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Ciceronian "*Bi-Marcus*": Correspondence with M. Terentius Varro and L. Papirius Paetus in 46 B.C.E.

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The spring, summer and autumn months of 46 B.C.E., that is to say the months following Caesar's defeat of the Republican uprising in Africa and preceding his departure for Spain, were at once an occasion of discomforting political compromise for Cicero and an extraordinarily productive period of his literary career. During this time he completed several dialogues: the *Brutus* and the *Orator*, both ranking among his major rhetorical writings; the technical *Partitiones Oratoriae*; and the *Stoic Paradoxes*. The provocative *Cato* was also a product of this moment. In the early months of the autumn opportunity to urge pardon and restoration for exiled Republican colleagues gave him reason to break the oratorical silence in which he had remained since 51 by delivering the two speeches *pro Marcello* and *pro Ligario* in Caesar's presence. At the same time he was composing an unusually large volume of letters to associates and friends. Roughly a fourth of the extant *ad Familiares* stem from this period. The range of recipients mirrors a variety of Ciceronian roles in relationship to the troubling issues of the moment.

Some of Cicero's correspondents are exiled Republican colleagues to whom Cicero reports his progress in negotiating with Caesar for their recall. These are not only Marcellus and Ligarius, but also his scholarly friends A. Caecina and Nigidius Figulus.[1] Some letters of this period are merely recommendations. However, the two partially overlapping sequences of eight and twelve letters directed respectively to M. Terentius Varro and to L. Papirius Paetus that make up the greater part of *ad Familiares* 9 stand out among contemporaneous correspondence, because their motivation for exchange is not any immediate

[1]M. Marcellus, the consul of 49 who had sided somewhat passively with Pompey against Caesar, was living as a voluntary exile in Mytilene; Q. Ligarius, a Pompeian captured during the African Wars, remained in that province. A. Caecina had been exiled to Sicily for anti-Caesarian writings and Cicero's long standing friend, P. Nigidius Figulus, a praetor in 58, died in exile.

practical business but a more expansive kind of comparison between Cicero's present *modus vivendi* and those of the two addressees. The style and composition of these letters places them among the most artful of Cicero's more literary epistles,[2] but their self-conscious artistry appears most significant when viewed from an interpretive perspective focused upon Cicero's anxieties of personal identity experienced amidst the disorienting circumstances of Caesar's dictatorship.

The identities of the recipients are important. Both Paetus and Varro are long-standing acquaintances, as witnessed by their mention in letters of the 60s to Atticus.[3] Doubtless both were recipients of many more letters no longer extant.[4] Within the whole spectrum of Cicero's correspondence during this initial stage of Caesar's dictatorship, the tone of the letters written to these men differs from those directed to exiled Republicans because the more stable post-war circumstances of Varro and Paetus permit the enjoyment of a relationship that

[2]Until recently essays into the self-presentational strategies of the letters have been infrequent. The very use that Ciceronian biographers have traditionally made of them as a source of privileged information concerning Cicero's genuine thoughts or opinions with which to gloss other evidence seems to have precluded their value as art. Shackleton Bailey spoke of them as unguarded, confessional, the revelation of "a Roman Consular, on any reasonable estimate one of the most remarkable men of his eventful time, without his toga." Although Shackleton Bailey (1971: xi–xii) suspects "our Horace" of being an Horatian artifact, with Cicero he places his trust in the belief that the letters "that reveal him were never meant to become public property." Passing over the fact that some letters are declaredly conceived as formal compositions for the eyes of more than one reader, the assumption that their self-revelation is unguarded, which is to say rhetorically unprogrammed, is a premise very much at odds with Roman views of the close relationship between self-representation and style. Thus, as Hutchinson 1993: 441–51 has recently observed with particular reference to the literary artistry of *Att.* 1.16, it was perfectly natural that the master of rhetorical forms and strategies should not have relaxed his standards in writing to friends. While observing that the style and composition of letters can be even more brilliant than that of the speeches, Hutchinson also proposes that their representations of "reality" may often be seen as well-wrought reformulations rather than reproductions. If even the letters to Atticus, who is generally considered to be the recipient of Cicero's most forthright expressions, can be seen as "telling a story" or as literary "reformulations of reality," why not also the efforts of self-consciousness expended upon associates less familiarly known?

[3]In *Att.* 1.20.7 Cicero mentions that Paetus, *vir bonus et amator noster*, has made Cicero a present of books. In *Att.* 2.1.4 and 4.9.2 (55 B.C.E.), he mentions visiting Paetus in Naples. Varro appears in *Att.* 2.20–23 as the performer of some favor for Cicero, presumably connected with his mounting apprehension about Clodius, and again in 2.25, with the suggestion that Cicero was finding him inscrutable.

[4]On-going correspondence is clearly indicated by the allusions to the contents of a letter Cicero has received from Paetus contained in another that Cicero writes from Laodicea during his proconsular tour of duty (*Fam.* 9. 25).

focuses as much upon pastimes as upon politics. Paetus, a professed Epicurean living in and around the Bay of Naples whose primary activities were those of a local land-holder, had never been a key player in mainstream Civil War politics, while Varro, whose engagement during the most critical period of the conflict exceeded Cicero's own, was like Cicero the recipient of a Caesarian pardon.[5] Although the differing personalities and histories of their two recipients unquestionably provide the basis for Cicero's characterizations, the writer has so highlighted these personalities through his selection of subject matter as to make them reflect different versions of himself. In this respect, Cicero's epistolary communication shares more common ground than might be thought with the Latin poetic genres of the Republic and Augustan period that treat categorically "personal" experience as a public configuration of self and write the addressee into the dialogue as a spectator of the self.[6]

A few years previously (53 B.C.E.), in writing to Curio about the immediate state of Roman politics, Cicero had spoken of two kinds of letters that it gave him pleasure to write (...*sunt epistularum genera duo, quae me magno opere delectant, unum familiare et iocosum, alterum severum et grave*, *Fam.* 2.4.1). Neither mode, as he went on to say, befitted the troubled times of the moment when a true citizen could neither laugh nor freely express his thoughts; however, it is precisely this dichotomy of modes that we find him practicing amid the even more troubled times of the dictatorship. On a positivist note, one might justifiably speculate whether the kind of face-to-face social conversation that Cicero actually enjoyed with these two men would have differed so much as the way in which his letters construct their intercourse. The letters to Varro dwell most intensely upon the themes of retirement and scholarship, while those to Paetus are more concerned with social interactions in scenes of conviviality. Varro's letters, with one exception, are sober and almost solemn; by appealing to sagacious personal equilibrium in the recipient, they inscribe gravity in the writer. By contrast the letters to Paetus, jocular and familiar in their characterization of the recipient, sparkle with wit that showcases the essence of Cicero's urbane persona. Because this wit flashes against a political background, one cannot call the letters to

[5]Baier 1997: 17–27 closely compares the two in terms of career and temperament. He points out the half-hearted nature of Varro's activity in Spain, as well as the scholarly disposition that recommended him to Caesar.

[6]As Otis 1965: 1–44 remarks, Propertius' first book is virtually a book of letter forms in which all but two of the twenty-two poems resemble letters in their mode of address and shape their content around the identities of recipients whose character and life-style seem by contrast or comparison to accentuate some aspects of those of the speaker.

Paetus escapist in the sense of turning one's back upon realities. Rather, their ironic jocularity allows for a kind of escape from conscience by rationalizing accommodation to circumstances within an acceptable image of self.

Otium enforced by political dispossession is the background from which these letters emanate, and leisure under such circumstances was an opportunity that Cicero never willingly embraced. All the same, these letters which travel the out-of-town villa circuit from Rome to Tusculum, from Tusculum to Naples, from one Tusculan villa to another are letters *ex otio* inasmuch as they incorporate cultural definitions of the extra-urban life and pay homage to the philosophical cast of mind that retirement traditionally fosters. In investigating epistolary badinage on philosophical topics as an index of Republican erudition and interchange, Miriam Griffin has noted allusions within both the Varro and Paetus letters that invite a knowing response to principles of both major doctrines, Stoicism and Epicureanism.[7] In the most jocular passage of his letters to Varro, Cicero refers Varro's decision-making—to visit or not to visit—to a conflict of Stoic doctrines on possibility (9.4). Among the more serious passages of the Paetus letters is a meditation on necessity and the *sapiens* that embodies a Stoic principle to be compared with the Stoic paradoxes.[8] In the last of Cicero's extant letters to Paetus, written some two years after the rest, he argues the Epicurean case for *voluptas* so vigorously that, as Griffin suggests, he feels compelled to avoid the appearance of conversion by appending a serious profession of his own dedication to public affairs, which is in fact a true picture of his activities in 43.[9] Griffin bases her essay on the important premise that badinage as a form of dialogue incorporates the participatory presence of the person addressed.[10] In looking beyond individual exchanges to their larger epistolary contexts, I want to bring out in similar fashion how Cicero creates himself in these letters by inscribing the participating presence of the friends to whom he writes. As persons who "know" Cicero, the characters of the addressees enter into his self-representation. Their familiarity is seen in direct relationship to that core of being that is "Ciceronian," or rather that desired core of being, because as I will argue, events surrounding Caesar's return have made it very difficult to recognize the Ciceronian, save only as an elusive object of desire constructed under the aegis of memory.

[7]Griffin 1995: 325–46.
[8]Cicero writes similarly to Marcellus in *Fam.* 4.9.
[9]Griffin 1995: 338–39.
[10]Griffin 1995: 328–31.

By calling the Ciceronian a goal of desire I am taking an unaccustomed subsurface approach to *ethos*, the culturally formed image of the public man that is now a standard point of reference in studies of Ciceronian oratory.[11] Within the sphere of Republican aristocratic ideology, *ethos* is a goal of rational endeavor; the methods for its achievement can be codified in terms of the customs and assumptions that shape ambition and measure success. Its language is the symbolic vocabulary of electoral *honores*, bordered togas, triumphal regalia, funeral masks. *Ethos* assumes integrity of self for which consistency of observable public conduct is the sign, no matter whether this is the circumscribed consistency of an oratorical performance,[12] or the more prolonged championship, amidst daily activity in the senate or the courts, of a policy, cause or person, including the self. Shaping an audience's impression of *ethos* is no small part of the orator's art; ideally it unites the speaker's established reputation as a public man with his immediate image in performance. Antonius in *de Oratore* 2.182 gives a classic definition of the virtues, the *mores et instituta et facta et vita,* whose immanence promotes the cause both of the good advocate and of his worthy client, and whose absence marks the correspondingly bad character of his opponent.[13] The minds of those judging are won over, he asserts, by *dignitas hominis,* by accomplished actions, by esteem. Antonius does go so far as to allow the possibility of fabrication into this art of constructing *ethos* when he observes that virtues are easier to talk up (*ornari*) if they really exist than if they must be invented (*si modo sunt quae fingi, si nulla sunt*), but the valuation of integrity remains paramount under any circumstances. So much of the impression of character depends upon presentation that a speaker's *mores* are virtually the creation of his speech. Appropriate choices of thought and image, enhanced by decorous delivery, will make the speaker appear to be honest, well-mannered and a "good man." As a system of communication codes, *ethos* must be validated by

[11]Among recent discussions emanating from this locus, May 1988: 1–12 particularly emphasizes the character interplay between the advocate and his client; Vasaly 1993: 131–32 relates the client, especially, to the character of the places involved in various cases; and Hughes 1994: 211–25 discusses Cicero's progressive enlistment of comic paradigms in making his narrative lively through character portrayals.

[12]Gotoff 1993b deals both theoretically and practically with the interplay of fictionality and consistency as a general aspect of Cicero's performative artistry, illustrating it by examples drawn from speeches throughout his entire career.

[13]Gill 198: 149–65 points out the Aristotelian basis for this definition as the kind of proof by which the "speaker shows that he is trustworthy," that he has the socially approved ἀρεταί or excellences, that he makes decisions and performs actions as a good man should. The element of Roman modification that Gill finds in Cicero's Roman revision of *ethos* is an allowance for emotion and style in gaining the audience's approbation.

reception. Within the complex network of Republican political interactions, that is the rub.

As an orator Cicero is a master of persuasive *ethos* creation, but *sub specie aeternitatis* he is obsessed by the need for a more comprehensive validation of *ethos* that encompasses the entirety of his life's performance, and, in the category of obsession, this need masters him. Ciceronian studies have recurrently to contend with aspersions of vanity. In his recent analysis of Cicero's speeches, Paul MacKendrick counts the occurrences of *ego* as the word most frequently employed within the vocabulary of each. Although he oftentimes comments that vanity is not the only rationale underlying Cicero's frequency of self-reference, he also enumerates many topics about which the orator is "vain" and refers to the proposition "L'état c'est moi" as a "syndrome."[14] In the essay entitled "Stratagems of Vanity," Niall Rudd takes a similarly double-sided view of the rhetorical diplomacy of *ad Familiares* 5.12, the letter to L. Lucceius in which Cicero unites a request for a monograph on his consulship with a theory of historical writing.[15] Robert Hariman, however, shows a more sympathetic bias in a seminal treatment of the "political style" of Cicero's letters to Atticus as a "literature of political thought" when he proposes that what we might see as Cicero's vanity appears more significant when considered as "the story of a public figure striving above all else to become the embodiment of the political culture of the Roman Republic."[16]

By this interpretation Cicero's ambition was "to be more than a good man (say, an Atticus), he had to be the epitome of good government as well." Hariman finds the essence of the letters in a passage of the *de Officiis* (117) where Cicero provides a formula of self-interrogation for a man about to enter into public life: "Primarily we must decide who we want to be, what kind of man we want to be, and what kind of life we want to lead." For Cicero the letter-writer, however, this

[14]MacKendrick 1995. E.g., p. 210, the analysis of the *pro Sestio* with 535 instances of *ego*, of which MacKendrick attributes only 88 to "vanity"—but these include such rhetorical ploys as pride in having saved Capua, putting himself on a par with Republican heroes, boasts of being called the father of his country. But, as May 1988: 90–105 has shown, Cicero in this oration stakes his client's defense upon his own identification with the public welfare of Rome; he is following his own mediated prescription for the projection of *ethos*.

[15]Rudd 1992: 1–26. The stratagems of the title constitute Cicero's attempt to conceal his egotism beneath a skillfully woven fabric of complements to Lucceius. While allowing that his judgments may be based upon the use of a British rather than a Roman standard of decorum, Rudd adduces Quintilian as witness to Cicero's vanity. Yet his discussion grants no charity to the real anxiety that Cicero may have suffered.

[16]Hariman 1989: 145–46.

set of deliberations is not a one-time event to mark the commencement of a career, but a recurrent exercise in which he engages every time he takes up the stylus. Hariman identifies a weakness of Cicero's political philosophy in his belief in consensus as the foundation of political action. He notes also the inevitable emptiness with which the condition of exile surrounded Cicero's sense of identity. In thus bringing out the inter-association of performance, reception and self-perception within an on-going process of becoming,[17] Hariman's essay enters into the territory of Ciceronian desire, but stops short of its irrational or obsessive embodiment in characterizing Cicero's quest for political authority as the sculpting of a public image theoretically guided by a sense of decorum. While regarding the resultant series of "ethical" portraits as no less varied than those of the speeches, Hariman also considers them no less firmly controlled by rhetorical skills.

Unquestionably, rhetorical skills do shape the style and structure of Cicero's letters, but verbal artistry scarcely generates the compulsion to self-representation that is no more obedient to ambition than to desire. Desire is the dissatisfaction attendant upon the recognition of *ethos*, or wholeness of self, as an illusion.[18] Unlike ambitions which fix upon well-defined, achievable goals, desire can never satisfy itself; its insatiability stems from a discrepancy between its source within the individual "ego" and the subjectively conceived objects towards which it tends.[19] The desiring subject must always perceive itself as imperfect and incomplete. Again and again such a perception reveals itself in Cicero's letters as the psychological handicap shackling ambition and political interactions with a sense of removal from the true source of power. When we consider how such alienated apprehensions haunt Cicero's consciously conceived ambitions, his position can appear virtually paradigmatic of the Lacanian subject of desire, so that the images he constructs for the eyes of his correspondents will appear less

[17]Hariman 1989: 146 states that Cicero writes, by his own testimony, "to compose himself. He writes to others of his thoughts, fears, complaints and plans, and eagerly awaits his readers' responses so that he may create the substance of his political identity and also gain an internal composure, all through his artistic engagement with his interlocutor."

[18]Lacan 1977a posits the deceptive relationship between language, culture and the drive towards ego-fulfillment. As explained in his earlier essay, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" (Lacan 1977c), the deceptive function emanates from the discrepancy between the desiring subject and his image of the whole self, formed within a cultural environment, but spatially distant, in the same manner that the developing human infant recognizes his image reflected within the surface of a mirror and projects his craving for wholeness of identity upon this distanced self.

[19]Bowie 1991: 10 poses the contrast between finite wishes and insatiable desire.

like stable portraits than mirrors wistfully reflecting an absent self through the very gesture of assimilating that self to another.[20] To investigate the mirroring function of Cicero's letters more fully necessitates looking beyond individual self-consciousness to the larger context of Roman cultural psychology to consider how, as an explicator of Lacan has phrased it, "a subject's experience before the mirror is appropriated politically to reinforce a process of cultural mirroring that recurs, not just in infancy, but throughout one's life."[21]

Given its well-defined system of semiotic images, along with the transience of *honores* depending upon the reception of *ethos*, the competitive operations of the Republican political system were particularly adapted to trigger dissatisfaction through a sense of illusion and absence. Although the historian Sallust assures us that these evanescent honors were in former days wholly satisfying (*Cat.* 6–7), he makes this point with the kind of Utopian hindsight that constructs any absent *desideratum* as ideal, for Sallust, as he himself lets us know, wrote history with the sense that present-day abuses of the system had victimized him.[22] Lucretius, who allegedly viewed the sphere of ambition with a non-participant's detachment, perceives the men of his time as afflicted by a malaise that created irrational conduct and obstructed self-recognition, and he argued that Epicureanism could cure it. For a vivid late Republican exposition of the delusive matrix of the "Symbolic and the Imaginary," one may think specifically of his reinterpretation of the symbolic language of *fasces saevasque securis* in *DRN* 3.995–1002, when he relocates the mythological Underworld torture of Sisyphus' stone within the Roman *cursus honorum* with its endless uphill struggle and recurrent downhill failure. Likewise he devalues the symbolic topography of success in his depiction at 3.1053–66 of the man "seeking to change place as if to lay down a great burden" as he moves incessantly within the circuits of house, forum, and house and "drives his horses like a fire brigade" from city to villa and back at once to the city. His vignette might well depict Cicero. From this perspective the world that the Roman symbolic vocabulary of *ethos*

[20]In this category, Gunderson 1997: 202–3 analyzes Catullus 50, *inter al.*, and Pliny's "Catullan" letters concerning his own poetry as "love-letters" for a desired self.

[21]Feldstein 1966: 147–48.

[22]Looking at the *Coniuratio Catilinae* from a linguistic point of view, Sklenář 1998: 205–20 describes how Sallust captures the spirit of antique *mos maiorum* as an "anti-Sassurean alignment of signifier and signified." But Sallust himself writes with an admission of "his own complicity in the corruption of his age—he exempts nothing from his analysis of the post-lapsarian indeterminacy of Roman moral discourse, least of all his own attempts to frame his conviction within it" (206).

composes—the *fasces*, curule chairs, and senatorial togas that make up its material symbolism—is a fragmented world of language and cultural objects whose wholeness exists only in the perceiver's imagination.

This is the world into which Cicero's post-consular ego projects its obsessive desire for self-fulfilling recognition. One can scarcely say that Cicero conceals or suppresses this obsession; his letters to close associates freely express its anxieties;[23] it figures in certain dialogues as the virtual reason for writing and is occasionally exploited in his orations. Whether any of Cicero's contemporaries, such as Pompey or Lucullus, also felt a similar alienation is difficult to say without direct evidence, but certainly Cicero does in several instances somewhat symptomatically project both alienation and anxiety upon his colleagues.[24] The condition is, naturally, endemic to his situation as a new man, with its unrelenting need to maintain a high level of immediate involvement or be forgotten.

The particular condition driving the unconscious of the *novus homo* within the symbolic environment can be recognized as an acute form of Lacan's universal anxiety stemming from the absence of the Real. While interpreters of Lacan regularly refer to the concept of the Real as something ineffable and even inaccessible by definition,[25] the symbolic language of Roman political culture gives pronounced indications of the direction in which to look for it as a monolithic image of *auctoritas*. On the one hand, an antipathy towards its implications of dominance is reflected in Rome's "primal founding legend," the Expulsion of the Kings, and in a constitutional structure that locates empowerment at a point where three hypothetical sources of opinion intersect. On

[23]Hariman 1989: 148–49 categorizes four moods or "tones" that provide a pattern of emotional movement within the letters; these are "the joy of combat, angst, fretting and anguish."

[24]E.g., Cicero, upon Pompey's return from the East, notes the failure of the commander's first public speech (*Att.* 1.13 and 1.14) and comments on his total lack of political sagacity. In letters to Lentulus Spinther, *Fam.* 1.1–7, concerning the mission to reinstate Ptolemy in Egypt, which he had unsuccessfully attempted to commandeer for Spinther, he assimilates his addressee to himself as one whose merits have failed to achieve their deserved recognition and reward.

[25]Bowie 1991: 94–95 makes the point that Lacan's solemn definitions of the Real, as "an endlessly daunting power which supersedes the already very considerable power that Lacan ascribes to the Symbolic," while they come close to constructing the Real as 'ineffable' or 'impossible,' "do not stand in the way of his using it as a practical analytical tool. The importance of the concept lies not only in the additional work that it compels the Symbolic and the Imaginary to perform inside a self-enclosed system, but in the contribution that it makes to the discussion of vexed psychoanalytic issues."

the other hand its access codes are comprehended under the concept *mos maiorum*, which, given its indefinite location in past history and its susceptibility to infinite significations, might be seen with a good claim to stand for *auctoritas* itself. Like Lacan's translation of the monolithic, forbidding Freudian father-image into a metaphorical language-construct, the culturally defined "Name-of-the-Father" that preserves the order of the symbolic system,[26] Roman *mos maiorum*, in fact the Names-of-Many-Fathers, both upholds the symbolic network and enters into it. This spirit of our ancestors is transmitted into the linguistic system of everyday activity as *auctoritas*, the weight of presence or of opinion. In this any heir to a consular family may believe himself entitled, whether justifiably or not, to claim a share, but the new man must earn his share through the public validation of his *ethos* and is therefore in a position either to feel that he has never arrived, or, being both arrived and alienated, to experience his alienation more acutely. Thus the many instances in which Cicero seems unable to keep himself from rehearsing his exile and the affirmation of his recall. Within the symbolic world of late Republican culture, Cicero's desiring subject resembles, more than he would have liked to admit, those of the love poets who also define their individuality as a state of exclusion or absence by their advertisement of a life-style that opposes itself to the dominant code of *ethos*, but must necessarily appropriate its vocabulary and values to position the condition of desire.[27]

Behind the erotic obsessions of Roman love poetry, recent interpreters perceive a political vacancy: a dislocation of the symbolic system in which normal goals of self-definition are conceptualized that is consequent upon the societal upheaval and relocation of political authority between the late Republic

[26]Bowie 1991: 108–9.

[27]I perceive certain analogies between the creation of self in Cicero's letters and in the "personal" genres of lyric and elegy, especially as these are now being read by scholars versed in the theories of Bahktin and Lacan. Janan 1994 conducts a Lacanian analysis of desire in Catullan lyric. Miller 1994: 125 defines the kind of society that generates lyric in a manner quite relevant to Cicero's social position at the time that he began indulging himself in correspondence: "...the lyric genre requires a society with a group of educated people who possess sufficient standing in the community to lay claim to a voice in its collective discourse but who do not, at the same time, occupy so high a rank that their interests are perceived as being identical to that of the state...moreover in order for these conditions to be such as would permit the emergence of the lyric genre, this attention must be focused on the poets as individuals and artists, not as representatives of their particular group, or of society's ruling class."

and Augustan periods.[28] For Cicero the accession of Caesar as dictator was an event that transformed the fluctuations of anxiety attendant upon normal competition into a different kind of crisis in which the erasure of self was both to be feared and desired. Why was C. Marcellus able to live philosophically in his chosen exile at Mytilene while Cicero was casting himself about so restlessly in Rome? Lacan puts the situation quite simply: "*Your money or your life!* If I choose the money I lose both. If I choose life, I have life without the money, namely a life deprived of something."[29] Marcellus, one might say, had chosen life, but Cicero refused the choice.

In terms of Cicero's struggle with the Roman symbolic, nothing worse than Caesar's accession could happen, because the dictator virtually laid claim to embody Rome's Name-of-the-Father. By taking *auctoritas* upon himself, and even with a loud profession of assuming its responsibilities as well as its privileges, Caesar made himself a substitute for *mos maiorum*, creating a total disassociation of the logical interrelationship between the imaginary ego world and the symbolic. Slovoj Žižek offers some illuminating analogies to Caesar's usurpation in the symbolic language of present-day popular culture when he shows how, in horror fiction and movies, the return of the Real takes monstrous forms that both threaten everyday life and illuminate it.[30] As Žižek phrases it, "The role of the Lacanian real is...radically ambiguous: true it erupts in the form of a traumatic return, derailing the balance of our daily lives, but it serves at the same time as a support of this very balance. What would our daily life be without some support in *an answer of the real*."[31] As will be seen, the particular horror that confronts Cicero in Caesar's monstrous intrusion is that its "answer" to daily life defeats expectations of the worst that could happen at one and the same time

[28]Paul Allen Miller in "Why Propertius is a Woman," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South in 1998: "Propertius is a woman because his subject position cannot be precisely located anywhere within the conventional Roman, and therefore masculine space, ideological space (Wyke 1995: 120–21). In this context his inversion of normative gender roles in assuming the position of *servus amoris* can be seen as part of a wider ideological and rhetorical strategy in which the norms of gender, discourse and power are called into question in a fashion more radical than the concept of mere opposition can convey. To that extent, the Propertian text can be read as symptomatic of a more profound dissension at the heart of the Symbolic itself, one that figures the norms of discourse as radically incommensurate with the poet's Imaginary reflections of the self's experience.

[29]Lacan 1981: 212.

[30]Žižek 1991: 21–26.

[31]Žižek 1991: 29.

that its occurrence constitutes the worst. As Lacan says in speaking of alienation, "One lack is superimposed upon another."[32] A perception of lack in the Other is being tested by the subject's fantasy of his own death or disappearance.[33] Thus absence becomes the new desirable object rather than the cause of desire.

Strip-Tease

As an introductory example, I present some observations concerning the interrelationship between epistolary dialogue and the construction of personal identity in a letter to L. Papirius Paetus (*Fam.* 9.26). The approximate date of 17 November 46 which Shackleton Bailey assigns to it places it shortly after Caesar had left Rome for Spain.[34] Amid the climate of release that will have followed the dictator's departure, the moment was apt for testing the tensions that his presence had created. Cicero is a guest at the table of Volumnius Eutrapelus, likewise a minor correspondent. Like Paetus he is an Epicurean; but he is also a Caesarian, which is to make him a somewhat different breed of Epicurean. Writing as from his couch at the table, Cicero composes a spectacular example of what Roland Barthes called narrative strip-tease, that is "a progressive unveiling" that promises some consummate revelation of body as a fulfillment of desire.[35] Here, in fact, the consummation negates the promise, since Cicero, after all the preliminaries, doubles the tease by preserving his *dignitas* and keeping his tunic on. Theoretically he has other than carnal proclivities to reveal.

The strip-tease is a product of the letter's dialogic approach to communication that delegates an unusual share of participation in revelations and reflections to the addressee. Cicero engages Paetus through several modes of questioning. Some questions are projected indirectly onto Paetus in order to sharpen anticipation of an answer. Thus Cicero announces that he is writing from the dinner couch and predicts Paetus' curiosity in response: *dices 'ubi?'*. Later, when he reveals the shocking identity of a fellow diner, he envisions Paetus' saying "And what was Cicero doing THERE?" But Cicero also addresses a series

[32]Lacan 1981: 215.

[33]Lacan 1981: 215 remarks how the fantasy of one's own death can be manipulated by the child in his love relations with his parents.

[34]Shackleton Bailey 1977: 353 *ad* 9.26 (#197). He bases his judgment on Cicero's mention of a projected trip to Cumae and on the "tone of political disillusionment" he sees in the letter.

[35]Barthes 1974: 19–20. In reviving the concept as a basis for analysis, Brooks 1993: 19 observes: "Barthes' model of narrative as strip-tease refers to the observer in a readable text which works towards a progressive solution of preliminary enigmas, toward a full prediction of a narrative sentence, toward a plenitude of memory. The desire to reach the end is the desire to see the truth unveiled. The body, the object of desire, is the focal point of fascinated attention."

of direct questions to Paetus: *Quid ergo faciam? Te consulo, qui philosophum audis....Quid adsequar?* From the very beginning of the letter until its conclusion, there is really no moment at which Paetus is allowed, either as observer or interlocutor, to be absent from the dialogue until he himself becomes trapped into participation in the very same manner of activity in which Cicero himself is indulging: that is, dining out. Finally, with a surprising reversal as if the letter were not precisely tailored to its recipient, he asks Paetus what has any of this to do with him: *at hercule cena num quid ad te, ibi praesertim?*

Naturally the function of the questions is to dramatize Cicero's revelations. The placement of these direct and indirect characterizations of the addressee artfully alternates them with short passages of Ciceronian confession or statement. At the outset Cicero prepares his reader for something slightly risqué by his self-portrayal, *accubueram hora nona*, as a bodily presence on the banquet couch. The writer enters physically into his own text with a hint at the erotic liberation of symposiastic occasions by mentioning the activity of "plowing letters into his tablets." This initial enticement of the spectator's gaze is followed by the revelation that the host is Caesarian, while fellow diners are Cicero's and Paetus' mutual *familiares*: Atticus and Verrius. Slaves all; they are making their servitude exhilarating. To dine with or consort with minor Caesareans, especially such a clever and harmless joker as Eutrapelus, is certainly a lesser servitude than dealing with Caesar himself. "Is there anything else to do?" (*Quid ergo faciam?*) he asks Paetus. "Is it better just to suffer?" All the same he does allow Paetus to ask him why he should thus indulge himself: *'Vivas,' inquis 'in litteris'*. The next revelation comes as rejoinder. Cicero *does*, he insists, live in letters but even that alternative life has its limits of tolerance. If not satiety there is measure (*sed est earum etiam non satietas sed quidam modus*) and the need for relaxation, for human company. What else can a man do in the hours that preface sleep?

But there is more: *audi reliqua*. Moralizing seems to have distracted Cicero from the truly compromising detail of his situation, at which now he arrives with the sudden unveiling of the actress Cytheris beside her lover. Here is another tease, most of all for the modern reader who would like to hear more of the celebrated lady, because attention does not linger upon the couple but turns instantly back to the incongruity of Cicero's presence in such company, shown first by the surprised response that he projects upon Paetus: *'in eo igitur' inquis, 'convivio Cicero ille'*...followed by a sudden choral riveting of attention upon his own figure: *"Quem aspectabant, cuius ob os Grai ora obvertebant sua?"*

This of course is the climactic moment towards which Cicero has built his reader's anticipation, but now, by resisting the scandal of the lady's attractions, he makes the moment disappointingly anticlimactic. "I wasn't expecting her" he prudishly protests, whereupon he gives a determined wrap to his clothing by summoning up the substitute persona of the Socratic Aristippus to take his tunic off. For Aristippus does keep a courtesan and also keeps his autonomy. "He may have Lais, but is not had by her." Here Cicero gives Paetus another part of the action when he recommends him to retranslate the saying into Greek. There follows another revelation—disappointing, but one might have expected it—of Cicero's sexual indifference (9.2.2), a characteristic of the younger man grown even more typical of himself in age (*me vero nihil istorum ne iuvenem quidem movit umquam, ne nunc senem*).

For sex Cicero claims to substitute company. The *convivium* itself, Cicero professes, gives pleasure as an antidote to despair; it is a transformative atmosphere where groans are converted into guffaws. Here Paetus again enters in with a role to play. As a long-time devotee of the *cena*, Paetus should sympathize with this craving for sociability. In confirmation Cicero teasingly turns Paetus's gaze upon himself, stripping him down as an on-stage performer by recreating a scene in which he played the parasite at a philosophical lecture. "Has anyone a question?" the philosopher asks, expecting something about the nature of the cosmos, and Paetus replies "I've been looking all morning for my dinner."

Obviously what Cicero accomplishes through the dialogical address of this letter is not so much to analyze himself as to stage himself for Paetus' viewing. At the same time the very business of this staging denies whole-hearted engagement with the activity being staged. Although the occasion is a dinner, nothing here concerns food. Given the political charge that is implicit within the company, there is also nothing about the politics of the gathering and no further notice of the company itself after the revelation of Cytheris' presence has been made. While jotting with his stylus, this self-observing guest is partially absent from the society that he claims so much to be enjoying. Therefore he remains only partially present within the deprived conditions that have driven him to vary his quiet and studious life by such diversions. Yet this quiet life, this living *in litteris*, is in itself a compensatory mode of transferring the intellectual character of the old Cicero into the serious pursuits of the new. Where is the real Cicero centered? He is indeed taking shape within these *litterae* he inscribes as a composite figure—not in his own eyes, but rather in those of Paetus, who is entrusted with piecing together all these fragmentary images and seeing how the devices to

which the new Cicero is resorting are actually confirmations of the old. It is the old Cicero, the unchanged Cicero who denies the erotic charge of the *convivium*; who participates only through critical evaluation of the larger context of servitude; who insists that the core of his character remains the same although circumstances may have altered his politics.

Before granting Cicero total control over his situation, however, we might pause to consider whether there isn't something rather exaggerated about his infusion of an erotic coloring into this seemingly rather standoffish social encounter with Eutrapelus' mistress? The point is, after all, only one of decorum, of lending one's august presence to compromising company; it would have been only genuinely erotic if Cytheris had supplied a companion of her own stamp to recline beside Cicero himself. Nonetheless the Aristippus citation with its identification of masculine sexual possession and self-possession definitely carries an erotic charge, which in fact the original Greek will render even more erotic by a play upon the double sense of "possession."[36] Are the majority of Roman males sexually excited by the mere sight of another man's mistress, or, rather, is the suggestivity Cicero teases out of this self-image something that the ordinary man might not even recognize? By the same token, this apparent over-valuation of a mere hint of erotic stimulation might seem to place a corresponding strain upon his profession of youthful continence, indicating the absence both then and now of a normally desirous man. What Cicero seems to want to tell us is that political gratification is superior to sexual pleasure for him, but now that the political man is as far distant as the sexual, the impassivity he professes in the face of provocation to desire must be transferred to political bafflement. Conviviality may answer to Paetus' needs, but it can only begin to satisfy Cicero by its failure to compensate. Thus to be living convivially *in litteris* is to be living within a vacuous space. The ultimate revelation of Cicero's dialogic strip-tease is the absence of the truly desired self.

If this dialogue between the familiar and unfamiliar stands out for its dramatic and thematic coherence, it is also representative of these two groups of letters in its treatment of self-definition through the posting of a spectator to discern elements of the genuinely Ciceronian in the conduct of the disoriented self. Two instances in which the spectator is not the addressee, but an additional witness, are particularly striking. In the opening letter of the Varro sequence (*Fam.* 9.1), it is Cicero's books who are the first to grant him favor upon his

[36]This is seemingly the import of Shackleton Bailey's explanation (1977: 357).

return to Rome. They pardon his defection to less faithful comrades in turbulent times and recall him to a previous mode of life. For "books" we will eventually come to understand "Varro," who figures throughout these letters as a model of philosophical stability to whom Cicero assimilates his less settled self.

In 9.16, to Paetus, Cicero shows Caesar himself playing the role of observer. While keeping constantly informed of all that the new Cicero says and does through the agency of their mutual associates, Caesar shows his knowledge of the old Cicero's character by his ability to distinguish a genuine Ciceronian witticism from a spurious one, in the manner of a seasoned philological critic judging the authenticity of Plautine lines. Cicero boasts that his witticisms are Caesar's favorite part of the daily intelligence reports on the orator's activities he receives from his *familiares*. In this context, which involves the curtailment of free personal expression, sociability equals surveillance. Because Paetus seems to have expressed concern for his welfare, Cicero attests to his caution (9.16.3). In place of the outspokenness (*libere loqui*) upon which he once prided himself, as being a freedom that his own civic leadership had produced, he has adapted a new decorum of giving no offense. Still he cannot, he claims, renounce his verbal dexterity, the style if not the substance of delivered opinions.[37] Whatever Caesar's informants have found *nec illitterata nec insulsa* seasons their testimony, and so his witticisms are all that remains of the old Cicero. Since Caesar is exercising final judgment on what is acceptable, however, even these witticisms are only an illusion of a vanished self.

Posting a spectator to view the self in action is a rhetorical ploy in perfect conformity with the Roman cultural valuation of performance, but since the self that these spectators are to discover can only be validated by absence, their recognition merely attests to the fragmentation of *ego* and the insubstantiality of the desired image. In this context the identity of the recipients also figures because of the partiality of their acquaintance with Cicero. Atticus could not in the same manner perform the role of a reflecting Other; his function as addressee is always to mirror the Ciceronian object of desire as a unitary second self. Atticus, however, as we know from a mention in Paetus' letter, as well as by the absence of correspondence directed to him, was with Cicero in Rome during the months of 46 and thus experiencing similar circumstances of daily life. In the

[37]Corbeill 1996: 214–15 takes this claim to prove its opposite. He finds a sinister implication in this picture of Caesar as literary critic, suggesting that Cicero's wit is wholly restrained.

eyes of this spectator the performing Cicero cannot be absent, nor can an imperfect identity be idealized through division or multiplicity.

The interaction of present and former Ciceros within the contrasting roles of social actor and sage created by the two sequences of letters leads to the "*Bi-marcus*" of my title, which I borrow from the title given one of the collections of satirical fragments among the *Menippeans* of Varro.[38] Recently Joel Relihan wrote of this satire, "If our knowledge of it were more certain, [this satire] might be the most important of the *Menippeans* for our understanding of Varro's opinion of them."[39] Because these fragments are too disjointed for any clear sequence or argument to emerge, scholars have given a variety of explanations for the *Double Marcus*, but the consensus among contemporary Varronians is that it represents a confrontation, most likely a dialogue, between two masks of Marcus engaged in a critical examination of each other. That these are two sides to one self was the opinion of Bruno Mosca, who spoke of Varro and his *alter ego*,[40] or, as Relihan cites Bakhtin with more emphasis upon dichotomy and conflict: "The Author Split in Two."[41] That the competition has something to do with literary and scholarly activity is suggested from the prominence in one fragment of *tropoi* in an apparent double sense, as a speaker protests against the charge of confusing the tropes of rhetorical terminology and discourse with the heroic adventures of Odysseus, introduced as the man of many turns.[42] The satire makes most sense when this line is juxtaposed, as Jean-Pierre Cèbe has done, with fragment 60, where an unidentified speaker addresses *'Marce'* once again critically, making the accusation that drunkenness produces his confusion.[43] But the satire also has metaphors of food consumption in it, as we may gather from the juxtaposition of Rome with a Polyphemus-like image of gluttony (*magna uti tremescat Roma et magnae mandonum gulae*, fr. 53), and the presence of food as motif may also be suspected in fragments 54–55, when Jupiter sends his thunderbolt into the *tholum macelli chortis cocorum atque hamiotarum aucupumque*.[44]

[38]Title and fragments from Nonus.

[39]Relihan 1993: 62.

[40]Mosca 1937: 65. He interprets the satire as built upon "changes." The first change involves Varro himself, who sees his personality doubled. Varro and his other self represent two halves of a contrast. "Il Marco, lodatore degli antichi, appunta Le sue critiche contra lo Marco moderno e quest lo rimbecca."

[41]Relihan 1993: 50; Bakhtin 1981: 26–27.

[42]Relihan 1993: 63–65.

[43]Cèbe 1974: 196; 218–21.

[44]Here I follow Astbury's edition.

The dichotomy of literary and rhetorical approaches may, as Mosca sees it, be related to Varro's use in other satirical contexts of Odysseus as a catalyst whose return from wars and peregrinations provides occasion for commenting upon the alienation of the speaker from the contemporary world.[45] Varro wrote his satires during the period 80–67, that is, in the aftermath of the Social War. The basic attraction of Menippean was its already inherent freedom to cut loose from consistency in presenting a topsy-turvy world from correspondingly fragmented points of view.[46] If the scholars and theorists are right about Varro, his satires do mark an innovation in Roman literary self-representation through the introduction of conflicting personae to accommodate the multiplicity or fragmentation of the self in response to perceptions of a changed and continuously changing world. The criticism of present-day Rome by comparison with past standards provides characteristic color, yet not without awareness of the fundamental absurdity of resisting the times upon which one's position is dependent. Self-parody and a sense of the ineffectiveness of literary discourse can be glimpsed within many fragments. Characterizing himself as a pedant narrator, Relihan suggests, Varro embodies within his own person a contradiction between stylistic and moral concerns and "makes fun not only of his intellectual and moral interests, but also of his position as a writer of works that betray a confusion of the two." From this manner of articulating inarticulation, Relihan argues, eventually derives a long tradition of introspective authorial self-parody.[47]

Does Cicero also find Varro a model of introspection? Does writing letters about philosophy to Varro and social activity to Paetus bring the double image of Varro's satire to mind? The point is not to be proven philologically, nor do I want to urge it in any strict intertextual sense, because my comparison remains general rather than specific. Still, as will be seen, attention to dining and luxurious food is one point of contingency between the letters and Menippeans. Furthermore, we do know that Cicero had not forgotten Varro's early satirical production at the moment of writing his *Academica*, because of the specific explanation he assigns

[45]Mosca 1937: 63 places *Bimarcus* within the same category as *Sesculixes,* in which he sees "Varro become a new Ulysses," but actually one whose adventures and wanderings so far surpass those of his original both in variety and in duration that he is really a "Ulysses and a half." On the other hand, these two masks of Marcus may also be seen as two alternative roles for a speaker, neither one, which is to say the philosophical or the literary man, identical with the person himself.

[46]Relihan 1993: 24–25.

[47]Relihan 1993: 65. By making the difficulty of expressing his ideas in print a proper topic for Menippean satire, Varro inspires the introspective authors of the late Roman period for whom the struggle to write a meaningful book is part of their self-parodic presentation.

to the writer himself: *in illis veteribus nostris quae Menippum imitati, non interpretati, quadam hilaritate conspersimus, multa admixta ex intima philosophia, multa dicta dialectice quae quo facilius minus docti intelligerent, iucunditate quadam ad legendum invitati...* (*Ac. Post.* 1.8). One might wonder whether this description of jocularity intermingled with philosophy represents Cicero's own reading of the *Menippeans* or Varro's retrospective view of his work, but its mention of *dialectice* underlines the idea of interchange. While Cicero never confronts himself with a second Marcus in letters or dialogues, nevertheless his conscious employment of spectators and his division of personae might seem to reflect not only the performative self-consciousness of his rhetorical training but also his perception of circumstances whose complexity engendered multiple views of the self as their inevitable response.

Caesar

Why does Caesar's usurpation of *mos maiorum* generate multiplicity? An external pressure to redefine *ethos* imposed by the ambivalent patronage of a victorious Caesar jeopardizes the desire for Ciceronian integrity more critically than the overt perils of civil conflict had done.[48] As a recent defender of the two "Caesarian orations," Harold Gotoff has asserted their intellectual respectability by positioning them within a context of long-standing, if grudging, mutual admiration between Cicero and Caesar and analyzing their style as a sophisticated rhetorical game played out between two intelligences well attuned to the subtleties of each other's thought.[49] While this observation aptly encompasses Gotoff's demonstration of the rhetorical artistry of the orations, that artistry nonetheless spans a chasm of inequality in *auctoritas* greater than any previous discrepancy between the positions of the two men. A success that is merely compensatory, that painfully underlines the handicaps of the speaker's

[48]Dyer 1990: 19–23 reviews the ways in which several scholars have viewed Roman aristocratic reactions to Caesar's clemency.

[49]Once rejected even on the grounds of an unCiceronian Latinity, and often passed over as an embarrassment because of their overtly complimentary treatment of Caesar, these speeches have, in recent years, been readmitted to the corpus of rhetorically interesting orations by scholars giving attention to their psychological nuancing. Rambaud 1984: 43–56 argues for the political and intellectual respectability of the *pro Marcello*, noting, as evidence of the latter, its use of formulas from Stoic logic to construct a position for Caesar that is acceptable to the state. May 1988: 140–55 studies the construction of persona as *ethos* in the *pro Ligario*. Dyer 1990: 17–30 bases a wholly ironic reading of the speech upon an interpretation of its "figures of double meaning." Gotoff 1993a: xii–xiii remarks of both speeches that "they pit Rome's greatest master of the psychology of persuasion against Rome's cleverest and most subtle intellect."

position, scarcely conforms to Cicero's theoretical ideal of oratory which, at the moment, is only freely embodied in the dialogues on the subject. Thus he says at *Brutus* 2.6 that Hortensius died happier than he himself, as Hortensius' successor, now lives in seeing the forum, his *theatrum ingenii*, bereft of eloquence. When in the *pro Marcello* Cicero thanks Caesar for his restoration to public speaking, we may remember how recently, in *Orator* 2.7–3.10, he had moved his ideal orator, as a subject for discussion, out of the senate and forum and into the realm of Platonic ideas.[50]

In laying out the background for the Caesarian orations, Gotoff comments, "Successful politics requires the ability to shift allegiances from time to time. The forces with which a politician deals are not static and reliable."[51] Cicero had said much the same thing himself in 54, and backed it with Plato's authority, when explaining to Lentulus Spinther how he had come to shift his allegiance from old optimates to the triumvirs (*Fam.* 1.9.18–21). Valid as the defense may have been, however, it would seem that cool reason could never entirely agree with conscience about this compromise, with its devastating implications for Cicero's view of himself. The most disorienting aspect of Caesar's conduct was not a threat to life and property, but rather the opposite: his policy of conciliation and clemency that—Africa and its immediate aftermath notwithstanding—was beginning to emerge with increasing clarity. In the pardons extended to Marcellus, the consul who had barred Caesar from Rome, and Ligarius, *clementia* was giving Cicero no small part to play; but it was a part that, all the same, required alienation from a cherished image of an heroically independent self. One must consider the personal politics of the situation, and then the way in which these are reflected in the *pro Marcello* and countered by the letters.

As scholars well know, Cicero, from the year of his consulship at least, had formed a habit of conceptualizing his career and political participation as a series of courageous elevations to meet heroic challenges. Clodius, with his persecutions, readily filled the place left vacant by Catiline's murderous plotting and remained a satisfactory enemy even after his death. Needing self-dramatization, Cicero constructed his course of conduct upon the model of heroic self-sacrifice ennobled by mythology and tradition. So, in *pro Sestio* 48, we hear him proclaim himself ready to face death with the same resolution as his fellow citizens Mucius Scaevola, Publius Decius Mus, and Marcus Crassus. When such

[50]Obviously the dialogue, completed during the spring of 46, could not have anticipated the two orations.

[51]Gotoff 1993a: xxii.

dramatization placed him at the center of conflict, *ethos* might begin to satisfy the cravings of desire.

To fulfill his sense of an embattled self, Cicero also needed an adversarial Caesar, that is to say a Caesar of his own emotional construction, and the problem of the real, political Caesar was simply that he possessed too much intelligence and acuity to live up to the worst that could be expected of him. From the early days of Caesar's appearance on stage, Cicero had recognized, however grudgingly, not only his capacities for conceptualizing and executing policies, but also the wisdom of being allied with him in *amicitia*. Not without a sense of irony does he remark to Quintus Cicero (*Q. fr.* 3.5) that, of all his influential associates, only Caesar loves him as he should.

Occasionally Caesar's conduct did afford moments of oppositional self-dramatization that could also justify the wish for a *Mucianus exitus* (*Att.* 9.12), as Cicero wrote Atticus in mid-March of the year 49 B.C.E. When he broke with Pompey and the senate *in absentia*, the figure of the far-away Caesar marching towards Rome was a empty *tabula* upon which to paint the portrait of a dangerous and imaginatively satisfying tyrant, however stereotyped the image might be.[52] A strain of excitement runs through the letters written to Atticus during the first two months of the year but becomes progressively subdued by common-sense evaluation of the realities of the situation. In his letter to Atticus of 24 January 49, with the kind of exhilaration we feel before a rising storm, Cicero dramatizes the way that rumor charts the course of Caesar's march from the North as a sequence of towns either captured or besieged. Here Caesar is a foreign invader, a Hannibal or a Gaul, acting incongruously in the name of his Roman *dignitas*. Death is at least metaphorically in Cicero's thoughts as he moralizes on the irresponsibility of the quest for *regnum*.

In early February Cicero is ready to die with Pompey defending Italy and Caesar's potential is only for what kind of tyrant he will prove: a brutal Phaleris or a constructive Peisistratus. A few days later Cicero raises the Sullan image—fear of a massacre—but attributes this fear to Atticus while himself remarking,

[52]The rhetoric of the letters from early 49 B.C.E. presents this figure momentarily in the mold of what Dunkle 1967: 151–71 has so aptly termed the rhetorical tyrant: a composite figure formed from scraps of Greek tragedy added to early Roman history and merged into the remembered realities of the Roman Social Wars. Cicero's characterizations of Verres, Clodius, Piso in various orations show his awareness of the rhetorical effectiveness of tyranny and its vices, but his deliberate manipulation of the topos by no means indicates that he can view it with supreme detachment himself.

from Caesar's perspective, that it would scarcely be advantageous to the profile he aims to project (7.22). On February 17 (*Att.* 8.2), as he determines to stay in the city, Cicero poses the stereotypical question "Can you bear the sight of a tyrant?" and answers it with reference to the example of Socrates and the Thirty rather than to present circumstances. In later February, he acknowledges the appearance of Caesar's clemency while suspicious that it might be a prelude to cruelty (8.9a), but by 27 February (8.11) he notes that Pompey also aims to play the despot on the Sullan model. By now he has come to expect that an angered Caesar is more likely to take action against his property than his person. The dramatic satisfaction of anticipating death fails in the face of mundane conditions. By the first of March he concedes the astuteness of Caesar's policy in abjuring the tyrannical actions one dreads. In 8.13 he remarks how those who feared Caesar are beginning to trust him.[53] Throughout these discussions, it is reiterated that Cicero could gladly "lay down his life for Pompey" but doubts Pompey's effectiveness as a leader or his intention of restoring the republic. Thus Cicero's own political sense impedes the motivations of desire and plunges him into nothing more dramatic than the limbo of indecision.

Naturally, the desire for heroic embattlement is neither merely personal nor purely Ciceronian. It may properly be characterized as Cicero's manner of fitting his self-image into his conceptualization of Roman culture. With reference to the early Empire, Carlin Barton in her *Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* has illuminated the psychological boundary-crossing by which the Roman aristocrat comes to find that his deprived self can best find fulfillment by projection onto that socially outlawed figure, the gladiator, with his dedication to conflict and death.[54] While showing how this figure answered the emotional needs of the empire, Barton traces its origins to the power struggles of the late Republic.

Rhetorically, Cicero seldom made gladiators into heroes. Throughout most of his forensic career he reserved the comparison for his verbal debasement of such violence-arousing enemies as Catiline, Clodius, Vatinius, and finally Antony.[55] Whenever he does refer to the gladiator as a model of courage, it is

[53]More images in *Att.* 9.1; 9.5; 9.6; 9.7.

[54]Barton 1993: 18–19, 22, 37 comments on Cicero's rather grudging praises of gladiatorial courage. The most positive of these actually occur in writings of the period when Cicero had begun facing down Antony (*Phil.* 13.14.35; *Tusc.* 2.17.41). In the *de Oratore*, however, he does use gladiatorial metaphors with relationship to some aspects of oratorical performance (*de Orat.* 2.317, 326).

[55]Leach (forthcoming) treats the strategic concentration of this imagery in the argument of the *pro Sestio*. Of references outside that oration, twenty-one occur throughout all the

always within a context of servitude, as when he concludes the *pro Milone* by noting how the public always wishes to spare the gladiators who show themselves brave and spirited as they offer their persons to death (*Mil.* 92).[56] For himself he prefers heroes with noble names and legends. Nonetheless, gladiatorial enemies may serve to provoke a gladiatorial response from those whom they attack. Such a mind-set emerges in what Cicero considers one of his finer moments when he reports to Atticus how his interview with Caesar on March 28 ended in a frigid stand-off. No great good was done for the Republic, but he has eluded Caesar's manipulative intentions by saying what the dictates of his loyalty to Pompey and the optimate cause would have him say. Caesar desires Cicero to come to Rome and lend his good countenance to the new regime in the role of conciliator. On what terms will he speak? When Caesar answers evasively, Cicero expresses his opposition, ending with a declaration of loyalty to Pompey. "This is not what I want you to say." The consequence is a new sense of independence, of control over one's own fate: *credo igitur hunc me non amare, at ego me amavi, quod mihi iam pridem usu non venit* (*Att.* 9.18). Failing to avert conflict, he has salvaged his personal self-respect. Is Cicero then free to fear? Not really, although he describes in a succeeding paragraph the utter *nekuia* of the reprobates surrounding Caesar.

If, however, a dangerous Caesar provided self-reinforcement, a victorious yet beneficent Caesar dispels energizing fear and erodes self-respect by insidious transformation. With death no longer at stake, and most clearly disadvantageous to the victor, power is exercised by seduction, by courtship. When Cicero again enters into the role of conciliator in 46 it is no longer with the self-gratifying aim of averting conflict he had cherished in 49; rather, his efforts will save face for Caesar. Being himself a chief example, a conspicuous target for Caesar's benevolence, he is now in the position to urge its extension to others. Not only the political but also the psychological stakes have been altered by a needful relocation of self-preserving desire. No longer can one satisfy the emotional craving for embattlement by believing the worst of Caesar, since now, in the interest of colleagues still out of favor, it is necessary to hope for and to predict the best. This is the substance of letters to exiled *familiares* of various ranks and degrees of friendship: Trebonius, Ligarius, Marcellus, Caecina, Nigidius Figulus.

Philippics, seven in the second Catilinarian, three in the *in Pisonem* and occasional mentions in other post-*Reditum* speeches, such as the *in Vatinium* and the *pro Murena.*

[56]Axer 1989: 31–43 (English summary 42–43) argues that the entire oration has been conceived as the staging of a gladiatorial combat.

The dilemma of self-recognition assumes a new dimension. Certainly Cicero welcomes the opportunity to be of some manner of service to old optimate colleagues, thereby exercising the power of personal patronage as he liked it to be, even in some cases requiting equivalent favors to himself. Thus one may see his particular efforts on behalf of the ex-consul Marcellus and the way in which he pushes this case to make returning to Rome a virtual obligation of citizenship, even though Marcellus was apparently quite contented in his philosophical exile.[57] In addition to the gratifications of successful patronage, his current position offers certain psychological benefits. For one thing, it provides a chance to rehearse the drama of his own exile and recall from a happily reversed point of view. For another, it gives him the opportunity to assuage both personal and public guilt for the failure either to have supported Pompey to the last or died in the cause. This theme, which will enter into the *pro Marcello*, is stated strongly in a letter to Nigidius Figulus of July 46 (*Fam.* 4.13.2) that is, perhaps on the basis of old acquaintance and similar rank, among the most outgoing and discursive of the letters.

In this letter Cicero seems careful not to define his position as one of strength but rather of uncertainty stemming from dispossession. On the one hand, while apologizing that one has not already died with the bravest, he wants to think that death from a misstep would still be possible. On the other hand, there is a kind of symbolic death that comes from marginalization, of putting one's best skills in desuetude within a world where old customs and procedures that employed these skills are themselves defunct. Caesar's associates have chosen to cultivate him and Caesar himself shows affability. As Cicero says to Nigidius, however, whatever influence he may in these circumstances wield, it is not that same influence he used to possess as merited by the actions of his past career.

Instead the new climate demands new skills. In these letters Cicero represents himself as proceeding with caution while he urges patience upon his correspondents. In a state where his own situation is the product of clemency, he remains passively watching the signs to note how Caesar's tendencies are gravitating more and more towards generous leniency (4.13.6). Through all these letters with their varied degrees of intimacy and relaxation, Cicero consistently develops this pose of observer. The primary skill he employs is that of *reading* Caesar, that is to say of creating a character for him that will accomplish the desired end. A letter to Aulus Caecina (*Fam.* 6.6) makes this semiotic activity

[57]Gotoff 1993a: xxi–xxxi.

into a form of skilled augural reading, classing signs in two categories: those of Caesar's own nature and those of the times. In order to reassure his colleagues, Cicero must absorb Caesar's mentality, his essence, and remake it within himself. In thus acquiescing to the erotics of power, he accepts Caesar's Other as the object of desire—but, like all such objects, it is ambivalent. The fact that Caesar, the monster who has inserted himself into the Real, now possesses *auctoritas* in a guise that aims to be humane rather than monstrous is what makes him most monstrous of all, for its attendant danger is now, far more than ever before, the danger of not loving or not recognizing the self.[58] The peril of *becoming* Caesar is the ultimate peril of *clementia*.

Pro Marcello

In the *pro Marcello* Cicero does in a sense become Caesar on the more public stage of the senate as he attempts to reformulate Caesar's character in a manner compatible with an acceptable public image of self.[59] Opening with a vision of return to former custom amidst an approach to a vanished and vanquished *res publica*, the speech climaxes, one might say, with a brief but celebrated catalogue of Caesar's reforms, couched in terms of exhortation to attend to the needs of the state (23). A reformed Caesar, we hear, must also be a true Caesar whose real nature emerges in the conversion of *gloria* from victory to *clementia*. This is a Caesar whom misguided optimates can now perceive their error in having at any time opposed, and the best of them did of course have reservations (13). It is a Caesar so dedicated to peace and to peace-making that he regrets the war he has fought, a Caesar so far from vindictive that he would like to resurrect dead men from the battlefield (17), and finally a Caesar whose safety everyone recognizes as being one and the same as the well-being of the state. Having made his enemies into friends, this is a Caesar whom Cicero can serve as a trusted confidant (19–20). As one might say in rhetorical terms, Cicero builds an *ethos* for Caesar here in order to rebuild his own.

[58]Corbeill 1996: 210–11 speaks very much to this point when he notes Cicero's use in the *pro Ligario* of a comparison with a schoolmaster deciding upon the punishment of his pupils, a comparison that elsewhere forms part of Cicero's private ironic humor about Caesar.

[59]Rambaud 1984: 54–55 sees Cicero's general purpose as taking advantage of Caesar's longest period of residence in Rome to formulate a program and to offer council on a policy of staffing the senate with other than Caesarian adherents. Thus, Rambaud concludes, Cicero has remained true to himself. Somewhat differently, Dyer 1990 argues for Cicero's integrity on the basis of a recognizable irony, proposing that "the bind into which Cicero's hyperbolic praise puts Caesar works because Caesar does not understand it."

While the speech may talk *at* Caesar with multiple repetitions of his name and familiar personal pronouns, and also talk *about* him as the focus of public attention, one must not forget that it incorporates as its corollary audience that assemblage of *patres conscripti* to whom its opening words are directed and with whom Cicero identifies his own speaking voice in conclusion.[60] Naturally it is this audience before whom Cicero feels called upon to justify his own changes of sentiment and allegiance through an interplay of portraiture and prediction. Cicero restored to self in consequence of Marcellus' restoration is the theme announced in the opening words of the oration and reiterated at the end. Not only has he been restored, he has even been allowed to assuage long-suffered guilt for the inequality between the fortunes of Marcellus and himself. This design is scarcely accidental, as Gotoff notes, remarking how logical it might have been to begin with the theme of "gentle Caesar" or "noble Marcellus."[61] Instead the rhetoric constructs itself as a turning point in Cicero's own career; it celebrates the dissolution of silence enforced by sorrow and embarrassment (*verecundia)* rather than fear and announces the beginning of a return to a *pristinus mos dicendi*—but yet within a context that in itself evidences how impossible such a return is. With the possible exception of the passages on Caesar's safety that lament the concentration of public welfare into one person (32), there is very little clear irony in the *pro Marcello*, save for the larger irony of the oration itself in denying the realities it represents. Despite all the bravado, a Cicero recreated by Caesar is a new Cicero in place of the old. Accepting and confessing his seduction by Caesar's dangerous power, he is Cicero become the Other to his former self.

If Cicero were contented with this new *ethos* it would be one thing; but, of course, these occasions that restored his speaking presence did not alter the way in which he wanted his opinions to be perceived. Among the various letters surrounding and explaining the speech, the apologia sent to Sulpicius Rufus, who was absent from Rome as governor of Achaia (*Fam.* 4.4), incorporates some of the phraseology we see in the written text in order to gloss the occasion with all the reservations that the actual oration withheld. Looking from behind the scenes, we understand that the *dies pulcher* merely seemed fair (*visus est*) and the vision of the resurrected republic was in fact an insubstantial appearance *ut speciem aliquam viderer videre quasi reviviscentis rei publicae.* As a commentator on the oration, the reluctant speaker of the letter rewrites the fluent

[60]Gotoff 1993a: 13 points out that the senators are addressed in these passages, while Caesar is elsewhere the direct addressee.

[61]Gotoff 1993a: 12.

speaker of the public occasion in order to correct any possible false impressions that the ease and confidence of its visible persona might have engendered. Thus Cicero goes on to explain, in terms that echo the speech, that the motivation for his own silence had not been inertia; rather, that longing *desiderio pristinae dignitatis* had effected his reluctance to speak. But in the letter Cicero construes this breaking of silence less positively (*Fam.* 4.4.4) when he complains of having delivered the *pro Marcello* at the sacrifice of the *honestum otium* that had been his sole consolation for the troubles of the time (*unum solacium in malis*). Nonetheless, he claims that dedication to his everyday pursuit of philosophy is the only genuinely efficacious remedy for the troubled mind (*ut nulla res alia levare animum molestiis possit*, 4.4.5). The ultimate refusal of capitulation comes in the letter's final paragraph, where Cicero demonstrates that he has *not* been genuinely seduced by Caesar in noting that it is probably not wise to take any action unless it is something that Caesar wishes. That is to say that the political world is so paradoxical that the only way in which an old self can be sustained is through denial of its possible existence.

The compulsion to rewrite the image of a self in public performance for the perusal of a colleague of Republican sympathies who, not having witnessed the speech in person, was very likely to be receiving impressions from other external witnesses, foregrounds the complex interactions between writer and recipient to be seen in Cicero's letters. Another version of *otium* occurs, however, in the letters to Varro and Paetus.

Varro

Cicero's first letter to Varro (*Fam.* 9.1), dated to 47 or early 46, contains an implicit analogy that anticipates the tenor of the ensuing correspondence. Upon returning to Rome, he declares, he has made peace with his books, whose use he had virtually abrogated, not from any fault on their part but rather because his own conduct had filled him with shame for insufficient obedience to their principles. Now they have pardoned him, even welcomed him home. Into this homely example Cicero encodes the solace and the assistance that he hopes to receive from the scholarly Varro himself.

Tyrrell and Purser thought that Cicero really did not like Varro.[62] Rawson's subtler observation is that Cicero was never quite easy with him.[63] Certainly he

[62]Tyrrell and Purser 1918: IV.lxxii.

[63]Rawson 1983: 210. Her points, however, are based upon literature rather than personal politics. If Cicero admired Varro's learning, he did not like his prose style. More recently Baier

would seem to have depended most often upon Atticus as go-between to negotiate the most important messages, including the complimentary dedication of the *Academica* in which Varro himself appeared as a participant.[64] What is striking in the eight letters written directly to Varro is the way in which Cicero portrays Varro as a figure who has pursued a better course of action than himself. In 9.1 Cicero's perspicacious books call Varro wiser than Cicero because he remains steadfast in the *consuetudo pristina* that Cicero had forsaken. In the major tribute of 9.5, Cicero characterizes him by the time-honored metaphor of the ship that has weathered storms and rests safely in port, but Varro is alone among republican associates to have achieved such tranquillity. This topic gives scope for the idealization of intellectual pursuits in their freedom from the pollution of politics; yet all their activities are presented in wishful terms and in the future tense. Perhaps because these letters are all anticipatory and never come to record the actual meeting that they are purportedly arranging, they project a certain distance combined with a sense of the unsatisfied. [65] In letter 9.8, written in June, Cicero does engage in a dialogue with Varro, but it is his own fictive conversation of the *Academica* in which the two participate, and Cicero himself is still impatiently awaiting the emergence of the *de Lingua Latina* whose dedication Varro has promised to him. Along with the four books, he includes a wish for future conversations, perhaps even about the dialogue itself.[66] Practically speaking, these eight letters may represent only a stage in the resumption of an intercourse that later became quite reciprocal with the exchange not only of dedications but also of visits. All the same, it is the immediate interchange and not its future that is relevant.

The letters as a group are written in anticipation of Caesar's return. Varro has retired to Tusculum; Cicero remains in Rome. The practical difference

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1997: 17–27 closely compares the two in terms of career and temperament and observes in conclusion that there was great mutual respect between them, but "absolutely no familiarity."

[64]Varro's position within Cicero's circle of acquaintance had been enigmatic during the early 50s while, in the midst of Clodius' emerging hostility, Cicero was looking to all his optimate contacts for support that did not materialize (*Att.* 2.25; 3.15; 4.14; 4.16). Correspondence with Atticus in June and July 45 (13.9–13.21) indicates that Varro has been expecting some literary tribute from Cicero, who—while eager to fulfill this expectation—still expresses anxious hesitations concerning the disposition of the sage: whether he really does want to receive a dedication from Cicero and also how the work is likely to be received.

[65]Griffin 1995: 340–41 notes how he jokingly employs bits of Stoic philosophy to discuss Varro's choice of meeting or not meeting.

[66]By virtue of Cicero's contemporaneous letter to Atticus (3.25) confessing the painstaking effort that this very elegant composition had cost him, we are able to see around this letter.

between their careers as Pompeians is not so great, save that Varro had played a more active role at the critical moment, commanding two legions in Spain and more readily following Pompey to Dyrrachium until disillusionment set in. Their mutual dissatisfaction with Republican conduct is a point that Cicero wants to emphasize. They followed Pompey, he says, "as a duty, not as a hope, and what they abandoned was no longer duty but despair" (9.5.2). In this context, Cicero places a high valuation upon Varro's recognizing a basic affinity with himself. Indeed Cicero might seem to be bringing out current dissimilarities of circumstance primarily to underscore the fundamental likeness beneath. Mutuality of evaluations and sentiments pervades the series, a professed sharing that instantly appears to the reader in several passages structured by a plenitude of equilibrating first-person plural verbs (9.2; 9.3; 9.5; 9.6). In the past this sharing had involved reservations and criticisms. "Together," as Cicero recalls, "they lamented the evil of a civil war and foresaw the destruction of one of the armies." Recognizing how negative a victory that gained in civil war would be, they "feared even the triumph of the camp they had joined" (9.6.3). In the present moment, however, this emotional distance has transformed itself into physical distance in the form of a bookish dedication to arts that seem "to bear richer fruit than they once did" (9.3.2). Beyond philosophy, however, the shared experience of the moment admits potentially unfavorable external perceptions: misunderstandings evinced in the form of gossip and calumny. It is best to avoid men's eyes if not their tongues (9.2). If the two visit Campania together, either at Cumae or at Baiae, their *otium* will be certain to draw criticism from men who do not know how little their locations alter their habits (9.3). This, however, the unsettled times and the rascality of men will justify their ignoring (9.3). The hardest censure to take is from those who themselves did nothing at all (9.5). Perhaps it is not wholly unfair to suggest that the prominence Cicero gives to the motif of shared slander indicates greater satisfaction in his intellectual and ideological association with Varro than any manner of serious discomfiture.

When we reflect upon what both Varro and Cicero were doing at this moment, it seems important that Varro's own pardon from and employment on behalf of Caesar will justify Cicero's action in the same cause. Thus in May, before Caesar's return, Cicero hopefully writes to Varro of their possible colleagueship in mutual employment, not only as designers or planners (*architecti*) but also as hands-on workers (*fabri*), should their neglected skills and prestige be once more called upon for rebuilding a state (*non deesse si quis adhibere volet, non modo ut architectos verum etiam ut fabros, ad aedificandam rem publicam, et potius libenter accurrere*, 9.2.5). Lacking such a summons,

they will follow with dignity the alternative course of writing and reading *politaeias* and, in the manner sanctioned by the wisest philosophers, they will build their republics away from the forum and senate house in letters and books. Later in June, with the news of Caesar's imminent arrival and the call still not come (9.6), Cicero speaks of his intention to imitate Varro in his cheerful acquiescence to a life of studies.

This statement hardly misrepresents Cicero's own activity during the summer of writing the *Brutus* and the *Orator*. In the following year, after much back-and-forth consultation with Atticus, he dispatches his *Academica* to Varro as a work-in-progress, with express hopes of hastening the promised *de Lingua Latina*. Here, as in 9.1, Cicero personifies *libri* as vocal presences, but this time they are the new *libri* pressuring Varro for fulfillment. Exposure of the letter to Atticus adds a witness to make the document at least semi-public. In spite of Cicero's earlier uneasiness concerning Varro's disposition towards receiving a public tribute from him, as well as his potential judgment upon the work itself, Cicero here confidently designates the dialogue as a symbolic declaration of sympathy and affection between the two, with only mild apologies for his liberty in fabricating Varro's persona to talk about things he never discussed (*sed nosti morem dialogorum*, 9.8.2). The theme is public confirmation of like-mindedness. As always there is the note of regret for disappearance of the public life in which the two might have exercised their mutual interests (*haec inter nos studia exercere possemus*, 9.8.2), yet nostalgia serves primarily to deepen the assertion that writing has become the only source of meaning in life (*nunc autem quid est sine his cur vivere velimus?* 9.8.2). For himself, he adds, it is all that makes life endurable.

Granted that the Cicero of the moment was resorting to study as a consolation, he is here writing to a colleague far more distinguished for scholarship than himself. Consequently, we might ask how genuinely this recipient needed to see his own intellectual dedication spelled out. Nor, indeed, does Cicero fail to acknowledge the redundancy of such comments when he speaks in one instance (9.3) of "bringing owls to Athena." Rather the Varro to whom Cicero assimilates himself so closely as a *melior ego* by his insistence upon the mutuality of intellectual dedication in these letters is a figure towards whom Cicero's self-representations have inclined as to a pole of active desire. With their emphasis on consistency and continuity the letters to Varro are a construction of *ethos* in the manner of an oration, with Varro at once the subject and the audience.

Paetus

As letter 9.26 has demonstrated, Cicero cultivated a more easy-going relationship with Paetus, based upon the confident articulation of common sympathies. Biographers regularly invoke the sequence of letters to Paetus to document the "hectic social life" with which Cicero occupied himself during these months in Rome.[67] Since it is not Paetus himself with whom Cicero is consorting, but rather the *familiares* of Caesar, the letters present a behind-the-scenes view of Caesar's conciliatory policies. That Paetus is an Epicurean philosopher appears in a letter of 50 B.C.E. in which Cicero asks his legal assistance in support of M. Fadius Gallus, who has often helped him out *in iis controversiis quas habeo cum tuis combibonibus Epicuri<i>s* (9.25).[68] At the beginning of this letter, Cicero, still serving out his proconsular governorship, teases Paetus about the knowledge of the literature of military science he had displayed in a letter congratulating Cicero upon his little victory. Thus reciprocal jocularity appears as a consistent mode of epistolary interaction between the two friends. However, the letters to Paetus composed in 46 play especially upon associations between Epicureanism and festivity.[69] Cicero characterizes Paetus as a man whose enjoyment of laughter enables others to laugh. At the close of the Volumnius letter, Cicero promises to visit Paetus as a guest bringing a larger appetite for jocularity than for food. The letter of August 46 (9.20) rejoices in the return of Paetus' ability to provoke laughter, thus revealing how he himself has been laughing in response to Cicero's provocation. He is a man with whom one can escape the constraints of dignity by playing the *scurra*'s part, and the right kind of sophisticate to receive a mock-learned letter that inquires, in the light of Stoic philosophy, whether obscenity is located within the word or within the thing, a letter whose emphasis on *double entendre* scarcely veils its concern with freedom of speech (9.22).[70]

How Paetus himself can play the *scurra* is shown by the anecdote with which Cicero teases him in the Volumnius letter (9.26), where we see him call out at a philosophical lecture: "Who will invite me to dinner?" Paetus' joviality stands apart from the two other modes of responding to present times that Cicero sees among those who frequent his morning *salutatio*: the many gloomy *boni*, and

[67]Rawson 1975: 216–17; Mitchell 1991: 280–81.

[68]Griffin 1995: 339 adopts Shackleton Bailey's understanding of the *controversiae* as philosophical table talk for which "Gallus was able to forearm Cicero in sparring with clever Epicureans."

[69]Griffin 1995: 335–39 illuminates the subtlety in Cicero's use of Stoic paradoxes to describe aspects of the situation in which Caesarian politics has placed him.

[70]As he says in conclusion, he has written *in tectis verbis* what the Stoics openly debate.

the *victores laeti* who insist upon cultivating him (*hos laetos victores, qui me quidem perofficiose et peramanter observant*, 9.20.3). Paetus the joker imitates Cicero's verbal thunderbolts and does it skillfully (9.21). He likes letters couched in plebeian language. Cicero sometimes teases his unpretentiousness. When Paetus, in some moment of misplaced democracy, claims that all his ancestors were plebeian, Cicero brings forth a distinguished line of patrician Papirii, and then proceeds to point out in loving detail what a bunch of cutthroats and desperadoes his friend's vaunted plebeian connections were and are (9.21). In letter 9.15.2 we see the fullest appreciation of Paetus' wit among present-day cultivators of humor. His style is not Attic, but, better than that, it is an old-fashioned Roman wit recalling Lucilius or such great figures as Crassus (the orator) and Laelius. In fact Paetus is *festivitas* personified: *moriar si praeter te quemquam reliquum habeo in quo possim imaginem antiquae et vernaculae festivitatis agnoscere*. That is to suggest that Cicero sees in Paetus something lingering from a lost world.

Since Cicero's friendship with Paetus involves a long-standing exchange of hospitality in the *convivium*, it is not surprising that he should be the correspondent to whom Cicero recounts his social exchanges with the Caesareans, through which useless rhetorical skills are traded for exquisite food. In 9.16.7 he jokes about this exchange: Dolabella and Hirtius are his pupils in oratory and his masters in dining, and so they go from one to another house, declaiming at Cicero's residence and banqueting at their own. The oratorical *ludus*, as Cicero terms this new pastime in 9.18, is another form of compensatory role-playing. It is based, the unemployed orator declares, upon the model of the tyrant Dionysus, who opened a school in Corinth upon being exiled from Sicily because he could not live without exercising some kind of domination. Thus Cicero, with his "forensic kingdom (*regnum*) lost," now conducts his own private school. But here of course the model of Dionysus is ironically reversed, since the political tyrant is still reigning at Rome. In fact, as the letter explains in its more sober moments, this contact with Caesar's supporters is one strategic device for watching the times, avoiding the need to share Cato's noble fate (9.18.2).

Although the declamatory exercise gives a means of preserving *facultas orationis*, it is all the same a parody of occupation and a subject of sport. Thus Cicero puns upon the double meaning, both legal and culinary, of *ius*: while Paetus enjoys *ius Haterianum* at Naples, he is enjoying the *ius Hirtianum* at Rome. When Cicero takes his turn at hosting Hirtius, the *ius fervens*, surely a Caesarian specialty, is what his cook cannot imitate.

With such prolonged ironic analogies as this in the Paetus letters, Cicero comes as close as ever to genuinely satirical writing on the current world. Generally he lacks the light touch needed for sustained satire. Although he prides himself on his wit, it takes the form of sharp sallies, often expressed in concentrated turns of phrase or by the application of a telling epithet. All the same, he has the satirist's eye for absurdity in contemporary society and politics and sometimes even for the absurdity in his own responses to these conditions, and he occasionally enlists standard devices of humorous writing to express his perceptions.[71] The relationship between food and society is a traditional topos with a long history of applications, both metaphorical and direct, but the intimate link between food consumption and bodies gives food foibles a natural affinity for the human foibles that furnish material for satire.[72] Late Republican discourses of luxury and excess had long since discovered this affinity, grounded perhaps in the cook scenes of Roman comedy. Varro's *Menippeans* abound in cookshops, tidbits, kitchens and voracious eaters.[73] Specific references to upper-class luxury dining were concentrated, perhaps, in the Περὶ ἐδεσμάτων from which Aulus Gellius extracts a list of the names and provenances of gastronomic delicacies that Varro had composed *lepide et scite* in verse by which to illustrate his own moralizing on the excesses of luxury.[74]

[71]E.g., he shows particular flair for mock-heroic narrative in reporting the corrupted trial of Clodius (*Att.* 1.16), and the description of the dedicatory games for Pompey's theater that he gives to his Epicurean friend Marius cuts the extravagant spectacle down to size by its sardonically detached point of view (*Fam.* 7.1). But these *jeux d'esprit* are single compositions responding to specific occasions, while the Paetus letters form a coherent body of texts unified by incorporating the personality of their addressee.

[72]Gowers 1993 highlights such motifs as consumption in a comprehensive history of Roman gastronomic discourse across literary genres. In this context, however, her discussion of Cicero's food imagery (10–11) focuses only upon its variations according to the decorum of context. So in these letters "he dabbles in the gastronomic knowledge proper for a cultivated man."

[73]As in the *Bimarcus* already mentioned, or in *Modius* 308 and 315–17, where he remarks "and there is this difference between Epicurus and our gluttons for whom the kitchen is the measure of life."

[74]Gel. 6.16.1. The pejorative language with which this catalogue is introduced (*helluones isti terra et mari conquirunt...quae profunda ingluvies vestigavit*) apparently belongs not to Varro but rather to Gellius, who enforces his moralizing about luxury with a quotation from Euripides on the virtues of living in accordance with nature. Although Gellius says that Varro writes censoriously in this satire (*quae Varro obprobrans exsecutus est*), Relihan 1994: 57–58 questions whether Varro's enumeration is really condemnatory or actually somewhat admiring, since "the passage that Gellius singles out here is actually notable for its elegance and is

Naturally peacocks, eels and oysters, all of which figure in Varro's attributed list, are dinner items common enough that no literary source would be needed for them; but Cicero is our only witness that some of these same delicacies had recently been made contraband by Caesar's imposition of sumptuary laws.[75] Which is to say that Caesar has legislated the satirist's role into censorship. Accordingly, Cicero's sustained application of gastronomic measures to the social structure detailed in the Paetus letters reconverts censorship into satire. If not consciously Menippean, this discourse of *luxuria* certainly enters into the Menippean carnivalic spirit, thanks to its fragmented perspectives upon a disordered world.

The politics of Cicero's gastronomic discourse are carnivalic because they present images of feast amidst famine as an example of the privileges to be enjoyed in the company of Caesar's most intimate friends, a small society licensed to flout censorship rather than suffer its enforcement. Elsewhere Cicero turns his wit upon sumptuary laws in a manner that suggests the need for public obedience to them accompanied by a certain irony in the very gestures of conformity.[76] To Fabius Gallus he writes of a recent indisposition caused by an augural dinner that Lentulus hosted, a semi-official occasion, no doubt (7.26.1), where a dressed-up concoction of beets and greens has disordered his digestion more than oysters and eels ever did. If we can believe Suetonius' complementary testimony, Caesar had not only posted guards at the *macellum* to prevent the sale of such commodities, but even sent his food police into *triclinia* to carry out dishes that had slipped by the guards (*Jul.* 43). Other letters to Paetus do seem to indicate observance of sumptuary laws within the sphere of private life. At the end of the Volumnius letter, Cicero mentions dining with friends not *contra legem*, "if law remains still in existence," but *intra legem*.[77] In letter 9.15 he comments that he could live in his own house for ten days on Caesar's sumptuary allowance, although this assertion leaves us uncertain whether to understand the allowance as small or large.

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ultimately frustrating to Gellius, who seeks to moralize against luxury but has to turn to authors other than Varro for pointed condemnation of gourmets and gourmands."

[75]Rotondi 1922: 421 gives the sources for this legislation, the major one being Cicero himself, but the historians Suetonius and Cassius Dio bear witness to its actual enforcement in a manner that would have embarrassed violators.

[76]Here also there may be satirical precedent. Gowers 1993: 115 mentions a possible link between culinary confusion (*satura*) and satire laws in Lucilius.

[77]It is on the strength of this reference that Shackleton Bailey 1977: 353 dates letter 9.26.

Our scant written evidence for Caesar's sumptuary prohibitions does not incorporate his rationale for them. Although the factor of revival would seem to signify the ethic of *mos maiorum*, the resort to such measures is more overtly an exercise of power. No less a manifestation of power, however, is the way that such prohibitions can be disregarded in the society of Caesar's associates. Exotic delicacies of the kind to which Cicero's rhetorical "disciples" Hirtius and Dolabella are introducing him are an appropriately superfluous commodity to be given in exchange for the niceties of declamation. The trading of superfluities in this manner is itself a response to the conditions created by power. Does the aging orator respond less indifferently to exotic food than to the company of the actress Cytheris? Apparently so. With the refined tastes he learns from the Caesarians, Cicero himself attempts new culinary challenges. He counts it a step in his gastronomic progress to have entertained the mutual Epicurean friends, Verrius and Camillus, both very sophisticated and elegant men (9.20.2). Hirtius, it seems, is partial to peacock and Cicero has consumed several at his table (9.18), although he had not yet ventured to serve him one in return on that occasion mentioned above when the cook spared to produce "boiled constitutional law" (*ius fervens*, 9.20.3). In proclaiming his newly educated tastes to Paetus, Cicero represents them as a threat to the economy of his correspondent's hospitality. His friend must prepare himself for an onslaught of appetite from a guest who has learned a "little something" (9.20). Where once he was a simple eater who easily contented himself with one platter of Paetus' "hors d'oeuvres" (9.16, 9.20), he now makes his way through all the courses from eggs to meat. Being alienated from his old civic preoccupations has driven him into the camps of once adversarial Epicureans (9.20.1), where, figuratively speaking, he is learning to consume Caesarian politics.

The other side of Cicero's culinary discourse is the contrast between the new Caesarian tastes that Cicero is learning at Rome and the more restrictive mode of life imposed upon Paetus, the genuine Epicurean. Cicero credits Paetus with refinement and discrimination; he recalls the standards of elegance he used to maintain when he had money (*ad illam tuam lautitiam, veterem dico, cum in sumptum habebas* 9.20.1), but balances his culinary humor against a show of consideration for the straitened circumstances of his friend. Company is what he really values; his visit will cost no more than the expense of heating a bath. In 9.16 Cicero intermingles rhetoric, food and philosophy in such a way that it is hard to distinguish their boundaries. Among the jocularities that Paetus has incorporated into a recent letter are a scrap of mime and the menu and price of a dinner offered to a Cumean friend. Opulent Rome contrasts with a deprived

Campania as Cicero urges Paetus to join him, trading indigestion in the city for famine at home. He can ride the mule that is left to him after he has been driven to consume his old horse and take an assistant master's chair in the rhetorical school (9.18).

Presumably Paetus has not eaten his horse, although one should not belittle the point of a good joke. But has he really been compelled to sell it for subsistence? Although this too seems an exaggeration, there are other indications that his finances are not flourishing under Caesar's rules. The chief employment for Paetus' philosophical convictions at the moment is watching the diminution of his material possessions with detached equilibrium (*cum tam aequo animo bona perdas*, 9.16.7).[78]

Does it matter what Paetus actually eats? At times it would seem that he favors country food—cheese and salt fish (9.16.7). If this is a standing joke, it is corroborated by being one shared with Atticus (*Att.* 14.16). His characteristic *promulsides* are greens and Lucanian sausages (9.16.9), food quite in keeping with his "old Roman" style of wit. It is hard to separate what is a joke from what is cultural evidence. Is the boiled lobster at a feast of Magna Mater fantastic? Perhaps it is relevant that Paetus seems to be suffering from gout (9.20), an ailment provoked by gastronomic indulgence, that mandates diet, therefore forcing its victim into conformity with the times. At one point when offering to share his simplicity, Cicero also notes that the cook does not suffer from the same infirmity (9.23). Both eating and philosophizing out of character are the common bonds that unite Cicero and Paetus within Caesar's disordered world.

This is not to say that Cicero's correspondence with Paetus contains no direct political news, or that the friends did not share anxious concerns about matters of greater national consequence than dining. The entire account of Cicero's social doings in 9.16 apparently answers to Paetus' expressed fears for his political safety amidst possible *invidia*. In 9.17 he responds at some length to Paetus' inquiries concerning Caesar's aims for land distribution. No, he says, he has learned nothing from Balbus since Balbus himself does not know what portends. Cicero sees territories verging on Tusculum being measured but refuses to fear. The tenor is Epicurean: he will enjoy what is permitted, hoping that the permission will continue. Rome, however, has become unfamiliar. In answering Paetus' question why he would leave Rome for Naples, he gives an unusual turn

[78]Shackleton Bailey 1977 ad *Fam.* 9.16 cites Caesar's laws on real estate income as the point of reference.

to his well-loved ship of state metaphor (9.15.3–4). He who used to be seated on the poop-deck, guiding the rudder, can scarcely now locate a seat in the bilge. He complains of finding a genuinely unrecognizable "other self" in the Forum as pronouncements in reports of *senatus consulta* that he never uttered come to his ears in the guise of his own *sententiae*. No, he is not joking (*atque hoc nolim iocari putes*, 9.15.4). His felicitations have been carried overseas to foreign potentates whose very birth was previously unknown to him.

While speaking of his substitute kingdom of rhetoric (9.18), he says what he said to Nigidius, that death would have been more honorable. Even so, he is mildly facetious when he adds that for him it would have to have been death in bed, since the chance for death in battle did not come his way. In 9.17, the most political of all the letters in its content, he again questions the profit (*lucrum*) of life as a survivor of freedom and predicts a future determined by the alliance of power and arms. Yet he gives an unusual turn to the discussion by analyzing Caesar's predicament in relationship to his own. Not even he, Cicero pronounces, has freedom to direct the state as he might wish. The situation has produced a double bondage of Romans in servitude to Caesar and Caesar to the times (*nos enim illi servimus, ipse temporibus*, 9.17.3). Entrammeled within his own network of obligations and bound by the wishes of his followers, he can no more predict what lies ahead than others who are anxiously watching him (*ita nec ille quid tempora postulatura sint nec nos quid ille cogitet scire possumus*, 9.17.3).

Cicero's standpoint for these observations is one of exclusion. Paetus, it would seem, has brought this condition home to him by a request for information concerning Caesar's plans for distributing land. Written in late summer—late August or early September—this letter must postdate those letters to Varro that had expressed hopes of both men being recalled into service to the state. Presumably it was not long afterwards that Cicero was to deliver the *pro Marcello* and *pro Ligario*, at the moment of his greatest service and influence under Caesar and also, therefore, of his closest approach to reconciliation. Looking behind the scenes, we might see the observation concerning the constraints that bind Caesar as Cicero's attempt to live up to the political perspicuity expected of him. But beyond this, the idea of an inconsistent Caesar, a Caesar bound to those who helped him to secure and to sustain his power, would suggest a Caesar that Cicero as observer can intellectually accommodate to his own condition of instability and apprehension. In this version of Cicero's becoming Caesar, the alien Other assumes the characteristics of the disoriented self.

If Caesar himself cannot be consistent, if his actions too are subject to unpredictable external influences, then who else can be? Varro, of course. He alone understands, appreciates, and maintains his identity amidst *otium*. If the letters are not wholly coincident in time, they are also not precisely opposite in their complimentary self-portraiture. The Cicero who looks with ambivalent envy upon Varro's philosophical life remains the Cicero motivated by ambition. The Cicero of the Paetus letters, by contrast, seems more concerned about reassuring himself that he is keeping his identity stabilized even with his ambition thwarted or laid aside. To Cicero the Neapolitan presence of Paetus, a fellow humorist always available to be visited, is a reassurance that the witty, socialized Cicero has not in fact betrayed either himself or others, but is rather adapting his characteristic ingenuity to the preservation of internal freedom. If he laughs more in these letters than in any others, it is because laughter confirms his detachment from the compromising life he leads.

Two years later, in the final letter of the correspondence (9.24, dated to around mid-January 43), Cicero appears quite earnest in urging Paetus not to abandon the sociable custom of going out to dinner. As always, he mixes teasing with advice: Paetus will forget how to give dinner parties of his own, he will greatly deprive the state. But the letter continues *extra iocum* to describe dining in the most eloquently idealistic terms as the very sustenance of humane life (9.24.3). It is the essence of Roman community, Cicero writes, and cites the Roman substitution of *convivia* with its emphasis on companionship for the Greek συμπόσια and σύνδειπνα, which highlight the act of consumption. Given the insertion of the Greek names for the Latin equivalents *compotationes* and *concenationes*, these comments are a version of what Cicero had recently written, in the fictive voice of the elder Cato, concerning the pleasures offsetting old age in *de Senectute* 45–46.

Consideration of the *de Senectute* as an attempted reconciliation of *ethos* and desire will provide an appropriate conclusion for this essay. In this dialogue Cicero poses the question of how the *senex* may surmount the debilities attributed to old age by remaining supremely recognizable to himself. For "old age" we may easily read "political displacement"; yet the serenity of the dialogue reflects a certain coming to terms with alienation. For this change, we have to credit the further career of Caesar, who from the time of his return from Spain began to resolve Cicero's crisis of *ethos* by consolidating the tyrannical aspect of his rule. If this made *amicitia* no easier, it did allow for an easy acceptance of his removal

from the scene.[79] Amidst the chaotic politics that preceded the rise of Antony and the return of his own desired, embattled, and heroic self, Cicero could tranquilly reflect upon the question of how to remain oneself in old age.[80]

[79]Griffin 1997: 87–109 deals with the conflicts between *amicitia* and political opinion triggered by Caesar's assassination.

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