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Border Wars: Literature, Politics, and the Public

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SUMMARY: Approaching Latin along the border line dividing the academic humanities from public discourse, this essay explores the possibility of articulating a publicly responsible practice of Latin literary studies. I suggest that the current eclecticism in literary studies well serves the project of democratic criticism at a time when the traditional *raison d'être* of the university as the preserver of Euro-American culture is in decline. Next I draw on my current work on the republican tradition in literature and political thought, focusing on translations of Vergil by the 17th-century theorist James Harrington. The study of reception is a crucial part of renewing Latin studies for the new world, I suggest, because it reveals the role of Latin literature in shaping modern conceptions of the political, the aesthetic, and the relation between the two. Concluding, I turn briefly to Cicero, whose blurring of the political and the aesthetic calls into question our habits of thinking about the transition from Republic and Empire.

1. LATIN IN THE NEW WORLD

SINCE 1970, THE YEAR I WAS BORN, the American academy has seen the theory revolution and the canon wars come and go. Opinions differ as to whether the general abandonment of battle stations is a sign of increased civility or of exhaustion.[1] The critical divergences in Latin literary studies today mirror the state of the literary humanities at large: strong crosscurrents of historicism and formalism mingle with tributaries of psychoanalytic criticism, gender studies, linguistics, translation studies, and what used to be called the history of ideas.

[1] This question arose several times at the Rutgers Critical Divergences conference, where we civilly debated the benefits, and a few drawbacks, of academic civility.

This is to say, in the words of John Paul II, it is as it was.[2] No real winners or losers emerged from the theory revolution or the canon wars, and the factions have not been banished from the scene but live on, resuscitating traditional projects and, in the process, forming new and sometimes startling coalitions. Deconstructionism, semiotics, structuralism, and Marxism are still to be found; psychoanalysis has been pressed into the service of historicism; intertextuality studies have largely exchanged the theoretical exploration of textuality and literary signification for learned close readings, with the welcome addition of material objects and historical events as a newly legitimate (if not as yet clearly defined or theorized) set of intertexts. And so on. As the editors of *Critical Inquiry* asked themselves in April 2003 (this is the first of five questions; the rest deal with politics, changing technologies, and the return of aesthetics[3]):

> It has been suggested that the great era of theory is now behind us and that we have now entered a period of timidity, backfilling, and (at best) empirical accumulation. True?

The current stasis is not, however, a sign of crisis in the humanities, despite the efforts of the media and some naysayers in the academy to proclaim it as such.[4] The field is open for new directions, and here I invoke as grounds for optimism not only the *CI* editors' generally provocative responses but Lowell Edmunds' observation, in his recent book *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry*, that the subfield of Latin studies is historically distinguished in Classics for its ability to conceive itself as relevant to larger discussions in the humanities.[5] So I will frame my reflections on new directions in the study of Latin literature around the following question. What would a publicly responsible—and publicly convincing—practice of Latin literary studies look like?

[2] The pope's reference was to Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* (2004). H. J. Miller 1987a surveys the literary scene after the New Criticism: "there has been a spectacular proliferation of powerful and incompatible 'critical theories,' structuralist, semiotic, Lacanian, Marxist, reader-response, feminist, deconstructionist, new-historicist, and so on" (42).

[3] Available in print and online, in keeping with the symposium's effort to address new media.

[4] One example from the mainstream media: Eakin took the bully pulpit in *The New York Times* to hail Hardt and Negri's *Empire* as the possible answer to the "crisis" of the humanities; see also the books surveyed in Delbanco.

[5] Edmunds 168–69.

If it invites many possible answers, of which I can pursue only one, my question is not rhetorical. In fact, I think, the sense of sameness in contemporary literary studies derives from neither civility nor exhaustion, but from the awareness, rarely acknowledged in scholarly journals and books, that though critical literary discourse has evolved swiftly in the past forty years, the world around us is evolving at ever higher and more challenging speeds; and in contrast to earlier periods of intense anxiety among literary scholars about relevance and direction, the cushion of respectability long accorded the profession of Classics has worn thin.[6] I propose to launch no jeremiad here, Luddite or otherwise; I simply pose the question of what role Classics, and especially the study of Latin literature, will assume in the new world.

The proliferation of digital information, the democratization of the academy, the permeability of nation-state boundaries, and the emergence of a vibrant, relentlessly presentist, Americanized First World culture are quietly but inexorably bringing about massive changes in the way we view and value knowledge and critical thought. Academics have helped win a series of important culture battles since the middle of the twentieth century, providing the theoretical and historical underpinning for reform outside the university and bringing social and political activism inside its walls. The access to academia's upper tiers now being gained by women, racial and religious minorities, and the financially underprivileged is a good example of this work in progress. In the aftermath of the theory revolution, the study of literature and art is asserting its centrality in the academy via interdisciplinary connections with the sciences, economics, law, history, and political science. Despite activism and the adoption of broad intellectual perspectives, however, we risk losing the culture war.

We risk losing the war first of all as educators in the old paradigm of the university. At the time of its emergence as a modern institution in the nineteenth century, the university was the site of producing, protecting, and inculcating national knowledge and self-knowledge, designed to further the common goal of producing citizens and research (measured in publications and patents) that would enrich the nation and its cultural capital. Initially by example and then by contrast, in the modern search for differentiation and innovation, Latin studies in this period helped define European notions of history and sophisticated national literature, especially in epic and lyric po-

[6] Graff 18–54 surveys the development of the institutionalized study of English literature in America in these terms in the early nineteenth century; subsequent chapters trace the impact of industrialization and the growth of the leisured middle class on the humanities.

etry. For Americans, the retention of Latin in school curricula bridged the cultural schism from Old Europe, provided recognizable marks of refinement for the emergent well-to-do, and, briefly, promised common cultural ground for marginalized groups in the new republic.[7] Today, the authoritative role of the nation-state as an anchor for identity is vastly diminished, and "culture" is a label applied to everything from museums to the behavior of chimpanzees. As its traditional sociopolitical and cultural *raisons d'être* erode, the university *qua* institution resembles more and more a technocratic factory for producing excellence, a conceptually vacant term.[8] *Pace* Dan Quayle, the role of Latin in a world that is simultaneously pushing academia to adopt corporate models of accountability and calling into question the relevance of the European nation-state's traditional claims to authority is profoundly uncertain.[9]

No less importantly, we risk losing the war as critical intellectuals. In a recent lecture, Bruno Latour took anxious note of the appropriation of postmodern notions of constructionism and indeterminacy by the political right. Ruefully observing that corporate lobbyists now defend themselves against environmentalists by appealing to the imprecision of scientific measurements and the ideological biases built into the production of scientific knowledge, and that racists and conspiracy theorists can invoke Foucauldian notions of power to support their view of global government and its invisible hands, Latour sought to redefine our responsibilities as the producers of critique (225):

> Are we not like those mechanical toys that endlessly continue to do the same gesture when everything else has changed around them? Would it not be rather terrible if we were still training young kids—yes, young recruits, young cadets—for wars that cannot be thought, for fighting enemies long gone, for conquering territories that no longer exist, and leaving them ill-equipped in the face of threats we have not anticipated, for which we are so thoroughly disarmed?

[7] Winterer surveys the scene; Gustafson is a brilliant discussion of early American rhetorical education as it relates to race, gender, and the development of political culture.

[8] Here I follow Readings: thanks to my student Allen Beye Riddell for bringing the book to my attention. My comments do not imply a wish on my part that the nation-state or a strict definition of high culture should persist in their nineteenth-century form.

[9] For the record, the ex-Vice President claims he was joking in 1989 when he referred to Latin as the international language of Latin America. I should stress that my interest is not the number of Latin enrollments or majors in the nation or the world, but what kind of intellectual account of itself Latin studies (and the humanities at large) will make in the future.

The revival of religious fundamentalism, and its leaders' exploitation of identity politics for purposes of self-legitimation, should also prompt us to reassess our critical priorities and categories of discourse and our reasons for adopting them, and the ways they are disseminated in public discourse. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, literature is not an object of concern for many Americans (witness the sharp decline in literary reading recently documented by the NEA), and the critical public voice sporadically assumed by humanists over the past two hundred years has been ceded largely to economists and historians.[10] The detachment of the general public from literature and literary criticism should be a matter of concern for us, and we should not contemplate new directions in the study of Latin literature without considering the future of literature in the academy at large.

Literary studies have a central role to play in the new world. With the habits of imagination and abstraction that it helps refine, and with its attention to the effects of power and the historical evolution of the concept of the social, literature can excavate what Edward Said called in his posthumously published *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* "the silences, the world of memory, of itinerant, barely surviving groups, the places of exclusion and invisibility" that inhabit the past and the present (81). Visual and textual artworks are (among other things) the stylized representations of social concepts, relations, and institutions. Once unpacked, the ways and means of stylization illuminate social concepts, relations, and institutions—a capacity vividly borne out in one elementary dynamic informing the history of art in Western culture, namely, its ongoing flirtation with the concealment of stylization, captured in the sentiment (never expressed precisely this way in extant Latin literature) *ars est celare artem*.[11] Like social systems, whose dirty relations of inequality are concealed by the proliferations of rules, habits, and manners that we then call "the social," so art's stylishness conceals its representational relation to the awkward and inconsistent practices from which it arose and evolved (speech communication, emotional interaction, belief formation, and so forth). Rigorous, knowledgeable examination of the form of a work of art is good training for probing the mystifications of other kinds of social rhetorics. As Raymond Williams once observed in an attempt to explain the rela-

[10] *Reading at Risk* summarizes the NEA survey of the printed fiction reading habits (i.e., excluding online reading and all non-fiction) of nearly 20,000 Americans. The contributors to Bender/Schorske offer historical perspective on the relationship between public discourse and different fields in the academy; see also Anderson and Said 2002. Readings and Miyoshi brilliantly analyze the humanities' indifferent relation to public discourse and vice versa.

[11] Ovid, *Ars* 2.313 *si latet ars, prodest*; cf. Quintilian 1.13.3.

tionship between literature and critical social thought, "Someone who writes about communication becomes, in a sense without ever having intended to become, a social critic."[12]

Yet our grasp of the relationship between text and social context, and the theoretical problem of how to conceptualize the relationship between the past and the present, is still at a rudimentary stage. Latin literature, self-consciously preoccupied with notions of propriety, relations of cultural exchange, and literary tradition, is particularly rich in its capacity to illuminate the hidden scripts of social practice, and most importantly, the concept of the social itself—with regard not only to the field of cultural production in ancient Rome, but also to the history of our self-understanding up to and including modernity. And it offers rich opportunities for progress on the theoretical level, should we choose to pursue them.

The point of reading in this mode, for me as for Said and many others, is nothing less than emancipation, subjective and communal. This may be achieved not by assuming along with our nineteenth-century forebears that culture makes us free (the naïve claim behind our term "liberal arts"), but by approaching literature as a set of complex experiments in communication that is by no means transparent, that despite its investment in difference and hierarchy manages to communicate across categories of identity such as race and gender, that imagines and critiques the ways we build conceptual communities, that investigates the words that exert force in the world, such as laws, contracts, and creeds of all types.[13] In short, I am putting a political spin on Richard Lanham's "'Q' question," so called because he traced it back in its strongest form to Quintilian: is there a connection between literature and living well?[14] If not, on what grounds may we treat reading, and particularly literary reading, as the foundation of liberal education?

Of the long tradition that criticizes the usefulness of this question, feminists and theorists of race and class have most recently, and justly, been suspicious of the service it does to the traditional "owners" of the canon, the wealthy and privileged—the problem being that if literature is an essential part of living well, those who cannot read, or who reject a canon they view as exclusive, must abandon the quest for the good life. Social justice, they claim, has very little to do with literature. My response to this, and my starting assumption here, is that understanding the ways in which ancient texts com-

[12] Williams 1989: 23. My representation of this critical project can and should itself be historicized; see Jameson 124.

[13] Said 2004: 81.

[14] Lanham 653–57.

municate—almost always, crucially, with self-conscious attention to concerns of the civic—lends us insight into the ways in which we might "civilize" our own critical discourse. By "civilizing" I do not mean polishing and refining the ways we currently do literary criticism—we scarcely need more of that—but rather theorizing literature's relation to civil society, and especially the ways in which literature creates and challenges notions of collective and individual identity, freedom, justice, and dignity.

The history of Latin and Latin literature is intimately bound up with these notions, and, even further, with the evolution of conceptions of the political and the social in the western tradition. Latinists thus have a unique role to play in revealing the "twisted relations between knowing and doing" that make political thought so dangerous and necessary.[15] My point is not that Latinists should commit the worst kind of presentist offense, treating ancient literature as though it were all "about us" and our politics, but that we should explore the ways in which Latin literary production unsettles and helps reinvent our habits, or non-habits, of civic thought—habits that it played a central role in forming in the first place. Literary studies in this mode converge with the humanistic project of democratic citizenship.

So I return to my question: what would a publicly responsible and persuasive practice of Latin literary studies look like? To begin, I believe, involves taking a closer look at our own history, remembering that Latin literature is one of the basic ingredients of imagination that enabled the emancipatory waves of revolution in the modern West. As the traditional core of western pedagogy, Latin literature has always performed twin functions of conservation and inspiration, simultaneously sustaining and challenging prevailing traditions of thought. Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, Leonard Barkan, David Lupher, and others have shown, in a series of rich studies in the history of classical reception, how the continuous, intensive conversation with ancient texts to which early modern readers were committed constructed the foundation of their efforts not only to create personal codes of conduct and literary styles but also to devise new modes of science, sexuality, philosophy, and political thought, and to understand other cultures and religions.[16]

The reception of Latin in early modernity operates within a peculiarly productive, plastic nexus of interpretation, ideology, and memory. The Latin canon is the creation of empire. Partly because of its nature as imperial pro-

[15] The phrase is from the conclusion to Barbara Johnson's essay "Melville's Fist," an excellent example of a deconstructive reading that grapples with the question of justice.

[16] Grafton 1997: 5; see also Grafton 1991, Grafton and Jardine, Barkan 1986 and 1991, Lupher.

duction, the canon possesses a unique capacity to be reread and even altered in translation to accommodate a wide variety of resisting experiences and outlooks, without losing its historical purchase in a remembered past of violence and oppression. The earliest New World geographies and ethnographies, for instance, modeled themselves upon ancient texts in the face of empirical observation, and in doing so replicated those texts' worldview of conquest and assimilation.

But if Latin texts are voices of dominion and conservation during moments of massive cultural reordering, they also function as forces of communicability and dialogue across cultural boundaries. A canon of empire is also a canon of multiple cultural identities, even if the process of canonization seems to demand the denial of diversity. Take the case of Matteo Ricci, who shortly after 1600 wrote *Twenty-Five Sayings*, a version of Epictetus that masquerades as a classical Confucian text, using his experience of bridging cultures as a reader of foreign texts from classical Rome to create a treatise that communicates Christian values to the Chinese.[17] The tradition of reading Cicero, the younger Pliny, Tacitus, the jurists, and others in early modern Italy and England is another set of examples. The intellectual historians of the Cambridge school have diligently excavated the importance of these texts for late medieval and early modern theorists of the self and the state, revealing the role of Latin reception in the development of modern civic thought. They have explored the Roman influence on the early modern conception of the subject as a self-adjusting, communally responsive yet fragile entity, whose body becomes the site of reflection and discipline, and whose relations with itself become paramount for the survival of the virtuous political community.[18]

Heirs to a profession that, institutionally speaking, arose as a force of conservation in an era of revolution, Latinists have yet to lay decisive claim to the history of the field as a driving force in the revolutions of thought about identity (gender, class, ethnicity, nation, religion), tradition, and power that shape the late modern world. On the contrary, some continue to claim that the future rests in ignoring our history:

> The classical scholar's only duty towards, say, the medieval reception of Virgil's *Aeneid*, is to peruse it for surviving evidence and for medieval insights which help our understanding of the ancient text in its own historical context.[19]

[17] Grafton 1997: 1–3. See Stephen Hinds' provocative discussion of encounters between past and present in early, modern, and postmodern receptions of Ovid elsewhere in this volume.

[18] Pocock 31–80, Skinner 152–86.

[19] West 1995: 16, quoted in Martindale 1997: 7.

This remark, though it arises from serious and reasonable concerns and expresses a long-established viewpoint in Latin studies, comes close to abdicating responsibility for doing justice to the past, for it dismisses the complex story of the *Aeneid*'s persistent presence in the literary tradition, a presence that shapes our presence as Latinists studying the text. The evolution of Latin literature as a central institution of Western culture demands study by scholars who are experts both in the original texts and the theoretical, literary problem of translation. For this is what the history of reception involves: translation. Not only reproduction and transmission, but *translatio*, the Latin rhetorical tradition's word for metaphor. What would happen if we were to view the history of reception as a history of translation, keeping in mind, just to begin with, the sophisticated work on metaphor and translation by Roman Jakobson, Walter Benjamin, or George Steiner?

Each alone, the methodologies of formalism and historicism cannot help us recover our history; this much is clear. We can reduce the critical divergence between the two to a medical analogy: if the materialist/historicist nexus is often caricatured as treating aesthetic concerns as (an)aesthetics in the surgical sense, numbing the reader with abstractions that deny the text meaningful purchase in the world, formalism may be similarly viewed as treating historicism as a procedure of surgical reduction, by which the text comes to signify nothing but the fulfillment of a master narrative long since defined by conventional histories: imperialism, autocracy, sexism, racism, the emergence of "new subjectivities," and so on. By now, as the contributors to this collection agree, this border war and the skirmishes it generates are tediously familiar.

But both have crucial contributions to make to the project. Historicism poses a fruitful challenge to the old idealist, aesthetic, and metaphysical categories of essentialist humanism, whose worst biases long camouflaged themselves under universalist guise; it examines the power of literature in making the world in its own image; and it retains a still sharp if somewhat blunted political edge, usually expressed in feminist or Marxist terms, under the pressure of which texts come to reveal ideological contours of oppression and prejudice. Literature is more than a simple tool picked up to train the imagination or refine the rational processes of the citizen or judge, two approaches to literature that have recently been defended as socially recuperative in a series of writings by Martha Nussbaum. Our status as readers and our evolving conception of textuality require the kind of analysis only historicism can offer.[20] The rise of historicism may be understood in part as an effort by scholars to

[20] Nussbaum begins from the fruitful point of exploring literature (especially novel) as an essential part of "an education for public rationality" (2) but ultimately reduces it

revive, or rediscover, the emancipatory potential of literature in a world increasingly and exclusively attuned to the opinions and objectives of social science. In classical studies, however, historicism has also fed into a nasty disciplinary tendency to enforce what John Peradotto called "the conversion of philosophy into the *history* of philosophy, rhetoric into the *history* of rhetoric, texts into the *history* of texts," and so on (17).

The complaint that formalism limits speculation about the political or ethical significance of texts is at least as old as Cicero, who criticized the language experts of his day for lavishing care on the technical means of persuasion rather than on persuasion's ability to make good in the world.[21] His usual targets are Greek rhetoricians whose love of logic-chopping categorizations make them tactless and out of touch: "Look to Rome for models of virtue," his father told him, "look to Greece for models of learning."[22] Some readers have vigorously countered modern reiterations of Cicero's view by asserting the power of formalist analysis to demonstrate the hollowness of hermeneutic and ethical simplicity—a valuable tool at a time when nuance has been redefined as vice. Said's book is one prominent example, with its praise of philology as the technique by which we reveal the way words mean. Work like this sheds light on the operations of political rhetoric and social thought, in the past and today; for instance, on the many-troped language of similarity and difference ("them" and "us") and the true axis of evil: fanatic unreason, fear, and the will to dominate.[23]

Nor are the metaphors that are normally employed by historicists to express the relationship between text and context capable of handling the virtual infinity of signification, political and otherwise, in a literary text. Take the relations between property ownership and authorship, or political order and rhetorical composition, or rule and art: without the kind of critical in-

to advocacy of a safe, inclusive liberal vision that sidesteps both formalist problems of genre, irony, and indeterminacy and historicist problems of class, gender, race, and nationality.

[21] He regularly complains of the related division between rhetoric and philosophy (*de Orat.* 3.59–61); cf. 2.77–84, 3.122, 148.

[22] *De Orat.* 3.127 *nam ut virtutis a nostris, sic doctrinae sunt ab illis exempla petenda*; along similar lines, 1.102, 2.18.

[23] See Simic on American fundamentalism and conservatism, and its relation to poverty. Of the growing body of postmodern work on literature and ethics see Miller 1987b; Eaglestone. Nancy Armstrong explains the politically dynamic contribution of poststructuralist thought to understanding culture (43–44). Eagleton 2000: 121–31 criticizes recent trends in historicist and materialist studies; in an accessible but less insightful mode, Eagleton 2003: 74–102, 174–207.

terrogation that formalist attention helps provide, we are left trying to explain them with words like reflection and mirroring, layering, weaving, conversation, or synecdoche, whose simplicity builds in its own explanatory limit.[24] The names that we give to interconnections between literary form and social context, interconnections that are necessarily heterogeneous and mutable over time, themselves demand formal analysis—as do concepts like culture, essence, matter, and ideology. To attend to the ways we read and have read in the past, and to examine the evolution of words and genres are practices of freedom that sharpen our judgment of the ways language—rationally or otherwise—creates the world in which we live.

Our postmodern age is generally suspicious or contemptuous of grand hopes for literary studies. With this firmly in mind, I will yet try to defend the notion of reading Latin literature as the galvanizing stuff of emancipation. The second section of this essay discusses in depth a single critical exemplum, a translation, aptly enough, a creative reading that refuses to transform text into history. This translation seizes energy and direction from the relations between a Latin text (the poetry of Vergil) and contemporary experience (England in the 17th century), balancing its role as passive debtor to Vergil's text with an active resistance to it. The text combines historicist and formalist modes of reading in order to claim a potent role for literature in the making of contemporary political conviction—or, to put it more pointedly, between Roman poetry and political reform. If the passage of time now places this text's encounter with the past outside the horizon of the exemplary possible, politically speaking, its masterful mobilization of past and present meanings takes steps toward fulfilling the scholarly fantasy of staying "true" to the text in its ancient Roman context and the reader's quest for its potential to mean anew.

Next, in answer to Lowell Edmunds' request that contributors discuss a concrete example of the way our reflections on critical divergences in Latin studies have inspired our own work, I will sketch my current work on republican notions of citizenship and subjectivity in the texts of Cicero. I conclude that the history of Latin reception has crucial lessons to teach us about the imaginary and sometimes destructive borders we habitually defend between ethics, politics, and literature, between historicism and formalism, and between the eras in Roman culture and the evolution of Roman subjectivity as it is traditionally conceived: Republic and Empire.

[24] Armstrong criticizes cultural analyses (especially social constructionist ones) that fail to take into account the principle that "no form of cultural representation ever simply reproduces what it represents" (17–18).

2. A REPUBLICAN VERGIL

"I have reason'd to as much purpose as if I had rimed," wrote James Harrington in 1658, in the middle of a five years' spate of political writing that included his great utopian political treatise *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), "and now I think I shall rime to as much purpose as if I had reason'd." The sentence opens the preface to his translation of Vergil's *Eclogues* 1 and 9 and the first two books of the *Aeneid* (Books 3–6 appeared the next year). The preface as a whole indicates Harrington's intent both to blur the borders between reasoned argument and creative entertainment, a project already undertaken on a grand scale in prose in the often fantastical *Oceana*, and to confuse the hierarchy of writerly authority occupied by his Roman model and himself, the latecoming translator. Colin Burrow notes that Harrington's translation is a "free rendering" of Vergil, and this is certainly the case.[25] But the free form of his reading has a profound political significance. Freedom is indeed Harrington's central concern: not only the translator's freedom to rework the original Latin, but the freedom of Vergil, his characters, and the citizen-reader to speak and to act. The translation thematizes Vergil's authorial historicity with the aim not simply of transforming his text into English, but also of reforming him, both politically and poetically.

Harrington, whose *Oceana* owes much to Machiavelli and is often compared with Thomas More's *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis*, was a republican political theorist active during the English Civil War. He is a character shaped, like John Milton and Harrington's particular friend Andrew Marvell, by the typically complicated allegiances of his time. He was a friend of Charles I's who (according to Harrington's posthumous biography) stood next to the king on the scaffold at Whitehall; but Harrington was also a devout and active supporter of constitutional reform whose writings made him an object of suspicion to Oliver Cromwell, to whom *Oceana* is tactfully dedicated despite the Lord Protector's initial effort to suppress it. Ironically, in light of Cromwell's disapproval of his work, Harrington was arrested and imprisoned on charges of conspiracy soon after the restoration of Charles II. Perhaps as a result of exotic drugs he was prescribed in abundance during an illness in prison, he suffered physical and mental breakdown there, and after his release wrote only one short unfinished essay that is reliably attested.[26]

[25] Burrow 25 places it in company with the "ramshackle" work of Vicars and remarks that both translations were "laughed into oblivion" by Samuel Butler.

[26] See Pocock's introductory essay to *Oceana*, vii–xi, and accompanying references.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, "Englishing" Vergil was no revolutionary act. But with his opening remark "I have reason'd to as much purpose as if I had rimed," Harrington teasingly invites his readers to read the Latin text as though it were just that: revolutionary. His recent act of "reasoning," his political writings, had in fact received a considerable amount of attention immediately upon publication, so this remark makes his Vergil, rhyming to as much purpose as that prose, the poetic partner of a highly controversial republicanist work. The association between poetry and political thought appears again near the end of the preface, after a defense of poetry as the "sprightly liquor infused into the soul by God himself," in Harrington's observation that three of the most important figures of constitutional innovation in his *Oceana*—Moses, Lycurgus, and Machiavelli—are all "known to have exercised and delighted themselves with Poetry."

If the invocation of the three lawgivers as fellow makers and consumers of verse is supposed to legitimize his decision to translate the *Eclogues*, as Harrington first implies ("at worst I shall but fail with the best companie"), the preface's conclusion undermines that possibility. There Harrington suggests that translating Vergil is a criminal act. The preface ends with two short poems, one eight lines, the other four lines in length. The first poem begins:

> The man's unblest in time or season
> That neither thrives by rime nor reason.

And it ends with a declaration that Harrington is indeed one of the unblessed:

> In me alone a rime or reason
> Must either be a crime or treason.

We have already seen, in the first sentence of the preface, that rhyme and reason refer to Harrington's poetry and prose, a pair that the first couplet holds in opposition, "neither rime nor reason." By the final couplet, rhyme and reason, poetry and prose together are unexpectedly united and identified with political transgression, "crime or treason." Harrington immediately pursues this identification in the second poem, or so its title aggressively suggests:

> Courage
> Who writes doth launch a ship, that should not pray
> For calms, but winds to make her streamers play:
> For live she never shall, except the weather
> To set upon her can but wag her feather.

Like a ship, the poem needs winds to "wag her feather": the writer's feather pen. The word "wag" carries special connotations in 17th-century English:

the sense not only of the familiar cheekiness and trickery of young men in Shakespeare, but also of malice and instability, as in the famous line by the mad courier Jacques in *As You Like It*, circa 1600: "Thus we may see (quoth he) how the world wagges" (II.vii.23). And the ship also recalls the ship of state, an apt political metaphor in Commonwealth-era civil unrest.

The ironically self-condemning performance of criminality in this poem claims a subversive power for Harrington's text. It simultaneously inverts categories of literary convention and law, making reason and rhyme not only identical but also identically treasonous. The introductory material as a whole plays a game with literary authority, an easy joke for a translator of a canonical and popular work. But it also represents poetry as occupying a radical point, speaking not merely at a distance from political and social institutions, but in contradiction with the determination of political and social order itself. Poetry (ultimately, anyone's poetry: "Who writes doth launch a ship ...") emerges as both essentially political, if transgressively so, and, being the product of pleasure and unreason, essentially at odds with conventional notions of the political.

Indeed the suggestion that reasoned political critique and rhyming poetry are indistinguishable compels the question of where and how a rational political critique in conventional prose might exist in the first place. Harrington's preface to the second installment of his translation, *Aeneid* 3–6, presses this point further by confusing the practice of political reasoning with literary pleasure. Declaring that translation is not his real work but his "play," he then reveals that his book is written in a spirit of liberty. As proof, he identifies one prominent illiteralism, his version of Dido's sacrifice to Ceres in *Aeneid* 4, that includes several lines in defense of agrarian reform.

> Reader, The translation of Virgil hath not been my Work, but my Play; and any liberty at this Play not erring from good Poetry, I hold not onely lawful, but such as may be commendable ... . For the Verses in the fourth Book, concerning the Agrarian [Law], they are according to Servius upon the place, without whose Commentary it is not rightly to be understood ...

Here Servius, one of the original and most influential authorities on Vergil, is pressed into service to defend Harrington's intentional and premeditated miswriting of Vergil's text—a miswriting that advances Harrington's most deeply held political conviction: that republican government (in his view, the best regime) cannot survive in the absence of the just distribution of property, especially land. Hence, of course, his choice of *Eclogues* 1 and 9 to precede his "reform" of the *Aeneid*.

Harrington's reading and writing of Vergil is not a pure retrojection of contemporary problems backwards in time to Roman epic. It is not random,

and, most importantly, it does not erase or deny the Italian poet's historical location in time and place. On the contrary, the simple act of translating the *Eclogues* and the explicit discussion of Roman history in the prose note that follows them underscore the importance of remembering Rome, and particularly Roman land distribution, for understanding both the past and the present. "Wherefore (because the error is popular)," he says of conventional explanations for the Roman empire's collapse, "I shall take this opportunity to propose ... a few Quaeries." These nine questions range from the land policy of the Tarquins to that of Augustus, Constantine, the Goths, and the Vandals.

What Harrington creates is a resisting reading of Vergilian bucolic poetry, a reading that challenges the authority of the Roman poet and yet sustains a vivid memory of the Roman historical context and the particular value of the poetry's form and imagery. As I noted earlier, the issue at stake is freedom.

> Virgil's poetry is the best in Latine; and he who can bring it to be the best in English, *be his liberty* for the rest what it will, shall be his truest translator: which granted, the English Reader may sufficiently judge of like translations, without referring himself unto the Originals.

Here Harrington goes further than a confident expression of ability to capture in English the best of Vergil's Latin: he opens a space for "liberty" in his reading—the translator's freedom to say what Vergil would or could not. Again, we recall the modern commentator's remark; this is indeed a "free rendering," in more ways than one. We shall soon see Harrington openly proclaim his refusal to treat the Roman poet as a royal sovereign. Where we might have thought the job of the translator demanded "loyalty" to the text, Harrington (a critic of kings and Cromwell) rejects traditional conceptions of loyalty for a reading that (he suggests) is truly "true" to the text's original historical conditions.

Liberty under conditions of painful repression, both the poet's and the characters', is the main theme of *Eclogues* 1 and 9. In the prose "Argument" that serves as the final piece of introductory material for the poems, Harrington casts Vergil as the voice of forced political accommodation that his translation will set free. He begins in historicist mode with the date, place, and cause of the poems' original composition:

> The occasion of writing this Eclogue and the next was this, When after the death of Julius Caesar, slain in the Senate, Augustus his son, by a war against them that slew him ... had obtained the victory of them all, he divided the lands of Cremona among his souldiers, meerly because they had quarter'd his enemies ... he also divided those of Mantua after the same manner, for no other reason then that Mantua was neerest Cremona.

The reason Vergil did not lose his own property, the Argument continues, was the "particular respect" of "great ones" in Rome; but a centurion named Arrius seized the land anyway, taking it "so ill to be removed" that he nearly killed Vergil, who saved himself by jumping into the river Mincius.[27]

This almost-murder makes an ambiguous transition to the first scene of *Eclogue* 1, where Meliboeus reflects on the devastating effects of the land expropriations on his livelihood. Is Meliboeus to be read as Vergil, nearly dead at the hands of a greedy soldier, or is he Arrius, furious when Augustus reneges on his promise of land? If Meliboeus is ultimately too weakened a character to "be" Arrius, he is certainly not Vergil: at the end of the "Argument" Harrington declares that "In this Eclogue the Poet represents himself by Tityrus, by Melibeus the miserable condition of those of Mantua: Which City he coucheth under the name of Galatea; under that of Amarillis, Rome; by the god he celebrateth, he means Augustus Caesar."[28]

Harrington presents a Vergil/Tityrus whose constant theme is his debt to Augustus and whose words flatten the Latin's systematic ambiguities into praise. To begin with, Tityrus "teaches the woods to echo" not the Muses but "Amarillis fair." Mantua/Meliboeus' opening lines addressing Vergil/Tityrus omit the original verse's reference to the Muse (2 *siluestrem tenui Musam meditaris auena*), leaping ahead to the fifth line of the Latin. Amarillis, the preface has just informed the reader, is Rome: Vergil/Tityrus, singing of Rome/Amarillis, is cast from the start as a Muse-less poet whose range is limited to panegyric. Harrington next transforms Meliboeus' pathetic declaration in Vergil, "we flee the fatherland" (3–4 *nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arua. / nos patriam fugimus*), into a description of the effects of dislocation on the air he breathes. Vergil/Tityrus sings of Rome; but Mantua/Meliboeus, "enforc'd to change" his "native air" and to "give up the vital breath" of his lands, can only lament his exile. Beyond Mantua/Meliboeus' nostalgic longing for homely aromas, his loss of air and breath—Harrington's addition to the Latin original—evokes the harm done to his political voice and to his powers of poetic performance. When Vergil/Tityrus speaks again, ignoring Meliboeus' lament, he does not say "a god has made this leisure for us" (*deus nobis haec otia fecit*), but instead refers to the Muses of the Latin line 2: "'tis a god that

[27] The centurion story appears in Servius' commentary on *Ecl.* 9.1 (*Vergilius postquam paene occisus est ab Arrio centurione*). See also *Vita donatiana* 62 and *Vita Donati Aucti* 31 (Brugnoli and Stok 48 and 31 respectively).

[28] The identification of Vergil as Tityrus is ancient, first appearing in Calpurnius Siculus' reworking of the bucolic form: in his *Ecl.* 4.162–63 Meliboeus exhorts Corydon and Menalcas to be grateful for "Tityrus'" role in saving the countryside by appealing to Augustus.

yields our Muse this leisure"—reiterating the point that in inspiration and performance, Tityrus' poetry is strictly beholden to Augustus. He has no choice but to sing, and to sing Augustus and Rome.

The double problematization at work here, of Vergil's obligations to Augustus and his freedom of speech, poetic and/or political, converges in Mantua/Meliboeus' question to Vergil/Tityrus: *et quae tanta fuit Romam tibi caussa uidendi*, "and what was your reason for seeing Rome?" Harrington translates the query in a manner that reiterates his historicist emphasis on Vergil's economic relationship with Augustus: "And *what good* Tityrus made you at Rome?" The first line and a half of Tityrus' answer are Harrington's free invention. They make explicit the violent condition of an Italy where land ownership is in disarray:

> Why truly when I saw the souldiers come,
> And here misuse us so; though late it were,
> And that it snow'd if I but clipt my hair ...

Where liberty looks upon the Latin Tityrus late in his life (*libertas sera tamen respexit*), Tityrus/Vergil has carefully thought over his options, in lines whose freedom of translation puts theme into form:

> I thought upon it and began to see
> What kind of thing it was call'd Liberty.
> This lost while I with *Galatea* griev'd,
> Changing for *Amarillis* I retriev'd:
> While th'other held me, I could neither spy
> An hope of fredome nor propriety.[29]

Harrington's inventive expansion on the Latin in the first couplet above performs an intensely ironic reading of Vergil/Tityrus, whose ability to keep his land depends on his opportunistic willingness to redefine political concepts and change allegiances. Liberty does not look upon him; he turns his gaze toward it, and realizes that only an autocratic, patronizing Rome can supply it. In the Latin, Tityrus' enslavement to his lover Galatea refers to an erotic affair that seems merely coincidental with the land expropriations. Harrington, however, having explicitly identified the female names as symbols for Mantua and Rome, transforms Tityrus' final choice of a lover into acquiescence in the current regime. Indeed it turns out Rome/Amarillis always wanted Vergil/

[29] *Ecl.* 1.27–32 *Libertas, quae sera tamen respexit inertem, / candidior postquam tondenti barba cadebat, / respexit tamen et longo post tempore uenit, / postquam nos Amaryllis habet, me Galatea reliquit. / namque – fatebor enim – dum me Galatea tenebat, / nec spes libertatis erat nec cura peculi.*

Tityrus, as Mantua/Meliboeus remarks: "I mark'd why Amarillis made such moan, It was for thee ..."

Harrington's inflated representation of Vergil/Tityrus' economic reliance on Augustus rests on a problem Vergil himself articulates in the text, by linking the themes of *libertas* with land ownership and poetic composition. What emerges in his Englishing is a systematic sounding of the political limits, historically speaking, of Vergil's poetic expression. The poem's ending gives this strategy a final run:

> Yet Meliboeus since the shadows now
> Are at their length, and smoaking chimneys show
> 'Tis late; you may remain with us this night ...
> And you shall lie upon a bed of boughs.

The "great shadows that fall from the high mountains" that end Vergil's poem literally in the dark (*maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae*) are swallowed up into Tityrus' invitation, "since the shadows now are at their length." In the English, shadows give way to the welcome comforts of hospitality, and there the poem ends, absent the Latin's evocation of the clouded, ethically compromised state in which the characters exist. From a suffering victim of an Augustan soldier, Vergil is transformed in the course of *Eclogue* 1 into a happy slave who has yielded to (and, it should be said, is eager to share) the economic and erotic delights of Rome.

By virtue of its mimetic nature, the act of translation implicitly renews the authority of the Latin tradition. But Harrington's Vergil is a figure of authority that Harrington himself resists through his manipulations of historical meaning and formal structure in the Latin text. We have seen in the preface that his translation amounts to "crime or treason," just like his republican political writing. The Englished *Eclogues* commit treason against Vergil's canonized text—against Vergil's position as the monarchical head of European epic—at the same time that they examine the limits of the poet's political voice in the temporal frames of both past and present, and they end with a provocative claim.

At the time of their composition, the translation suggests, Vergil's poems exist and signify within narrow borders enforced by Augustan politics, a theme the Latin *Eclogues* explicitly address: as Harrington translates, "songs and loves Are unto souldiers as to eagles doves" (9.11–13 *sed carmina tantum / nostra ualent, Lycida, tela inter Martia quantum / Chaonias dicunt aquila ueniente columbas*). The temporal distance of Vergil's poetry does not make it irrelevant to the concerns of Harrington's peers, Puritan, royalist, Leveller, or Digger. Just the opposite is true: the political significance of the *Eclogues* for

Harrington lies in the gap that separates him as translator/interpreter from the Latin. The passage of time and the creation of the Latin tradition grant the translator/interpreter the power to transform an outdated attitude—in Harrington's representation here, Vergil's quietist collaboration with autocracy—into a voice of authority calling for republican equality. The poems present a dissonant Vergil literally split by civil strife: Vergil as republican, Vergil as collaborator.

History functions here as both constraint and permission: the historically contingent constraint on Vergil's powers of political expression, and permission, owing to the passage of historical time, for Harrington to explore the possibilities of the pastoral form, layered onto the lessons of the Roman past, with a view toward political re-form. Harrington co-opts the Vergilian tradition and, even further, makes Vergil speak against himself. But if his formal switches of prosaic and poetic register, unexpected conceptual connections in rhyme, allegorical redescriptions, and substitutions in diction transform Vergil into a unregretful monarchist, the poem is reborn as an agitated call for republican justice that reminds its readers of the complicit and collaborative position poetry often takes—or is made to take.

Harrington signals awareness of his own vulnerability to this process in his translation of *Eclogue* 9. This poem follows Vergil's Latin more closely than 1, and it offers a markedly pessimistic answer to the question of poetry's relevance and power in the world. The translation finally ends, however, with a return to the tone of the opening argument. The final "Note upon the foregoing Eclogues" reviews the high and low points of Roman history to reiterate pointedly Harrington's belief that land ownership is a prerequisite to stability in the best form of government, that in which the "Balance is Popular."[30] In what is by now a familiar tactic, Harrington quits the *Eclogues* with a short poem of his own composition about political power and popular liberty.

I have said that Harrington's *Eclogues* express sensitivity to the political conditions of ancient composition, but that they do so in the voice of a resisting reader. Resistance in the English text comes in two forms: it mimes the sustained interplay of political resistance to and panegyric of Augustus that characterizes the Latin original, and it resists that original with violent acts of formal cutting and reshaping. Simultaneously retaining the markers

[30] Is it not true, he asks, that Tarquin made "such havoc of the Roman Nobility, as left the advantage of the balance of Dominion ten for one in the people? And whether this did not inevitably tend unto the generation of the Commonwealth? ...Whether Sylla did not plant forty-seven Legions ... in Italy upon Lands taken in the war ... and whether this were not the ballance of the Roman monarchy?"

of signifying heterogeneity in the Latin text and overlaying a new field of signification that speaks to contemporary concerns about land ownership, autonomy, and poetic production, the translation and its Menippean-style preface make up an exemplar of poetry as political criticism.

In the preface to his next and last installment of translations, Books 3 to 6 of the *Aeneid*, published in 1659, Harrington stages a first-person critical encounter with Vergil that more explicitly yokes historical context to his aesthetic choices and their political implications as translator. The introduction opens with an epistle to Vergil, written in the tradition made familiar from Petrarch and the famous letter of Machiavelli from his farm outside Florence to his friend and hoped-for patron, Francesco Vettori. Like Machiavelli addressing his ancient books as though they were present and listening, Harrington speaks to Vergil directly in a prefatory poem that specifies exactly what he will translate and what he will not. As he had done in the *Eclogues*, Harrington casts Vergil as the ruling figure who must be resisted:

> Virgil, my soveraign in Poetry,
> I never flatter'd Prince, nor will I thee.

His new translation, he announces, will modernize the *Aeneid*. It will translate the epic into humanistic, realistic terms, which appear organized in a (humorously) lettered list:

> Yet things and persons well distinguish'd, we,
> What's possible, and what is not, may see.
> Thou never shalt perswade me to inform
> Our Age, (a) Aeneas in thy greatest storm
> Could raise both palmes, though to the Gods; one hand
> At least had hold, or there he could not stand.
> (b) Nor is it in a Picture to devise
> How Hector round his Troy should be dragg'd twice;
> Thou shalt not make me say, (c) A Fleet could glide
> Without a Wind or Oare, a Stream or Tide.

The climax of Harrington's list of changes is his rewriting of the character of Dido. He announces his plan to pare down the passages that elaborate her sexual relationship with the Trojan hero:

> I will not yield that (e) the enamour'd Queen
> Should spare a tear that she to stay had no
> Little Aeneas, when the great would go.

In fact *Aeneid* 4.327–330 does not appear in the English. What Harrington does not reveal here is that his translation will emphasize Dido's self-control

and royal sense of civic responsibility. He transforms her speech to Aeneas, to which he alludes in this epistle, from a lament of abandonment into a complaint of the political problems the Trojan has caused with her North African allies. And just as he promises, "Never shall I show her overt passion," he deflates her most dramatic Vergilian moments of madness. Three brief examples must suffice here. Gone from the English are the Latin poem's comparisons of Dido to an enraged Bacchant. Lines 4.300–303,

> saeuit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem
> bacchatur, qualis commotis excita sacris
> Thyias, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho
> orgia nocturnusque uocat clamore Cithaeron,

become

> The Queen, no longer able to controul
> The cruel Orgy's of her restless soul,
> Thus to the Trojan vents her grief ...

"I took him up, and gave him half my Throne," Harrington's Dido protests (4.373–74 *egentem / excepi et regni demens in parte locaui*), but she does not cry out that she is Fury-driven (4.376 *heu furiis incensa feror!*). Gone too is Aeneas' dream of Mercury, and the god's notorious speech, which bids Aeneas depart ignoring that "always various and changeable thing, woman" (4.569–70 *uarium et mutabile semper femina*).

With what we might call the depassionization (and to a certain degree, the de-feminization) of Dido, however, comes the passionization of Aeneas. Harrington's Aeneas weeps, loves, and acts impulsively in words that Vergil never wrote. Passion is announced as a central theme at the programmatic start of the poem, where Harrington translates Vergil's *tantaene animis caelestibus irae* ("are there such great rages in heavenly spirits?") as "Can passion set ev'n souls in heav'n on fire?" Comforting his companions, Aeneas' English heart "bleeds" where in Latin it presses down its pain (1.209 *premit altum corde dolorem*). Vergil's Achates wonders at Aeneas' self-restraint after the two hear the good news of the fleet's safety, which Venus had earlier announced and Dido has just confirmed (1.581–85); Harrington's Aeneas right away "swell'd with joy that tore his shroud Broke from the chamber of the lightning cloud" (17). His ensuing speech replaces the proud Latin introduction *coram, quem quaeritis, adsum, Troius Aeneas* with a pathetic direct address to Dido: "Sacred and only calm I ever knew ..." When Mercury arrives to warn Aeneas that he must abandon Carthage for Italy (4.279–94), it is not Aeneas but his men who take the initiative, prepare the ships, and plot their escape, in secret, perhaps, even from Aeneas himself:

This said, the cruel Hermes dis-appears,
And leaves Aeneas bathing in his tears.
The Gods must be obey'd; this Piety
Resolves; but how with love it should agree,
His labours lose themselves to find a way,
Who knows not how to look, nor what to say.
His ablest friends in secret counsel meet,
Whose sage result commands the soaken Fleet
(Ere bald occasion turn) should be prepar'd.
By motions neither to be seen nor heard,
Till Reason and Religion convince
The Queen, in soft approaches by the Prince.

At uero Aeneas aspectu obmutuit amens,
arrectaeque horrore comae et uox faucibus haesit.
ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras,
attonitus tanto monitu imperioque deorum.
heu quid agat? quo nunc reginam ambire furentem
audeat adfatu? quae prima exordia sumat?
atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc diuidit illuc
in partisque rapit uarias perque omnia uersat.
haec alternanti potior sententia uisa est:
Mnesthea Sergestumque uocat fortemque Serestum,
classem aptent taciti sociosque ad litora cogant,
arma parent et quae rebus sit causa nouandis
dissimulent; sese interea, quando optima Dido
nesciat et tantos rumpi non speret amores,
temptaturum aditus et quae mollissima fandi
tempora, quis rebus dexter modus.

While Aeneas is bathed in tears, his friends take collective action, pluralizing Vergil's singular verb of call, *uocat*, with Aeneas as its subject. From his statement that he will test Dido, *sese temptaturum*, Aeneas is exiled to prepositional phrases describing his "soft approach."

Aeneas has already represented himself as a man of strong erotic passion in his tale of Troy's fall. From his warning "dear Creus' be sure you follow close" (for 2.711 *longe seruet uestigia coniunx*), to his transformation of Vergil's *una defuit*, "she alone failed" to "where all are safe, but when we find the cost (While she alone is wanting) all are lost," Harrington's Aeneas underscores his love for his wife. Vergil's Aeneas calls on Creusa repeatedly, and with sad pathos, *iterumque iterumque* (770), but his narrative dwells largely on the terrible condition of the city (2.750–67): Harrington's Aeneas omits his surroundings and tells instead of his frantic search, which ends after a speech

that is Harrington's invention:

> I call'd, Creusa, O Creusa, come.
> Horror condenses, and in tears distils,
> The eccho's shreek upon the waking hills.
> Creusa, O Creusa, hear, O hear,
> Thou knowest my woes, and if thy soul yet wear
> The tenderness of humane flesh, shouldst aid:
> Or, ah Creusa, if thou beest a shade,
> Can blessed spirits wound as thou hast done,
> Are are they void of all compassion!
> At such complaints, to my affrighted eyes,
> Her taller ghost appears, and thus replies (43).

Harrington allows Aeneas to speak where he had been silenced ("she deserted me as I wept and wanted to speak," *lacrimantem et multa uolentem / dicere deseruit*, 2.790–91).

In his political writings, Harrington viewed Rome as a model for civic virtue. Yet he writes an Aeneas whose passionate sensibility threatens his status as a traditional Roman (and British) exemplum of virtue. Why does Harrington write this Aeneas? His version does not simply set up passion in opposition to the demands of duty: in fact Aeneas remains in love with Dido forever in Harrington's version, since he never published Books 7–12. But Harrington is also, we recall from the preface to *Eclogues* 1 and 9 and *Aeneid* 1 and 2, a thinker of utopian politics, revolutionary writing in the strongest sense: "In me alone a rime or reason Must either be a crime or treason." In his free expansion of the passionate aspects of Aeneas' character, Harrington is drawing on a growing body of thought that theorizes the ideal citizen as a man of feeling, of desire—a paradigm that finds its ancient origins in Cicero's rhetorical and political theory, its Renaissance revival in Castiglione's courtiership handbook *Il libro del cortegiano*, and its peak in the eighteenth century with works on natural feeling like Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and Rousseau's *Émile*. The passionate Aeneas emerges from Harrington's critique of Hobbes' view of the essential savagery and non-sociability of humanity in its natural state; and it informs his view of the sociable citizen adumbrated but not elaborated in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*. Indeed Aeneas speaks the silences in Harrington's own prose invention in *Oceana* of England as the Roman state, supplementing that text's presentation of dispassionate republican virtue.

"Thou shalt never perswade me to inform our Age ..." One more issue remains. When Harrington berates Vergil about the limits of fiction and plau-

sibility, using the example of Aeneas' stretching his hands up to the heavens in the midst of a hurricane, he is engaged not only in a (self-parodying) joke about modernizing seventeenth-century taste, but also in the crucial recollection that the process of literary interpretation rests on *communal* judgments of taste. Every text, after all, is an experiment in the relationship between (writing) individual and (reading) group. As a political theorist who ended his translation of Vergil's *Eclogues* with exhortations about land reform and government with a balance toward the "popular," and who reforms a monarchic epic of empire into an exploration of republican duty, Harrington is suggesting that the relationship between poet and reader (or translator and reader, or critic and reader) is not only an aesthetic but also a civic relationship. What we see as a judgment in taste is also something that cuts to the heart of the ways in which we "think together"—a matter for preoccupation in his *Commonwealth of Oceana*, as it was for Hobbes and most other writers on political community and aesthetic taste contemporary with or following Harrington; in particular, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, and Hume. It is not going too far, I think, to conclude that Harrington's desires for a unified, balanced, and virtuous republic that drive his political writing inform his experimentation with poetry, and his interest in how the language of tradition (such as Vergil's poetry) may be made to "reveal" reformist political values. In the act of shoring up the Latin tradition, Harrington introduces his own small earthquake, a ripple of literary imagination that cracks the smooth patina that the canon is usually imagined to present.

3. Rereading Cicero

I have argued at great length that James Harrington does the job of interpreting the Latin tradition in a fashion that transcends the familiar mantras of Augustanism and anti-Augustanism, the anxiety of influence, and "writing about writing," the last in particular so often applied to "pastoral" poetry. His work has also inspired me to reevaluate my relation to the Roman tradition of rhetorical and political thought, to ask whether I wish to track down the back story to that tradition or its evidence-rich afterlife (I prefer the afterlife), and, more specifically, whether I am willing to accept the conventional assessment of Cicero's work on the relations of language, passion, and social justice as the vague and vaguely admirable eclectic meditations of a well-read politician, or to see it as the intellectual bedrock of the early modern revolution in political thought. I have come to espouse the latter view.

My work on Harrington's Vergil has emerged from and fed my preoccupation with my opening question about Latin literary studies, and with this conceptual question: what does literature have to do with citizenship? In a

sense, of course, the answer is "everything"; citizenship in a liberal democracy, at least, is an important cog in a capitalist machine of work, leisure, and consumption that makes possible book clubs, the publishing industry, and, of course, university departments of literature. But what I am really asking is: what does literary hermeneutics have to do with the practices of citizenship? What does reading and interpretation have to do with the ways we think or theorize our selves as citizens, and with the ways we think and theorize our civic practices such as voting, serving on juries, developing political beliefs, and all the rest?

Reading Harrington is a small step toward understanding some of the unlikely ways the Roman republican tradition plays out in early modern conceptions of civic subjectivity. To further that aim, I am writing a book with the working title *Talk about Virtue: Roman Republicanism and the Making of the Modern Citizen*. It seeks to explore the relevance of Cicero's theory of justice and other civic virtues for selected early modern and contemporary work on citizenship and civil society. Currently, I hope to engage with three issues. The first is the role played by several key Ciceronian ideas about selfhood and political community in the writings of Harrington, James Ferguson, and Adam Smith, with the broad goal of showing the foundational role Cicero plays in both liberal and republican thinking, a phenomenon that destabilizes the story of their original "split." Second, it will explore the question of subjective self-staging that republican politics seems to demand, in both literary and political texts of the Roman republic and modernity. Third, it will briefly address the rhetoric of republican virtue that underlies programs of civic education designed to strengthen democracy in developing countries, programs that are currently underway all over the globe under the auspices of the UN, the US Department of State and other ministries, and a range of NGOs.

The way I have outlined my project probably reveals that when I think about, say, the "end" of the Roman republic, or the crisis of the aristocratic subject under Julio-Claudian autocracy, I do so now for reasons I would not have imagined ten years ago. At that time, as I completed my graduate coursework and started contemplating my choice of dissertation topic, I approached the crises of regime and subjectivity by exploring them in the context of Foucauldian epistemes or the Barthesian death of the author; in short, within a context self-consciously theoretical with a capital T. Today (though my interest in theory has not declined) I work on these questions because they speak to the crisis of apathetic democracy, and the particular condition of emergency that has arisen over the past three years as the nation sinks into the quagmire, real and rhetorical, of war-mongering unilateralism.

We are, as I said in the first part of this essay, the inheritors of a tradition that helped inspire the writers of the American constitution. The origins of our field are bound up with the birth of various political and national identities, Italian, British, French, Greek, German, Spanish, and American. We need to explore these relationships of reception and resistance in greater detail in order better to grasp the potential for humanistic emancipation in our texts. If we revise our notion of the goal of literary studies to make a place for this kind of thinking in print, I am certain that others would listen, inside and outside the discipline. And I think that writing in this style does not in any way entail giving up the fine-grained payoff of our most sophisticated literary interpretations. Yet the current climate of academic publishing remains relentlessly resistant to such explorations. Here, for me, is the biggest challenge of politics in Latin literary studies today; it is part of the obstacle to my hope (shared by others) that Latin produce new critical paradigms for the rest of the humanities.

Because of my rethinking of the relationship of politics, literature, and professional academia, my book has a strong political orientation profoundly informed by my reading and teaching in political theory and my commitment to contributing to the growing body of work that theorizes civic identity for pragmatic ends. However, it would be a serious mistake to think that in turning to political thought I have left Latin literature behind. Quite the opposite is true. Political thought rests on understanding that the world we inhabit depends in a real sense on the way that we read and represent the things and the people in it.[31] What intrigues me in the recent spate of citizenship studies is the recognition of many policymakers that, as a 2002 UN Development report concludes, "We are simply uneducated in the techniques of democracy." In the arena of development and democracy advocacy, a traditional focus on institutions is evolving slowly into a focus on practices. And to think about political practices, the fundamental issue of what people believe and do in the political arena, is to think about the formation of subjectivity—specifically, the place of desire in our sense of ourselves as political subjects. My approach to doing political theory in my current project rests on the belief

[31] For this reason (to answer another of Lowell Edmunds' questions about self-description), I do not really care to evade the label of "philologist," which alludes to a tradition of expertise in interpreting texts. There are strategic virtues involved in retaining emblazons of cultural capital. As Nancy Armstrong remarks in "Who's Afraid of the Cultural Turn?" the success of our Victorian forebears in establishing their picture of the world as the world itself offers a model, one that she argues humanists must have the courage to seize and shape for the best, using their historical/traditional identity as makers of culture to reclaim influence in the world; see esp. 43.

that literary texts provide the richest sediment for the history of subjectivity. It seeks to bring the subject and politics together under the purview of literary studies, asking: if the subject is to be conceived of in terms of community, communication, and desire, how can I as a literary critic contribute to its history—and its reinvention?

Literary texts, I have said, are the richest sediment for the history of subjectivity. We might say that literature is a primordial ooze that emits sparks of new thoughts about the fundamental problem of politics: the relation of individual and community. Allegiance to or membership in a state has many deep parallels with allegiance to or membership in a shared literary sensibility. The ways reason and emotion jostle for precedence in literature mirror and gloss the shaping of political belief on the individual level. The act of putting pen to paper is often interpreted as a simple authorial decision either to yield or to resist, with both options all too obviously vulnerable to charges of Romantic naivete. I suggest rather that that moment stages a confrontation between the individual and his or her community, which is to say that it embodies, in miniature, the most basic relation of politics. The language of Roman literary production overlaps with politics in just this way: not only in its concern with *libertas*, and related problems of innovation and (mis)interpretation, but also in its staging of the reception of the text as a moment that puts communal values to the test.

In the Roman context, judgments of literary taste are intimately related to, and discussed in the same language as, rhetoric. So I begin not with the literary text in its solitary state, but with Cicero's discussion of taste in the communal context, rhetorical style—framing the issue at the precise intersection of the political, the public, and the aesthetic. In *De oratore* and elsewhere, Cicero offers a Catonian definition of the orator as a good man skilled in speaking. Not only is eloquence not possible without virtue, he suggests, but virtue is not possible without eloquence. In the way he observes and supervises himself, and allows himself to be observed by others, Cicero's *orator perfectus* recalls the ideal statesman of *De republica* 2.69, who is a mirror (*speculum*) for his fellow citizens. I consider him in turn as a model to be kept in mind throughout Cicero's discussion of the moral virtues in *De officiis*, which "reflects" the image of the publicly active and responsible man living what Machiavelli and his contemporaries will eventually call the *vivere civile*.

As a figure who functions as a mirror for his community, the good man is the object of aesthetic attention, even fantasy, for his fellow citizens. When they look in the mirror, what do they see? First of all, an aesthetic object, a figure who embodies masculine beauty and charisma in the graceful control of his every action. No less important, however, is his passionate aspect. This

is easy to miss: we are quick to associate Cicero with a clean, pure transparency that his text fantasizes but does not precisely describe. Instead, Cicero's ideal man is a tangled web of passions that, if they are ideally restrained and properly directed, nonetheless always hold the promise of rebellion and disintegration. This is the lesson I bring back to Cicero from Harrington's translation of Vergil: the close interconnections between republicanism and romance, patriotism and passion, selflessness and self-destruction.

In *De officiis*, the second text to roll off the printing press after the Bible and one of the most reprinted books in western history, the blurred border between passion and self-control in a context of political and aesthetic self-consciousness quickly emerges. In Cicero's prefatory address to his son Marcus, he describes Marcus' education as a middling balance of conventional oratorical styles on the spectrum from the lofty forcefulness of the *vis maior* and the even, moderate *aequabile et temperatum genus dicendi* (1.2–3). The Greeks, he notes, are unable to maintain this balance: their philosophical writing is spiritless and sweet (*parum vehemens, dulcis tamen*). Against the balanced rhetorical mean idealized in Cicero's opening address, the ideal man described in the subsequent account of the four virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and propriety that makes up Book 1 is a study in contrast. To begin with, the good man is decidedly autonomous (1.11), yet he is drawn by nature to live in communities, to take account of the common good, and to love his family (1.12). He has a passion for external knowledge and independence (1.13) but possesses an irresistible aesthetic sensibility that feeds his awareness of right and wrong (1.14). His moral virtue takes a bodily as well as an emotional form (1.17), though Cicero confesses that bodily desires and pleasures are also the source of vice. The *patria* exerts a lawful and natural demand on the good man (1.22), but his desire to improve the *patria* materially leads easily to avarice, as in Crassus' case (1.25). But the deepest objection that Cicero voices to his notion of humans' natural sociability is the fact that concern for others is simply a difficult thing to sustain (1.30 *est enim difficilis cura rerum alienarum*).

Halfway through Book 1, Cicero starts again, offering a repetitious rendition of the nature of human obligation that is rooted in relations of the heart, the famous Stoic concentric circles that begin with the self and extend outward to the cosmos (1.50–52). Though Cicero also praises the *dispassionate* spirit in tones that stand in a certain tension with the claim that love is necessary for the republic to exist (1.69), the fulfillment of these duties is best enabled by the last of his four civic virtues, propriety or *decorum*, whose formal channeling of emotion into social practices of restraint makes it essential to the attainment of, and indeed virtually indistinguishable from, moral

virtue (*honestum*, 1.93–94).[32] The virtue involves a psychological drama of performance, observation, and control, demonstrated by Cicero's briefly limned but contextually highly provocative theory of character as mask (1.107). In brief, an important part of what Cicero offers his son in *De officiis* 1 is a psychology of the passions, passions that should be authentic but sharply regulated, internally motivated but written on the face and body for public scrutiny. As Rousseau put it (89–90), there is a kind of law

> which is the most important of all: it is not graven in marble or bronze, but in citizens' hearts; in it lies the true constitution of the state; its strength augments day by day; when other laws decay or become extinct it revives or replaces them, it maintains in the nation the spirit of its constitution, and imperceptibly changes the force of authority into the force of habit. I refer to moral standards, to custom, and above all to public opinion ...[33]

As a study in contrasts, and a subject that wears a set of masks, Cicero's virtuous man is a staged self. It is embodied yet impatient of bodily demands, passionate yet self-controlled, and constantly in a state of conflict between subjective desires and the communal good. This self is an impossible operation requiring constant violation of the method that it postulates; subjective identity is constituted not only through nature and reason but also in tenser operations of internal conflict and, even more problematic, visible performance, subject to the judgment of the community of peers.

This snapshot of my larger project is designed to expose the degree to which close reading of Cicero's text informs my thought about the rhetoric of citizenship and virtue, and the overlap between the discourses of the political and the aesthetic. But it also relates to another of Lowell Edmunds' questions: the problem of Latin literary history. Reading Cicero as a psychologist of the passions and a thinker profoundly interested in the staging of the self (and as such, inspirational for early modernity) should lead, I think, to a reconsideration of a tendency in contemporary attempts in classical scholarship to explain certain motifs and strategies in imperial Latin literature as representative of an identifiable *imperial* Roman sensibility.

Is there an imperial Roman sensibility, or is this a construct of ours based on the sharply limited corpus we possess, and the smaller pieces of it we actually read and authorize for further study? If it makes sense to speak of a "crisis" of imperial subjectivity after the consolidation of quasi-monarchical

[32] The Latin *decorum* represents a new step in the evolution of the fourth canonical social virtue in the Greek tradition (it translates Panaetius' *to prepon*, itself an innovating departure from the older Stoa's *sôphrosunê*). Further discussion in Dyck 95–96.

[33] Rousseau 89–90.

power by Octavian Augustus, we must beware of becoming modern Tacituses, arguing that theatricality, literary or subjective fragmentation, preoccupations with embodiment and mortality, and excessive passion are symptomatic, in some profound sense, of "imperial culture." Willingness to repeat the (conventional view of the) Tacitean story reifies conventional views of the crisis of autocracy, and reduces the study of literary texts to filling in chains of historical causality, just where it is possible to trace in imperial literature important lines of continuity with republican concerns.

As Paul Allen Miller points out, the task is to understand the relation of literary and discursive form to historical change (7). To do so, we could do worse than to read like Harrington: not squeezing imperial and republican writers into respective slots of grand historical narrative that the texts themselves resist, but using the texts to question the historical labels with which we begin. In short, I am suggesting that the opposition between Republic and Empire, and the corresponding oppositions of freedom/repression, honor/flattery, wholeness/fracture cannot hold, and that attention to the play of theatricalization, fragmentation, and passion in a writer like Cicero (or Plautus, or Lucretius) is a useful way of destabilizing the border we tend to accept as given between Republic and Empire. The point? The better to grasp the notion of regime change and its historical evolution: to understand how republican preoccupations actively shaped imperial narratives of change and evaluations of and responses to it—including our own.

This essay has taken up several borders: the borders we create between literature and politics, between academia and the public, between methodologies, and between ourselves and earlier readers of Latin literature. Why read Latin? The current critical divergence in Latin studies suggests that we have a choice of two answers to that question: we read Latin to understand Roman culture and history, especially social history; and we read Latin to understand the ways and means of literary writing. Taken on their own merits, these are both compelling answers. But by drawing a border line between them, Latin studies risk sidestepping the project of imagining new ways in which the experiences of writing and reading Latin might continue, as they have in the past, to jolt our historical, and especially our civic, sensibilities. So I have called for the continuing recovery of an earlier mode of reading Latin in which I find a productive sensitivity to the burden of the Latinate past, a critique of the authority of authorship, and an exemplary practice of engaged political reading that both appropriates and maintains critical distance from a historicist stance.

I am not at all interested in making our work as humanists and educators "accountable," in a slavish effort to remake literary studies in an image of

corporate America. I am suggesting rather that, like Harrington, we use the cultural capital that remains of Latin literature to re-authorize our role in understanding the civic and subjective experience of modernity—an experience Latin literature helped shape. As Raymond Williams remarks, "We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we may never be certain of what may enrich it."[34]

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[34] Williams 1983: 334. I would like to thank Lowell Edmunds for bringing the original conferees together (and for setting us good, innovative questions) at Rutgers University in 2003. Thanks also to my colleagues at the Princeton University Center for Human Values in 2003–04, especially James Tatum, for thought-provoking discussions about the future of the humanities, and Philip Pettit, who encouraged my early research on Harrington and republicanism. Finally, many thanks to the helpfully critical audiences at the University of Washington, USC, Princeton, the University of Michigan, NYU, and the University of Pennsylvania, who heard various expanded versions of Part 2 in early 2004.

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