satires* 8.184-210 refers scathingly to various aristocrats appearing on stage – 'disgusting and shameful examples' such as *planipedes Fabios* – 'Fabii mime actors'. Other references are in Suetonius (*Tiberius* 35) and Tacitus (*Histories* 2.62). Why ban, if it did not happen? Note Juvenal says nothing about *writing* for the stage.

46. Tacitus *Annals* 1.76, with Dio 56.47.2. A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 234 refers to the claques hired by individual pantomime dancers who lead applause in the form of rhythmical chanting.

47. Suetonius *Nero* 20.

48. Boyle, *Roman Tragedy*, 23 refers to the 'deep cultural anxiety about the political and social power of the theatre'.

49. Suetonius *Augustus* 44.2-3. Domitian revived the law some hundred years later, suggesting that it was not universally popular or followed. For the Lex Theatralis, see E. Rawson, *Roman Culture and Society* (Oxford, 1991), 508-45.

50. Pliny's Panegyric to Trajan 46.4.

51. F. Dupont, *L'Acteur-Roi*, 422ff.

52. Suetonius *Virgil* 27.

53. Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 13.2.

54. T.P. Wiseman in *Roman Drama and Roman History* (Exeter, 1998), 70-1 complains that the English language does not have adequate terms to describe this 'Roman demi-monde'. He argues that Ovid had a great debt to the mime theatre for at least parts of his *Fasti*.

55. Servius at *Eclogue* 6.11.

56. Cicero *Letters to Friends* 9.26. Later, a woman said to have started her career as a mime artist rose to be empress – Theodora, wife of Justinian.

57. Other attested female stars of the theatre are Dionysia (in Cicero's *Speech in Defence of the Actor Roscius* 23) and Arbuscula (Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 4.15.6 and Horace *Satires* 1.10.76-7). Odd how much Cicero knew about these actresses.

58. Suetonius *Nero* 54.

59. See Macrobius *Saturnalia* 5.17.5, and E. Hall, 'The Singing Actors of Antiquity' in *Greek and Roman Actors*, 27.

60. Augustine *Sermones* 241.5.

61. Joseph Farrell, *Latin Language and Latin Culture* (Cambridge, 2001), 7.

62. Ovid *Tristia* 2.519 and again at *Tristia* 7.25. The repeated use of *saltar*e, to dance, is striking.

63. H.M. Currie, 'Ovid and the Roman Stage', *ANRW* 2.31.4, 2703 argues that Ovid's own references (*Tristia* 5.7.25 and 2.519-20) imply that scenes from his *Amores* and *Heroides* were adapted for stage production in the form of ballet or mime with musical accompaniment. There have of course been modern stage renderings of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or some of them, e.g. by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon, UK, translated from the Latin by the poet Ted Hughes (*Tales from Ovid*, Faber, 1977). Those who saw this stage performance would be in no doubt about their theatricality.

64. Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 12 and Quintilian 10.1.98, where Quintilian, like Tacitus, also praises Varius' *Thyestes*.

65. See T.P. Wiseman, 'Ovid and the Stage' in G. Herbert-Brown (ed.), *Ovid's Fasti: Historical Readings at its Bimillennium* (Oxford, 2002). Wiseman remarks (282) that 'it is more likely than not that this popular and versatile dramatic form [mime] influenced and even overlapped with the literary genres of "high culture" ', and lists 15 episodes in the *Metamorphoses* that may have been directly influenced by the theatre.

66. Aulus Gellius 18.5.2-4.

67. See Statius *Silvae* 5.2.162-3 and Juvenal *Satires* 7.82-4. Also see Donka Marcus, 'The Politics of Epic Performance in Statius', in A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (eds), *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Brill, 2003), 431ff.

68. Numerous references: Juvenal 8.186 and 13.111; Martial 5.30.3 and 12.83; Suetonius *Caligula* 57, Josephus *Bellum Judaicum* (The Jewish War) 19.94.

69. Scholiast on Juvenal 13.109f. – *Catullus mimographus fui* – Catullus was a mime-writer.

70. T.P. Wiseman, *Catullus and his World* (Cambridge, 1985), 188-94.

71. 3rd edition under 'Catullus'.

72. H.M. Currie, 'Ovid and the Roman Stage', *ANRW* 2.31.4, 2701-42.

73. Died about 86 BCE.

74. See Horace *Satires* 1.5.40-2 and 1.10.43-4 and refs in Dio, Tacitus, Quintilian and Ovid.

75. Tacitus *Dialogue on Orators* 12.6 (*inlustris*) and Quintilian 10.1.98.

76. Pliny *Natural History* 7.80 and 13.83. He is sometimes confused with his brother Quintus, an avowed republican who perished in the conspiracy of 42 CE.

77. Pliny *Letters* 7.17.11-12.

78. *Provoco* in Latin has an interesting range of meanings, making it a subtle playwright's remark. It can signify 'summon', or 'challenge', or 'arouse', or 'appeal' (to a court or to a higher authority). See *Oxford Latin Dictionary* 1976 s.v. 'provoco'.

79. Tacitus *Annals* 11.13.1. Claudius issued an edict rebuking the theatre audience. Tacitus actually refers here to Pomponius' *carmina*, showing how widely this term was used – not just 'songs' – and says that Pomponius 'gave his carmina to the stage'.

80. Quintilian 8.3.31. Tacitus also praises Pomponius' work (*Annals* 12.28) as greater than his military achievements – not, I suspect, meant to be a compliment.

81. Even if not by Seneca, *Octavia* is 'the textual relic of a stage production' – J.A. Smith, 'Looking Back with Octavia', in Boyle and Dominik, *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, 393.

82. For example, in his *Seneca: Four Tragedies* (Penguin, 1966) E.W. Watling says that Seneca's plays are 'generally agreed to be intended for reading or recital at private gatherings and could never have appeared in what we would call public performance' (17). This is no longer 'generally agreed'. Seneca is discussed in most of the books on Roman theatre cited in this chapter, but additionally in A.J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca* (Routledge, 1997) and M. Erasmo, *Roman Tragedy* (Texas, 2004).

83. In addition to Ovid, Ted Hughes translated and adapted Seneca's *Oedipus* (Faber, 1969). T.S. Eliot in his introduction to Thomas Newton's *Ten Tragedies of Seneca* (1581, reprinted Cambridge, 1927) said that Seneca's plays are 'a model for broadcast drama'.

84. 'Scenes from Seneca's tragedies would make impressive, emotionally charged excerpts on the stage' – M. Coffey and R. Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra* (Cambridge, 1990). J. Fitch, 'Playing Seneca', in G.M.W Harrison (ed.), *Seneca in Performance* (Duckworth/Classical Press of Wales, 2000) points out that the idea that Seneca was not meant to be performed dates back only to the nineteenth century, and takes the view (3) that some scenes were written with theatre in mind, others for pure verbal effect, so that Seneca was an example of 'excerpt theatre'.

85. Virgil *Eclogues* 8.9-10; Horace *Odes* 2.1.11-12 and *Satires* 1.10.42.

86. See Suetonius *Life of Persius.*

87. Juvenal in *Satire* 7 refers to one Rubrenus Lappa who wrote a tragedy

Atreus and to Paccius and Faustus as writers of plays, and also to Serranus and Saleius Bassus as epic poets. Ovid speaks of one Turranius whose Muse 'wore the tragic buskin' (Ovid *Letters from Pontus* 4.16.31). Seneca (*Suasoria* 7.12) refers to one Surdinus, who wrote prose tragedies. Martial (5.30 and 5.53) also refers to Bassus, and to one Scaevus Memor (11.9.1) to whom Martial attributes 'the fame of Roman tragedy'. Sometimes we just have the name of a play, such as the history play about Claudia Quinta mentioned by Ovid (*Fasti* 4.326).

88. Dio 58.24.3-4: also Tacitus *Annals* 6.29.4 and Suetonius *Tiberius* 61.3.

89. Tacitus *Annals* 1.53.

90. F. Dupont, *L'Acteur Roi*, 404. She calls pantomime 'ballet tragique' (391). C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (*JRS* Monograph 6, 1993) says that 'the pantomime's art is regularly described as tragic' (15). Suetonius *Caligula* 57 says that the pantomime Mnester 'danced a tragedy'.

91. 'There is evidence that throughout most of the period from Sulla to Domitian educated people enjoyed watching unrefined mime shows and sometimes engaged in writing mimes designed for scenic performance … [conventional aristocratic attitudes] should not be taken to mean that mime texts did not observe high literary standards' – Panayotakis, 'Comedy, Atellane Farce and Mime', 145.

92. Aulus Gellius 15.25.1.

93. These two 'gave some literary form to the mime' – N. Horsfall, 'The Literary Mime,' in E.J. Kenney and W.V. Clausen (eds), *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1982), 293.

94. Macrobius *Saturnalia* 2.7.1-5 and Fronto *Letters to Marcus Caesar* 4.3.3.

95. Seneca *Suasoria* 2.19.

96. Suetonius *Domitian* 10.4. For *exodium* as mime, see E. Csapo and W.J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Michigan, 1995), 322 and 428.

97. Pliny *Letters* 6.21 and 4.3.

98. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, s.v. 'Herodas', contribution by R.L. Hunter.

99. See Vacca's *Life of Lucan* 336.17-22, where Vacca (whose dates are disputed) lists Lucan's works.

100. In his *Pharsalia*, Lucan 'is alert to the possibility that his narrative will be treated not so much as something to be read, but as something to be watched' – Matthew Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford, 1997).

101. Juvenal *Satire* 7.82-7.

102. See Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, for extensive analysis of Lucian's work.

103. Lucian *On the Dance* 62 and 37-61.

104. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Fragments of the Greek Tragic Poets) 1, 344 and 14a.

105. Horsfall, *Culture of the Roman Plebs*, 60.

106. Discussed by Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 110.

107. 'The Roman of the first century AD could see plays at least forty three days a year, much more often than a citizen of Athens' – R. Martin, 'Ancient Theatre and Performance Culture', in *Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (Cambridge, 2007), 50.

108. 'The tragic pantomime became a beloved element in the collective memory culture of Rome, with individual plays repeated over centuries … The social and cultural elite could act as connoisseurs of poetic quality, while the mythological subjects, music and movement were intuitively and emotionally accessible to all' – H. Denard, 'Lost Theatre and Performance Traditions', in *Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, 157.

109. F. Dupont, *The Invention of Literature* (Johns Hopkins, 1999), 237 suggests that writing for 'the storage of knowledge', like the elder Pliny's, was for the Romans a different cultural animal. If so, the theatre would be irrelevant to it.

110. I like the phraseology used by M. Andreassi in 'Osmosis and Contiguity between "Low" and "High" Literature', in the 1997 *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. 8, discussing the relation between Apuleius *Metamorphoses* and a mime unearthed in Egypt (P.Oxy. 413). Rejecting a direct dependence, he argues (17-19) that 'a literary contiguity existed, due to the existence of an extensive and diffused literary heritage … we are dealing with a kind of "connective tissue" … we must conclude that the borders between the so-called "high" literature and the so-called "low" literature are very weak'. Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* 10.29) describes a dance performance at Corinth of the *Judgement of Paris.*

111. Libanius *For the Dancers* 112. See M. Molloy, *Libanius for the Dancers* (Ohms-Weidmann, 1996).

A unitary culture

1. R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992), 159.

2. 'The library becomes an ornament for the aristocratic patron … the library forms the backdrop for the aristocracy's intellectual property' (in the late eighteenth century) – V. Coltman, 'Classicism in the English Library', in *Journal of the History of Collections* no. 1 (1999), 35.

3. Greg Woolf, 'City of Letters', in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (eds), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge, 2003), 208.

4. P. Saenger, *Spaces between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading in the West* (Stanford, 1997), 11-12.

5. Woolf, 'City of Letters', 205-6. He argues that Roman poets, by their learned and often obscure allusions, were engaged in a 'discourse of differentiation' of toffs from the rest, and in particular of toffs at Rome from toffs anywhere else.

6. F. Dupont, *The Invention of Literature* (Johns Hopkins, 1999), 224 calls the *recitatio* a 'self-defining ritual' and writes of it (228) as 'a way of preserving the unity of the Roman political class … as a group of peers who offered one another mutual recognition on the occasion of each recitatio through the celebration of common values, first and foremost a rhetorical mastery of language'.

7. Pliny *Letters* 1.13.

8. Woolf , *City of Letters*, 205 and 209.

9. T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 270 argues that 'writers on education … offer an elite minority a justification of social and political power not just in terms of birth, wealth or force, but in terms of a cognitive superiority achieved through literate education. In return, they seek to inflate the status of education by claiming that literate education gives its product the natural right and equipment to rule'. Literate education competed with other forms of education e.g. military and professional, and (272) 'It is easy to be persuaded into taking their ideology for fact. Having said that, the influence of the written word, and so literate education, on Hellenistic and Roman society and culture were out of all proportion to the number of people who could read and write'. Woolf (221) finally admits that the expression 'City of Letters' was not 'a falsification of Rome, simply an exaggeration'.

10. Petronius *Satyricon* 27-79. Discussed in e.g. V. Rimmel, *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002) and C. Connors, *Petronius the Poet* (Cam-

bridge, 1998). Whether the *Satyricon* is a satire on Roman manners, or on Virgil's *Aeneid,* or something else, I leave to them.

11. Simon Swain, 'Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Antonine Rome', in L. Holford-Strevens and A. Vardi (eds), *The Worlds of Aulus Gellius* (Oxford, 2004), 29.

12. J. Majeed, 'Rome and British Imperial Attitudes to India', in C. Edwards (ed.), *Roman Presences* (Cambridge, 1999) points out that T.B. Macaulay's 1854 committee on entry exams for the Indian Civil Service said that tests of Latin and Greek should be as tough as those at Oxford and Cambridge, and skill in Latin and Greek verse should weigh heavily.

13. A.J. Boyle, 'Reading Flavian Rome', in A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (eds), *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Brill, 2003), 22 and 24. Boyle acknowledges the phrase 'gift exchange culture' to B.K. Gold.

14. But Pliny tells us that he wrote a Greek tragedy at the age of 14 (*Letters* 7.4).

15. See discussion in P. White, 'Positions for Poets in Early Imperial Rome', in B.K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Texas, 1982), 52-3. White argues that for men of that standing, the problem was not basic income, but how to enhance it.

16. See discussion by P. White in 'Amicitia and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome', *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978), 80-1, where White argues that concepts like 'patron' and 'patronage' are anachronistic and raise false implications, whereas 'whether a man is superior, equal or inferior in standing to another, both are called *amici* and the relationship itself is *amicitia* … *Amici* rarely could be and rarely considered themselves as peers'.

17. Suetonius *Claudius* 42.

18. The addressee of the first of Fronto's *Letters to Friends* was one Claudius Severus, and E. Champlin, *Fronto and Antonine Rome* (Harvard, 1980), 30, remarks that 'the family of the Claudii Severi offers a typical combination of political power and active participation in the arts … the general combination of power and culture is noteworthy'. Champlin (49) remarks that it was 'an aristocracy of letters … its boundaries were sharply defined [demonstrating] the closed nature of literary society'.

19. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley (Penguin, 1994), vol. 1, ch. 7, 195. This Gordian and his father were killed in 238 CE.

20. The quotations are from T. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1998), ch. 5.

21. This controversy was triggered by Hugo Schuchart's 1866 book, *Vocalismus des Vulgärlateins.*

22. H. Inglebert, *Histoire de la Civilisation Romaine* (Presses Universitaires de Paris, 2005), 342-3. This position is supported by V.Väänänen, 'La Problème de la Diversification de Latin', *ANRW* 2.29.1, 503/4, who argues that before the barbarian invasions there was a unitary if not uniform Latin, 'variety in unity and unity in diversity' … 'one should not lose sight of the prestigious life of learned Latin, which assured the persistence of the cultivated tradition, that ideal aspired to by the most humble of scribes and the least skilled of stone cutters, an omnipresent element … which guaranteed to Romania its profound linguistic unity'. This author names in particular Varro, Cicero and Quintilian as leading intellectuals who strove to 'purify the dialect of the tribe' (a phrase of T.S. Eliot's, from his poem 'Little Gidding') by purging Latin of foreign and rustic forms and phrases.

23. 'The *circulator* [storyteller] acts as a link between his hearers and the world of theatre and books' – N. Horsfall, *Culture of the Roman Plebs* (Duckworth, 2003), 57. Dupont, *Invention of Literature*, 174 says that *circulatores* were despised by 'official Roman culture' as vagrant peddlers of cheap merchandise.

24. Inglebert, *Histoire de la Civilisation Romaine*, 347.

25. 'Perhaps the literatures of Greece and Rome were a purely modern invention' – Dupont, *Invention of Literature*, 10.

26. About Pompeii, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill writes: 'It is senseless on the basis of the expectations of contemporary Western societies to envisage a poor majority crowded into the smaller houses, while a rich minority rattled around in lonely splendour in the larger ones … the poor of Pompeii, as slaves and dependants, were surely to be found in the big houses too, and probably in greater numbers' – A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, 1994), 103. Houses often had multiple exit doors to the street, e.g. for shops or workshops incorporated into the building, and outside staircases leading up to (probably) rented-out rooms on the second floor. Wallace-Hadrill later writes (185): 'A frequent suspicion about Roman literary sources is that, as products of an elite, they may give us an imbalanced picture of the Roman world, preserving only their own high culture and not the popular culture or cultures of the majority. Although at one level there is truth in this, the implied dichotomy is simplistic and perhaps a projection into the past of the cultural conditions of the post-industrial West … the gulf is constantly bridged, by contiguity and mutual dependence … rich and poor, and indeed male and female, young and old, inhabit the same spaces, separated by social rituals rather than physical environment.' Julius Caesar, born a high aristocrat, at first lived in a modest house in the Subura, a poor district of Rome (Suetonius *Julius Caesar* 46).

Appendix A

1. See H. Maehler, 'Tachygraphy' in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1996).

2. P.G. Mitzschke, *M. Tullius Tiro* (Berlin, 1875).

3. H. Boge, *Die Griechische Tachygraphie und Tironische Noten* (Berlin, 1973). Boge lists 47 Roman stenographers known by name, mainly of Greek origin, judging by their names, and probably slaves – except for the emperor Titus (see below).

4. W. Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, 2000), 13, writes: 'Tiro's legacy to the future was the invention of the first system of tachygraphy.'

5. W.C. McDermott, 'M. Cicero and M. Tiro', *Historia* 21 (1972), 259-86.

6. R.A. Coles, *Report of Proceedings in Papyri*, Papyrologica Bruxellensia 4 (1966).

7. Jerome *Interpretatio Chronicae Eusebii* (Interpretation of the Chronicle of Eusebius) 01.194.

8. Isidore *Origines* 1.22.

9. Plutarch *Cato Minor* 23.3.

10. Cicero *Sulla* 41-2.

11. Suetonius *Julius Caesar* 55 – but Suetonius does here call them 'actuarii'.

12. Suetonius *Titus* 3.

13. In *My Own Books* 14.

14. Martial 14.208.

15. Martial 10.62 – see also Martial 5.51.
16. Pliny *Letters* 3.5.
17. *CIL* 13.8355. Quoted by Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 14.
18. Ausonius *Ephemeris* 7 and *Epigrams* 16 and 17.
19. Cicero *Brutus* 91.

Appendix B

1. E.J. Kenney, *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), vol. 2, 20.
2. Especially A.N. Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny* (Oxford, 1966), 91 and 490.
3. A.J. Marshall, 'Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome', *Phoenix* 30 (1976), 252ff.
4. See Chapter 6.
5. See again Chapter 6.
6. Martial 1.1.2 *toto notus in orbe* – known over the whole world: also 3.95 'my name is known in the towns'; 5.13 'I shall be read by the whole world'; 8.3 'my books are thumbed everywhere'. One might call all this a sales pitch.
7. Martial 7.88. Confusingly, Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny*, 490, continues to refer to 'Vienna' without explaining that this does not mean the capital of modern Austria.
8. Horace *Odes* 2.20.13-20.
9. Horace *Ars Poetica* 345 *Hic meret aere liber Sosiis, hic et mare transit et longam noto scriptori prorogat aevum*.
10. Ovid *Tristia* 4.9.21 *ibit ad occasum quicquid dicemus ab ortu, testis et Hesperia vocis eous erit*: and *Tristia* 4.10.128 *in toto plurimus orbe legor*. Stuck in remote Pontus on the Black Sea, how else could Ovid console himself?
11. Harris remarks that 'literary forerunners [of such claims], Greek and Roman, were numerous … poetic pretensions … which came from an already long tradition' – W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard, 1989), 224 and 227.
12. Horace *Epistles* 1.12.

Bibliography

In most cases, the name of the publisher is given. In some cases, for clarity, both publisher and place are given. Apparent references to places on their own indicate the university of that name. Abbreviations used are:

AJP = American Journal of Philology
ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CJ = Classical Journal
CQ = Classical Quarterly
JHS = Journal of Hellenic Studies
JRA = Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRS = Journal of Roman Studies
TAPA = Transactions of the American Philological Association
ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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