

CICERO'S FIRST READERS: EPISTOLARY EVIDENCE FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF HIS WORKS*

The study of the circulation of literary texts in ancient Rome has taken on new significance lately. Recent work on Roman books and their readers has emphasized the difference between the dissemination of texts in the ancient world and publication as we moderns know it, and we have come to see that our understanding of Roman culture and their politics can benefit from a closer examination of how the Romans composed, recited, and released their books.¹ Take, for example, Cicero and the readers of his philosophical works. In the *Tusculans*, the *Academica*, *De Officiis*, *De Divinatione*, and *De Finibus* Cicero promoted Latin, in terms very like those of modern linguistic nationalism, as a medium for intellectual discourse at the expense of Greek, and exhorted his readers to follow him in transferring philosophy from Greece to Rome. To choose to write philosophy at this time in Latin instead of Greek was, as Cicero put it, a practical means of increasing Rome's intellectual prestige, a campaign in which he invited his readers to enlist. But to whom was this appeal directed? Who, to Cicero's mind at least, would have been useful in achieving this political goal? From evidence in Cicero's letters to Atticus, we can largely retrace how he disseminated these philosophical books, reconstruct to some degree their original readers, and, most importantly, deduce the grounds on which Cicero selected them. Cicero's choice of audience, and the manner in which he assembled it, throws an interesting light both on his agenda in promoting Latin as a philosophical language as well as on the Roman culture of publication.

Before we look at the means by which Cicero's books were disseminated, we must look first, very briefly, at the linguistic politics of the Roman intellectual world in the first century B.C., and review what Cicero thought he was achieving by writing philosophy in Latin. Cicero pioneered the use of Latin prose as a vehicle for philosophy, permanently expanding its supply of abstract vocabulary in the process.² His own linguistic facility permanently extended the expressive capacities of Latin, leaving it a more supple, and more prestigious, medium of thought. Such is the point of an elegantly turned compliment, preserved for us by Pliny the Elder, to Cicero from Caesar himself: 'You have earned a laurel greater than that of any triumph, insofar as it is greater to have extended the boundaries of the Roman mind than those of Roman

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¹ Ground was broken on this question in the twentieth century by R. Sommer, in 'T. Pomponius Atticus und die Verbreitung von Ciceros Werken', *Hermes* 61 (1926), 389–422, which is still very valuable. I have found the following later studies particularly helpful: E. J. Kenney, 'Books and readers in the Roman world', in *CHCL* II (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 3–32; J. E. G. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (New York, 1984); R. J. Starr, 'The circulation of literary texts in the Roman world', *CQ* 37 (1987), 213–23; T. N. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1998), esp. ch. 5, 'Writing as social performance'.

² One can see Cicero at work on this in *Att.* 13.21 [Shackleton Bailey 351].3, comparing the merits of *inhibeo* and *sustineo* as translations of ἐνέχειν. For the lasting effect of Cicero's project, see the comments on this letter of L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London, 1954), pp. 128–9.

power.³ But Cicero's ambitions went beyond adding to the abstract vocabulary of Latin or expanding the Roman mind; he wanted to beat the Greeks at their own philosophical game, and he said as much regarding the *Academica* in one letter to Atticus (*Att.* 13.13–14 [Shackleton Bailey 321]). As he described it, his desire to surpass the Greeks was no mere personal ambition. Cicero took great pains to make his writing and philosophizing, normally understood as characteristic activities of the *otium* of a Roman aristocrat, sound as much as possible like the *negotium* of a statesman, the hard work of advancing the interests of the *res publica*. As the preface of *Tusculans* 2 shows, he had grand plans to annex for Latin the prestige of Greek philosophy and make the Romans in this respect independent of Greek intellectual culture:

I encourage all who can to snatch the glory of philosophy from the now feeble arms of Greece and transfer it to this city, just as by energy and zeal our ancestors transferred here every other kind of glory that one ought indeed to seek; let philosophy come to life in Latin letters from these days onward, and let us give it our aid. . . . if we transfer this pursuit to Rome, we shall not require even Greek libraries.⁴

The strident tone of this preface, with its talk of superseding Greek libraries and its militant image of Romans wresting the glory of philosophy from Greece's failing breast, is hardly unique. Sentiments like this crop up again and again in Cicero's letters and the prefaces to his other philosophic works, all of which promote the reading and writing of philosophy in Latin as a movement to be taken up by 'a few men whose hard work will extend far and wide throughout the Roman state' (*De Divinatione* 2, pref). With equal vehemence he deplored what he called 'this extravagant disdain for our own possessions' (*De Fin.* 1.10), a distaste for Latin intellectual culture that was apparently widespread among the Romans. He portrayed a whole class of philhellenes opposing his project, whom he castigated and ridiculed by turn, supercilious Romans 'who assert that they scorn books in Latin' (*De Fin.* 1.4), ridiculous philhellenes like the deracinated Albucius of Lucilius' satires, the Roman Epicurean 'who wanted to be out-and-out called a Greek' (1.9).

But Albucius was not alone in his preference for Greek. Even in Cicero's own lifetime, for some Roman tastes, certain genres were only to be written in Greek. At *Academica* 1.4 Cicero puts into the mouth of Varro the observation that those Romans with the intellectual bent to interest themselves in philosophy would probably already be 'well-versed in Greek learning', and would read Greek in preference to Latin; by the same turn, those Romans who had no taste for reading Greek already would be unlikely to bother with such a recondite subject as philosophy. Such a prejudice may have extended to fields of literary culture beside philosophy. Although one might sometimes infer from the generalizations of literary historians that the tradition of Romans writing Roman history in Greek had ended with Cato's *Origines*, this tradition

³ *Naturalis Historia* 7.117: 'salve primus omnium parens patriae appellatione, primus in toga triumphum linguaeque lauream merite et facundiae Latinarumque litterarum parens aequae (ut dictator Caesar, hostis quondam tuus, de te scripsit) omnium triumphorum laurea maiorem, quanto plus est ingenii Romani terminos in tantum promovisse quam imperii.'

⁴ 'quam ob rem hortor omnis, qui facere id possunt, ut huius quoque generis laudem iam languenti Graeciae eripiant et transferant in hanc urbem, sicut reliquas omnis, quae quidem erant expetendae, studio atque industria sua maiores nostri transtulerunt. atque oratorum quidem laus ita ducta ab humili uenit ad summum, ut iam, quod natura fert in omnibus fere rebus, senescat breuique tempore ad nihilum uentura uideatur; philosophia nascatur Latinis quidem litteris ex his temporibus, eamque nos adiuuemus. . . . quod si haec studia traducta erunt ad nostros, ne bibliothecis quidem Graecis egebimus' (*Tusc.* 2.5–6).

in fact extended down to Cicero's lifetime at least (*Tusc.* 5.112). Even in oratory we know that C. Memmius, 'a brilliant orator', possessed 'a refined taste for books, but in Greek, and was quite contemptuous of those in Latin' (*Brutus* 247). Before Cicero, the language of philosophy in Italy was Greek, and to Greek it reverted after his death. Cicero's only predecessors in philosophical prose were three Epicureans, Amafinius, Catus, and Rabirius, whom he mentions briefly only to dismiss on the grounds of their utter innocence of literary ambition.⁵ Sextus Clodius, the teacher of Mark Antony, famous for his ability to declaim in both languages, preferred Greek for his Pythagorean treatise *Πρὸς τοὺς ἀπεχομένους τῶν σαρκῶν*.⁶ Q. Sextius Niger, a contemporary of Julius Caesar,⁷ won Seneca's admiration for couching his essentially Roman approach to philosophy in Greek.⁸ One of the most influential philosophers of the first century A.D., Musonius Rufus, the instructor of Epictetus and Dio of Prusa, was a native of Volsinii but taught his pupils in Greek.⁹ That Epictetus himself wrote Greek rather than Latin was due to the dominance of Greek in philosophical discourse, rather than to his birth in Phrygia, for he came to Rome as a very young slave, and it was in Rome that he studied philosophy.¹⁰

It was Greek, then, that dominated philosophy at Rome before Cicero's time. Even in his age, there were Romans who preferred Greek to Latin simply because it was the entrenched language of intellectual culture in their country. In the strident tone with which Cicero attacked such philhellenism we can trace an ancient analogue of linguistic nationalism. His attacks on Roman readers of Greek imply an awareness of Latin as a language with distinct qualities and potential; they imply that speakers of Latin are united by a culture with a future necessarily separate from that of Greek. In this connection I take for my model of linguistic nationalism the description set out by Anderson in *Imagined Communities*,¹¹ his influential study of modern nationalism. Anderson's view of how nationalism developed in early modern Europe ties national identity very closely to consciousness of language. Pre-nationalist states derived their political identities from empires, dynasties, or churches that used well-established administrative languages different from the vernaculars of their subjects. When a neglected vernacular found writers to champion it against the prestigious supra-national language of intellectual discourse, speakers of that vernacular awoke to a sense of taking part in a new 'imagined' community—that is, a nation. For example, people who once thought of themselves as members of Christendom or subjects of the Holy Roman Empire might have begun to think of themselves rather as Hungarians or Germans. In Europe, the supranational language that had to be dethroned by most countries of early modern times was Latin—but if we apply this model to the intellectual world of the Roman Republic, it is Latin that would be the neglected vernacular, while the established language of philosophy would be Greek.

⁵ *Tusc.* 2.7: 'est quidem quoddam genus eorum, qui se philosophos appellari volunt, quorum dicuntur esse Latini sane multi libri, quos non contemno equidem, quippe quos numquam legerim; sed quia profitentur ipsi illi, qui eos scribunt, se neque distincte neque distribute neque eleganter neque orate scribere, lectionem sine ulla delectatione negligo.' See also *Academica* 1.5, *Tusc.* 1.6, *Fam.* 15.2. It is interesting to note that Cicero never mentioned Lucretius in this connection. His silence only emphasizes the distance between the poet and the mainstream aristocratic culture of his time.

⁶ *RE* 4.67, Brzoska.

⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 98.13; Plutarch, *De Prof. in Virt.* 77E.

⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 59.7.

⁹ *RE* 16.893–7, K. v. Fritz.

¹⁰ J. Kaimio, *The Romans and the Greek Language* (Helsinki, 1979), p. 245.

¹¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983). I paraphrase the argument of ch. 3, 'The origins of national consciousness'.

But to whom was Cicero directing his call to make Latin the new language of philosophy? Who were the 'few men' alluded to in the preface to *De Divinatione* 2, on whose influence Cicero counted to extend enthusiasm for Latin philosophy throughout the state? We must turn to his letters to find out.

Since the publication of R. Sommer's article 'T. Pomponius Atticus und die Verbreitung von Ciceros Werken' in 1926, all discussions of how books were acquired and read in Cicero's lifetime have recognized that models of literary circulation based on experience with printed books are not appropriate for the late Roman Republic. Public libraries and booksellers with large inventories of books and commercial systems for their distribution did not yet exist at Rome. The path a book followed from its author's hands to its wider readership was to a large extent regulated by the ties of friendship and social obligation. Noble Romans obtained most of their books through their social connections rather than from booksellers: as Starr says, 'the booktrade was merely an ancillary system of circulation beside the private channels that probably supplied the vast majority of literary texts'.¹² The author who wanted critical advice would usually have his work read to a small circle of friends; 'publication' normally meant giving the book to its dedicatee with permission to copy, then to other friends, and perhaps depositing a copy with a library or bookdealer. And so in most cases the published book would make its way copy by copy, from friend to friend, out into the world. 'When strangers could acquire copies of a work, that work can be said to have been *made public* or to have been *released*.'¹³ Needless to say, the circulation of books occurred on a smaller scale than it does today, and much more slowly. Although this personal circulation of books was in many ways less subject to authorial control than the circulation of a printed book, and revision of a work already released more difficult,¹⁴ the Roman Republican author would have had more control over this intimate and deliberate process in its early stages, since his first readers were all people he knew. Sending a book to be read aloud at a friend's dinner; dedication of a book to a friend with connections to particular social circles; giving one person permission to copy while denying it to another—these were decisions that could significantly affect the composition of a book's later audience.

Seen in this light, Cicero's correspondence with his friend T. Pomponius Atticus takes on an obvious importance. Atticus was not only a literary adviser, editor, and secretary to Cicero, but also his publicist, the starting-point from whom the circulation of many of Cicero's books began.¹⁵ In Cicero's letters to him we see the writer in the act of making the very choices that will shape the audience of his books.¹⁶ Since literary circulation at this time depended so much on the relations between individuals, and since Cicero's letters are full of the names of those he thought of as potential dedicatees, those to whom he gave his books, and those from whom he wanted them withheld, it is possible to form some idea of the social circles in which he wished his books to be read.

It is a logical step, then, to see what light Cicero's letters can shed on the choices he made in circulating his texts, and what the significance of these choices was for his

¹² Starr (n. 1), p. 221.

¹³ Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁴ See, for instance, *Att.* 13.20 (SB 328), where the wide circulation of *Pro Ligario* prevents Cicero from revising it further. I shall discuss this letter further below.

¹⁵ On Atticus in general, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 'Atticus and Cicero', in *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* 1 (Cambridge 1965), pp. 3–58.

¹⁶ The letters themselves circulated with various degrees of publicity or privacy. See J. Nicholson, 'The delivery and confidentiality of Cicero's Letters', *CJ* 90 (1994), 33–63.

project of Latinizing Greek philosophy. It is most convenient to break the letters up into three categories, and look first of all for evidence of the circulation of Cicero's philosophical works in the Roman world outside Italy; secondly, for circulation in Italy's non-Latin linguistic groups; and lastly, circulation among Roman authors who preferred to write in Greek rather than Latin, or who felt certain genres ought to be reserved for Greek.

DISSEMINATION IN THE PROVINCES

That Cicero sometimes directed his works to influential people in the provinces who would be able to promote their circulation outside of Italy is clear from the letters. It is notable, for instance, that Cicero, writing in praise of the memoir of his consulship that he composed in Greek, quite explicitly asks Atticus (still an Athenian resident at this time) to have it circulated in Greece: 'If you like the book, please see that it is at Athens and the rest of the Greek towns; I think it can contribute some celebrity to my reputation' (*Att.* 2.1 [SB 21]; 2 June, 60). Presumably Atticus could have helped to place copies of the book in these towns' public libraries, institutions which existed in Greece but not as yet at Rome.¹⁷ However, that Cicero had his works circulated outside Rome in order to increase the prestige of literature in Latin (especially the philosophical literature at issue in the preface to *De Finibus* 1) is not an idea supported by the evidence of the letters. The letter quoted above contains Cicero's most plain-spoken appeal for the promotion of his writings outside Italy, but the book to be promoted is of course in Greek, not Latin, and the prestige Cicero is concerned about here is his own ('videtur enim posse aliquid nostris rebus lucis adferre'), not that of his native language. We should class this letter along with Cicero's appeal to the historian Lucceius to write a monograph on his consulship (*Fam.* 5.12 [SB 2]), as an exercise in self-promotion rather than an attempt to disseminate Latin literature.

We have also a letter of 46 from Cicero to Quintus Cornificius, Caesar's *quaestor pro praetore* in Illyricum during the Civil War, who was at this time the governor of Cilicia, and was the following year to be appointed governor of Syria by Caesar (*Fam.* 12.17 and 18 [SB 204 and 205]). Here Cicero offers Cornificius one of his rhetorical works, playfully alluding to the difference in their literary tastes:

Me scito, dum tu absis, quasi occasionem quamdam et licentiam nactum scribere audacius, et cetera quidem fortasse quae etiam tu concederes, sed proxime scripsi de optimo genere dicendi [viz. *Orator*]; in quo saepe suspicatus sum te a iudicio nostro, sic scilicet ut doctum hominem ab non indocto, paulum dissidere. huic tu libro maxime velim ex animo, si minus, gratiae causa suffragere. dicam tuis ut eum, si velint, describant ad teque mittant.

(*Fam.* 12.17[SB 204].2; September 46)

Cicero's request to Cornificius to lend the book his support (*suffragere*) could be a way of politely suggesting that he recommend it to others of his circle, and so further publicize it. As Cornificius was at this time in the East, we could take this as an attempt by Cicero to disseminate the *Orator* outside Italy. Any possible ties Corni-

¹⁷ Rome had no public library before the one built by Caesar's friend Asinius Pollio at some time in the 30s. See E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore, 1985), p. 39. But Caesar had formed plans, possibly as early as 46, to assemble a huge public library of Greek and Latin books, putting Varro in charge of assembling and collating them (Suetonius, *Div. Jul.* 44). See N. Horsfall, 'Varro and Caesar: three chronological problems', *BICS* 19 (1972), 120-5, at p. 122.

ficius may have had to provincials in Cilicia and Syria are, however, not nearly so well attested as are his connections to the Roman literary world¹⁸ and his political links to Caesar. Furthermore, although Cicero must have acquired Cilician connections himself during his stay there, no letter commending any of his works to them survives. It is much more probable that, if Cicero sent Cornificius the book in hope of widening its circulation, he had in mind Cornificius' political and literary friends at Rome rather than the Cilicians.

As for promoting Latin in Italy by disseminating his works in the parts of the peninsula where non-Latin languages were still spoken, the thought does not seem to have occurred to Cicero. When Cicero wrote the *Hortensius* the Social War had only been over for little more than forty years. There is epigraphic evidence for the survival into Cicero's lifetime of Etruscan in the rural parts of Etruria and of Oscan in Campania; Greek was still spoken in some of the cities of old Magna Graecia and in Neapolis, and Celtic probably still survived in parts of Cisalpine Gaul.¹⁹ Not all of these speakers of the other Italian languages were necessarily unlettered rustics. The Etruscans had a complex body of lore on divination and religion written in their own language.²⁰ Campania was still famous for its Epicurean philosophers.²¹ Speaking in 62 about the career of his client Archias in the early first century B.C., Cicero says: 'erat Italia tum plena Graecarum artium ac disciplinarum studiaque haec et in Latio vehementius tum colebantur quam nunc iisdem in oppidis' (*Pro Archia* 3.5). If persons of some culture still spoke languages other than Latin in the Italian peninsula, then the opportunity obviously existed for Cicero to promote his language by circulating among them his Latin *philosophica*, in which, as we have seen, he claimed to have bettered the Greeks. From the evidence of the letters, though, he does not seem to have taken advantage of this opportunity. The only letter mentioning the possibility of circulating Cicero's works among provincial Italians concerns Cicero's Campanian friend and business-manager Vestorius of Puteoli, but in this passage Cicero does not treat the opportunity seriously. When Vestorius appears in an intellectual or scholarly connection in Cicero's letters, he is more often the object of ridicule than of respect. In this case he turns up in a discussion of the aftermath of Caesar's assassination, as Cicero hypothesizes on the state of things were the dictator still alive:

ille enim numquam revertisset, nos timor confirmare eius acta non coegisset, aut, ut in Saufei eam relinquamque Tusculanas disputationes ad quas tu etiam Vestorium hortaris, ita gratiosi eramus apud illum (quem di mortuum perduint!) ut nostrae aetati, quoniam interfecto domino liberi non sumus, non fuerit dominus ille fugiendus. (*Att.* 15.4[SB 381].3; May 24, 44)

Many readers have taken this reference to Vestorius at its face value: the *Real-encyclopédie* article on him says 'Vestorius muß ein sehr umgänglicher Mensch gewesen sein, der in geistiger Hinsicht seine Berufskollegen überragte', and Rawson believes that 'Atticus did press the untechnical *Tusculan Disputations* on Vestorius'.²² To interpret Cicero's remark in this light is, however, to ignore its context in the letter, and the part usually assigned to Vestorius in Cicero's correspondence. 'There is, of course, a lot of philosophical teasing in the Letters to Atticus', Griffin has noted;²³

¹⁸ Q. Cornificius has been identified as the addressee of Catullus 38, and also as the poet Cornificius mentioned by Ovid (*Tristia* 2.436) and by Macrobius as the author of the epyllion *Glaucus* (*Saturnalia* 6.5).

¹⁹ Rawson (n. 17), pp. 19–20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²³ M. Griffin, 'Philosophical badinage in Cicero's letters', in J. G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 325–46, at p. 328.

the reference here to Vestorius is simply one instance of these philosophical witticisms. The mere mention of 'going over to Saufeuus' [i.e. the Epicurean] side' signals that Cicero is speaking with his tongue in his cheek; a little earlier in the same letter Cicero writes, referring to Atticus' un-Epicurean approval for the *Tusculans*, 'Saufeuus de te celemus; ego numquam indicabo' (*Att.* 15.4 [SB 381]; 2). Furthermore, the very way in which Vestorius is alluded to ('*etiam Vestorium*') is marked by sarcasm. To broaden the field of enquiry, an examination of the other passages in the correspondence in which Vestorius' name is mentioned in connection with matters intellectual shows that they are all rather heavyhanded jokes at the expense of the practical Campanian businessman. Cicero can refer to Vestorius as a learned authority on geography: 'atque is [viz. Dionysius] primo est commotus, deinde, quod de deo isto Dicaearcheo non minus bene existumabat quam tu de C. Vestorio, ego de M. Cluvio, non dubitat quin ei crederemus' (*Att.* 6.2 [SB 116].3; May 50). Or he can refer to Vestorius as a paragon of eloquence: 'quid te Apulia moretur? an Vestorio dandi sunt dies et ille Latinus Ἀττικισμὸς ex intervallo regustandus?' (*Att.* 4.19 [SB 93].1; November 54). Or joke about his acquaintance with philosophy: 'haec conscripsi x Kal. accumbans apud Vestorium, hominem remotum a dialectis, in arithmetis satis exercitatum' (*Att.* 14.12 [SB 366] fin.; 22 April, 44). Atticus followed his friend's lead in portraying Vestorius as the leader of a philosophical school: 'Itaque ioca tua plena facetiarum de haeresi Vestoriana et de Pherionum more Puteolano risisse me satis nihil est necesse rescribere' (*Att.* 14.14 [SB 368].1; 27 April, 44). Consequently, when we note that Cicero's remark about Atticus pressing the *Tusculans* on Vestorius in *Att.* 15.4 comes less than a month after this last exchange of witticisms about the 'Vestorian school of thought', it becomes very probable that Cicero is replying playfully to yet another of Atticus' jokes about Vestorius. Even in the unlikely event that Atticus' suggestion were serious, we should have to admit that it is the only hint in the letters at an attempt to introduce Italian provincials to Cicero's works, that it was Atticus and not Cicero himself who made it, and that, as Cicero makes no more references to Vestorius and the *Tusculans*, it does not seem to have led to anything. It is plain that Vestorius' social status was not such as to entice Cicero to include him among his first readers.

DISSEMINATION AT ROME

On the other hand, we have much more evidence about the audiences at Rome to which Cicero directed his works, both those in progress and finished texts. Chief among these were Cicero's dedicatees. Since the reception of a book by its dedicatee marked its official release to the public, dedicatees like Brutus and Varro were, in theory at any rate, the first readers of these works, although, as we shall see, this rule of etiquette was sometimes hard to enforce.

The three men outside Cicero's family to whom he dedicated philosophical texts, Terentius Varro, Trebatius Testa, and Marcus Iunius Brutus, were all, on the contrary, men of established literary or scholarly reputations whose readership must have been a great aid in introducing books to intellectual circles. One thinks immediately of how the *Academica*, dedicated to Varro, would have come into that scholar's extensive personal library and there have been available for consultation and copying by all of Varro's scholarly acquaintances. Certainly many more readers must have come to know of Cicero's project to create a Roman philosophy through these men. Of course, Brutus and Varro were absolutely in agreement with Cicero's project of writing

philosophy in Latin, for they wrote philosophy in Latin themselves. Cicero was preaching to the converted, not trying to sway those who might disagree. Although Seneca refers to one of Brutus' works by a Greek title, *Περὶ καθήκοντος* (*Ep.* 95.45), the text was certainly in Latin, just as it was in Brutus' other philosophical treatises *De Patientia* and *De Virtute*. This is shown by quotations in the grammarians Priscian (2.199.8 Keil) and Diomedes (1.383.8 Keil). Testa, a jurisconsult for whom Cicero wrote a letter of recommendation to Caesar (*Fam.* 7.5 [SB26]), to whom he ten years later dedicated the *Topica*, and who appears in Horace's *Satires* 2.1 as an old and cynical authority about the Roman literary world, is known to have written a *De Iure Civili* and a *De Religionibus*, of course in Latin as suited those home-grown subjects. As for Varro, though Cicero in *Academica* 1.4–10 makes him devil's advocate in a discussion of the utility of writing philosophy in Latin, he had no doubts about doing so in actuality. Among the books in Varro's long list of works are the titles *De Philosophia*, *De Forma Philosophiae*, and *De Principiis Numerorum*.²⁴ The precise content of these books is obscure to us, but we know enough about Varro's great *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* to say that it confirmed in the Romans a sense of their traditions and national identity. Although not a 'philosophical' book in the strict sense, it reacquainted the Romans with their ancient national culture and educated them in the distinctness of their own traditions.²⁵ Cicero showered the book with praise in the preface to the *Academica* (9), saying that the Romans were wandering ignorantly through their city like foreigners; Varro, he says, by reawakening them to the traditions surrounding their laws, priesthoods, and topography, brought them home to themselves. In this respect its aim was parallel to that of Cicero's own philosophical books; Cicero chose for the object of his praise that aspect of the *Antiquitates* closest to his own enterprise.

Turning now to Atticus, who is known to have been the starting-point in the dissemination of many of Cicero's works, we find that there is ample evidence in the letters that he was a very effective conduit, not to those 'qui se Latina scripta dicunt contemnere' but to the politically influential.

Atticus promoted Cicero's writing firstly as an editor, giving him criticism and encouragement, and secondly as secretary, doing the work of copying, cutting, and pasting his manuscripts,²⁶ both roles more conducive to the creation of literature than to its distribution. He helped promote dissemination of Cicero's texts by copying them for his own use (e.g. *De Oratore*²⁷) and by sending corrected copies on to their dedicatees.²⁸ Perhaps his most useful way of increasing the circulation of Cicero's works was recommending it to other potential readers.²⁹ On the evidence of Cicero's correspondence, Atticus' most usual means of creating favourable publicity for a given

²⁴ Kaimio (n. 10), p. 241.

²⁵ T. Tarver, 'Varro, Caesar, and the Republican calendar', *Nottingham Classical Literature Studies* 3 (1994), 39–57. See also the response to this paper by J. G. F. Powell in the same volume, pp. 59–64.

²⁶ In *Att.* 16.6 (SB 414).4 Cicero confesses that he has thoughtlessly stuck on to the beginning of the *De Gloria* a preface he had already used for *Academica* 3, having pulled it at random from his 'volumen prohoemiorum. ex eo eligere soleo cum aliquod σύγγραμμα institui'. He encloses a new preface for the *De Gloria*, requesting of Atticus that 'illud desecabis, hoc adglutinabis'.

²⁷ *Att.* 4.13 (SB 87).fin.; 14 November, 55: 'de libris oratoriis factum est a me diligenter. diu multumque in manibus fuerunt. describas licet'.

²⁸ *Att.* 13.48 (SB 345).2: 'laudationem Porciae tibi misi correctam. eo properavi ut, si foret aut Domitio filio aut Bruto mitteretur, haec mitteretur'.

²⁹ 'Ligarianam, ut video, praeclare auctoritas tua commendavit' (*Att.* 13.19 [SB 326]).

piece of writing was to invite his friends to dinner. The dinner-parties Atticus gave were, according to one of his frequent guests, always attended by entertainment in the form of readings by a trained slave,³⁰ as we read in Nepos, *Atticus* 14.1–2:

usus est familia, si utilitate iudicandum est, optima; si forma, vix mediocri. namque in ea erant pueri litteratissimi, anagnostae optimi et plurimi librarii, ut ne pedisequus quidem quisquam esset qui non utrumque horum pulchre facere posset.

In his description of the accomplishments of Atticus' slaves the same source gives us some idea of the importance attached to literary diversions in his household:

nemo in convivio eius aliud acroama audit quam anagnosten, quod nos quidem iucundissimum arbitramur; neque umquam sine aliqua lectione apud eum cenatum est, ut non minus animo quam ventre convivae delectarentur. namque eos vocabat quorum mores a suis non abhorrent. (Nepos, *Atticus* 13.3)

Convivia at which such slaves provided the entertainment occur again and again in Cicero's letters to Atticus. Cicero often asks his friend to have such-and-such a text, or excerpt from a text, read aloud at his next dinner-party.³¹ Letters survive in which Cicero rather nervously asks his friend to introduce parts of two drafts of the as-yet incomplete *De Gloria* to his dinner guests:

De Gloria misi tibi. custodies igitur, ut soles, sed notentur eclogae duae quas Salvius bonos auditores nactus in convivio dumtaxat legat. mihi valde placent, mallem tibi.

(*Att.* 16.2 [SB 412].fin.; 11 July, 44)

sed tamen idem σύνταγμα [De Gloria] misi ad te retractatius, et quidem ἀρχέτυπον ipsum crebris locis inculcatum et reffectum. Hunc tu tralatum in macrocollum lege arcano convivis tuis sed, si me amas, hilaris et bene acceptis, ne in me stomachum erumpant cum sint tibi irati.

(*Att.* 16.3 [SB 413].1; 17 July, 44)

The audience provided by the guests at such parties was for many of Cicero's works the first definite step toward circulation. In some sequences of Cicero's letters we can trace almost step-by-step the progress of a text from first reading to wide distribution. *Pro Ligario*, which, in addition to having been pled before him, was eventually to be read by Caesar, much to the delight of its author, took its first steps toward popularity at a dinner-party for which Cicero congratulates Atticus in these rather commercial terms: 'Ligarianam praeclare vendidisti. posthac quicquid scripsero, tibi praeconium deferam' (*Att.* 13.12 [SB 320].2; 24 June, 45). Shortly thereafter this text was circulating so widely that Cicero could no longer make revisions to it. Cicero attributes this popularity directly to the excellent *theatrum* constituted by Atticus' guests: 'Ad Ligarianam de uxore Tuberonis et privigna neque possum iam addere (est enim pervulgata) neque Tuberonem volo offendere; mirifice est enim φιλαίτιος. theatrum quidem sane bellum habuisti' (*Att.* 13.20 [SB 328]; 2 or 3 July, 45). As to the members of this *theatrum* we can only speculate. Nepos says that Atticus' guests had characters similar to his own, but it is hard to believe that all the people at Atticus' *triclinium* were millionaire *equites* with the knack of never making an enemy. Cicero's correspondence is full of the names of likely candidates: Nepos, who describes Atticus' *convivia* and is known to have read Cicero's works (and who caused him much chagrin by disliking the ones that pleased him most³²),

³⁰ On *lectores* in general, see N. Horsfall, 'Rome without spectacles', *G & R* 62 (1995), 49–56.

³¹ For another instance of publication at a dinner-party, seen from guest's point of view, see Catullus 44.8–15.

³² 'Nepotis epistulam exspecto. Cupidus ille meorum? qui ea, quibus maxime γαυριῶ, legenda non putet' (*Att.* 16.5 [SB 410].fin.; 9 July, 44).

must have been in attendance; Sex. Peducaeus and Cornelius Balbus are also very probable attendants. Cicero gives few individual names, however. It is significant that when Cicero refers to these guests, it is *en bloc*, as an entity with a pronounced political orientation, that he describes them:

Sed de Catone, πρόβλημα Ἀρχιμήδειον est. non adsequor ut scribam quod tui convivae non modo libenter sed etiam aequo animo legere possint; quin etiam si a sententiis eius dictis, si ab omni voluntate consiliisque quae de re publica habuit, recedam ψιλῶςque velim gravitatem constantiamque eius laudare, hoc ipsum tamen istis odiosum ἄκουσμα sit.

(Att. 12.4 [SB 240]; 13 June, 46)

What is significant about this text is that it demonstrates how large the idea of the implied listener loomed in Cicero's mind when he was at work on a piece. For Cicero, the creative problem of writing was not distinct from the political problem of persuading a specific group of people with certain well-defined opinions. In this sense, writing was for him not so much an act of creation as of *reaction*—he tailored what he wrote with an eye to the prejudices of the audience he anticipated, in order either to reinforce those prejudices or to overcome them. In the case of the letter just quoted, he foresaw the audience of what was to be a political text, the *Laus Catonis*, in specifically political terms. For Cicero the difficulty of the *Laus Catonis* lay not in problems of character-drawing, style, or structure, but in the anti-Catonian, pro-Caesarian politics of its anticipated audience. In the light of Cicero's habit of writing with one eye on his audience, this evidence for the political attitudes of Atticus' dinner-guests, by way of whom many of Cicero's works first came into public circulation, is very important. Furthermore, it is clear from the evidence of his letters that Cicero paid this kind of careful attention to the politics of his audience not only in disseminating his political speeches, but also with many of his philosophical and rhetorical works. Cicero often seems to have selected his readers, or to have preferred one reader to another, on the basis of their political connections.

PRIVILEGED READERS

In the summer of 45, when, as his letters show, Cicero was rewriting the *Academica* and very worried about the propriety of dedicating it to Varro, he discovered that two people he knew had been poking about in the yet-to-be-published manuscript of *De Finibus*. His letters to Atticus, who was responsible for making a fair copy of the work and sending it to Brutus, the dedicatee, reveal much annoyance at the discovery. Copying a book for private use, whether by the dedicatee or by an interloper, constituted publication, and so in this case a violation of the author's intentions. Brutus' privileged position as the book's first reader had been compromised. Furthermore, as the author had no means of changing a text in circulation except by issuing a second version, the premature publication of an unrevised text of *De Finibus* would have been disastrous for Cicero. The two trespassers, however, did not share the brunt of Cicero's annoyance quite equally. There is a difference in Cicero's reactions to them, and this tells us something significant about how he preferred to choose his readership.

Dic mihi, placetne tibi primum edere iniussu meo? hoc ne Hermodorus quidem faciebat, is qui Platonis libros solitus est divulgare, ex quo 'λόγοισιν Ἑρμόδωρος'. quid illud? rectumne existimas cuiquam ante quam Bruto, cui te actore προσφωνῶ? Scripsit enim Balbus ad me se a te quintum de finibus librum descripsisse; in quo non sane multa mutavi, sed tamen quaedam. tu autem commode feceris si reliquos continueris, ne et ἀδιόρθωτα habeat Balbus et ἔωλα Brutus. . . .

Quo modo antea fugit me tibi dicere? mirifice Caerellia studio videlicet philosophiae flagrans describit a tuis; istos ipsos de finibus habet. ego autem tibi confirmo (possum falli ut homo) a meis eam non habere; numquam enim ab oculis meis afuerunt. tantum porro aberat ut binos scriberent, vix singulos confecerunt. tuorum tamen ego nullum delictum arbitror itemque te volo existimare; a me enim praetermissum est ut dicerem me eos exire nondum velle.

(Att. 13.21a [SB 327]; 30 June, 45)

Cicero's second letter to Atticus on the problem makes his attitude to the copyists clear:

scripta nostra nusquam malo esse quam apud te, sed ea tum foras dari cum utrique nostrum videbitur. ego et libenarios tuos culpa libero neque te accuso, et tamen aliud quiddam ad te scripseram, Caerelliam quaedam habere, quae a meis habere non potuerit. Balbo quidem intellegebam sat faciendum fuisse, tantum nolebam aut obsoletum Bruto aut Balbo inchoatum dari.

(Att. 13.22 [SB 329]; 4 July, 45)

The difference between the tone of Cicero's references to Caerellia and those to Balbus is obvious. To Balbus he concedes the right to read *De Finibus* ('Balbo quidem intellegebam sat faciendum fuisse'), and is disturbed rather by his having read it before the final revision and delivery to the dedicatee than by Balbus' actual trespass on the manuscript. Cicero has no objection to the prospect of Balbus reading the book—in good time. Caerellia, on the other hand, he describes with dismissive sarcasm ('studio videlicet philosophiae flagrans'). The simple idea of her having copied the text irritates him. He allows her, his own *necessaria* (Fam. 13.72 [SB 300].1), no reason for the kind of legitimate interest in his work that he conceded to Balbus. There are a number of ways to account for this: sexism (a woman should not be meddling in philosophy); human nature (it would not be impossible for Cicero to be irritated with someone from whom he once borrowed money [Att. 12.51 (SB 293).fin.]); or simple dislike. The explanation most ready to hand, however, is that Balbus is a more important reader, one whose own prestige will reflect well on that of the author of the *De Finibus*, and one, moreover, who is known only five days before the writing of Att. 13.22 to have passed another piece of his reading material on to an even more important friend: 'Ligarianam, ut video, praeclare auctoritas tua commendavit. scripsit enim ad me Balbus et Oppius mirifice se probare ob eamque causam ad Caesarem eam se oratiunculam misisse. hoc igitur idem tu mihi antea scripseras' (Att. 13.19 [SB 326]; 30 June, 45).

So far as can be established, L. Cornelius Balbus did not have the kind of professional interest in *De Finibus* 5 that a specialist in the topic might feel for it (he was Caesar's *praefectus fabrum*), or the sort of literary career³³ that might have made him a good conduit for disseminating Cicero's works among other writers. Although born at Gades (he acquired Roman citizenship in 72 from Pompey by an act of the consuls Cn. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Gellius [Pro Balbo 8]), Balbus was not much of a medium for spreading knowledge of Cicero's works in Spain, either. Although Balbus had accompanied Caesar to Spain in 61–60 (Pro Balbo 43) and followed him across the Alps repeatedly during the Gallic War, he seems to have spent most of his time in the 50s, during the civil war, and afterwards, at Rome as Caesar's agent, and is

³³ The only thing Balbus is known to have written is a memoir of Caesar. Of this, the only remnant is an account of a prophecy at Capua that foretold Caesar's death (HRR II.46 = Suetonius, *Caesar* 81). Balbus was, however, a close friend of C. Oppius, another close connection of Caesars' who achieved more of a literary reputation, writing lives of Caesar, Cassius, and Scipio Africanus. Balbus and Oppius are frequently paired in Cicero's letters as the intermediaries of Caesar (see the quote from Att. 13.19 [SB 326] above), and it is probable that all three often shared what they read.

not known to have returned to Gades at any time close to the writing of *Att.* 13.22 (SB 329).³⁴ To Cicero, who mentions him frequently in his letters, Balbus appeared most often in his capacity as Caesar's go-between, assuring him of Caesar's support (as early as Dec. 60, as we know from *Att.* 2.3 [SB 23]), trying to win him over to the Caesarians by holding out the prospect of a glamorous role as a mediator in the civil war (*Att.* 8.15a [SB 165A]), and giving him front-line dispatches from Caesar's camp (*Att.* 9.13a [SB 181]). In addition to his relationship with Cicero, Balbus appears to have become an intimate friend of Atticus. In Cornelius Nepos' account, he is one of the three close friends to whom Atticus announced his preference for suicide over a lingering final illness: 'postquam in dies dolores accrescere febresque accessisse sensit, Agrippam generum ad se arcersi iussit et cum eo L. Cornelium Balbum Sextumque Peducaeu' (Nepos, *Atticus* 21.4) From the records of their careers, it would not be unfair to describe all three of the friends of Atticus named by Nepos as members of the political establishment. Two of these three were certainly among Cicero's first readers. Agrippa, the third, was only beginning to come to political prominence in the last year of Cicero's life. In light of the close connection between Balbus and Atticus that this passage reveals we need not wonder at how Balbus managed to get access to Atticus' *librarii* and copy *De Finibus* 5. Balbus was a man of very definite importance in Cicero's political and social circle, and, after the battle of Pharsalus, a vital conduit of information to circles above that. This is sufficient to explain why Cicero should treat him with rather more respect than he treated his *necessaria* Caerellia.

In the case of Sextus Peducaeus, who turns up in company with Balbus and Agrippa in Nepos' account of Atticus' death, we find that Cicero entrusted with the reading of some of his works-in-progress a person of neither great literary reputation nor provincial extraction, but rather someone born into the political establishment at Rome and an ally of Caesar. He was the son of the *propraetor* under whom Cicero served as *quaestor* in Sicily in 76–75. We know that during the civil war he allied himself with Caesar and was appointed by him to be governor of Sardinia in 48 (Appian, *B.C.* 2.48 and 5.54). Peducaeus occurs frequently in Cicero's correspondence to Atticus as a close friend and a man whose advice Cicero respects.³⁵ He was also a literary adviser in whom Cicero had an exceptional amount of trust. He asks Atticus to give him Sextus' advice about the second *Philippic* in the following terms: 'tu vero leges Sexto eiusque iudicium mihi perscribes. εἰς ἐμοὶ μύριοι.' (*Att.* 16.11 [SB 420].1; 5 November, 44.)

Another member of the Roman establishment and ally of Caesar's was Q. Cornificius, to whom, as we have already seen, Cicero sent the *Orator*. Cicero's request that Cornificius lend the book his support would accord very well with the writer's habit of trying to circulate his texts by bringing them to the attention of political insiders.

Like Q. Cornificius, C. Trebatius Testa, the dedicatee of Cicero's *Topica*, had a reputation in both the literary and the political world. Between 54, when Cicero introduced him to Caesar, and the dedication of the *Topica* ten years later, Testa had become more intimate with Caesar than Cicero himself. He had served with Caesar during the Gallic Wars and acted as his ally during the civil war. He is reported to have written to Cicero at that time, telling him that Caesar wished Cicero on his side also,

³⁴ After Caesar's murder in 44 Balbus quickly attached himself to Octavianus, and was rewarded for his loyal service with a consulship in 40, the first naturalized Roman citizen to become consul (Pliny, *N.H.* 7.136).

³⁵ See especially *Att.* 12.1.3 (SB 248); 15.7 (SB 374); 10.1.1 (SB 190); 9.10.10 (SB 177).

or, if he felt too old, that he should withdraw to Greece as a neutral (Plutarch, *Cicero* 37). After the civil war, to judge from an anecdote in Suetonius (*Caesar* 78), Testa acquired the reputation of someone in a position to give Caesar advice; he is said to have advised Caesar to rise to receive the Senate on a formal occasion, not endearing himself to the dictator thereby.

For Publius Cornelius Dolabella, another person to whom Cicero considered dedicating a book, it is difficult to account without resorting to political connections for an explanation: 'Nunc autem ἀπορῶ quo me vertam. volo Dolabellae valde desideranti; non reperio quid, et simul αἰδέομαι Τρῶας, neque, si aliud quid, potero μέμψιν effugere. aut cessandum igitur aut aliquid excogitandum' (*Att.* 13.13–14 [SB 321]; 6 June, 45). The part of Cicero's letter leading up to this, in which he expresses his contentment at how the second version of the *Academica* has turned out, makes it clear that what he would like to do for Dolabella is write a book for him. Why should he especially value Dolabella's readership? The question is much the same as for Cornelius Balbus, who, however, was usually on better terms with Cicero than Dolabella was. Dolabella had no trace of the sort of literary or scholarly reputation that moved Cicero to dedicate the *Academica* to Varro. Furthermore, Dolabella was notorious for his huge debts and unrestrained way of life; had married Cicero's beloved daughter Tullia against Cicero's will in 50; sparked riots as tribune of the plebs in 47 by introducing a motion for the cancellation of debts; and tried to erect a statue to Cicero's old enemy Clodius, whereupon Cicero initiated a divorce between Tullia and Dolabella in 47.³⁶ Yet his letters show that Cicero kept up a connection with Dolabella, and even considered dedicating a book to him. The most probable reason for this lies, as with Balbus, in Dolabella's strong ties to Caesar, whose Adriatic fleet he had commanded in the civil war, and who later promised him the consulship for 44.

The predominance of Caesarians in this list will not have escaped the attentive reader. This should not make us think Cicero had a special message to proclaim to Caesarians in particular, as if either their ideology or their personalities held a peculiar fascination for him. The truth is that the evidence in Cicero's letters that concerns literary circulation is severely skewed towards the period between 46 and 44. Had Pompey won the battle of Pharsalus in 48 and filled the Roman establishment with his followers, we would doubtless find their names in the letters instead. What we must take into account is Cicero's interest not in Caesarians as such, but in the politically influential. This is in itself a significant finding. The readership Cicero chose for himself was not among educated provincials, nor the philhellenic intellectuals whom Cicero claimed as his opponents. Instead, he directed his works to the attention of influential residents of Rome, especially the urban politicians in the circle of Caesar. These early readers were not chosen on the basis of the language they spoke or wrote in; rather, they were selected for their social status and their *auctoritas*.

Was this bias due wholly to pragmatic political considerations? Or was there something else behind Cicero's preference for an audience of powerful urban aristocrats?

The model of literary dissemination in Cicero's head, I should say, was likely to have resembled less Anderson's portrait of early modern print-capitalism than the picture in the *Cato Maior* and the *Laelius*. Together, these two dialogues make a diptych, each panel reflecting and varying the themes of the other. Although the topics of these dialogues are old age and friendship, their common subtext is the transmission of

³⁶ W. K. A. Drumann, *Geschichte Roms*, 2nd edn revised by P. Groebe (Berlin, 1899–1929), vol. 1, pp. 195ff.

auctoritas through the passage of time. Here time is not an empty medium in which events occur, the neutral horizontal line that we moderns often imagine it to be, but something vertical and hierarchical. Time actively confers *auctoritas* on the events and the lives of the past. *Auctoritas* accumulates as one recedes into past, back along a chain of stories repeated and disseminated. As memory lends past events and faces the power of accumulated emotion, so time confers on a bare action or event the status of *exemplum*. It is through time that men become not simply older but greater, *maiores*. So in the first dialogue Cato and the great Romans that populate his memory are not simply 'older' than Laelius and Scipio, but 'greater'. They do not stand behind the reader, invisible, but are 'higher' than us—that is, they are *superiores*. None of these figures exists in isolation; for each, his life is a performance for an audience of Romans living and yet-unborn. Each hands his performance down to his successors as an *exemplum*. It is all the more important, then, that the participants in the dialogues are real people, and the connections between them historical—whereas a Greek writer on old age gave the speaker's role in his dialogue to Tithonus, Cicero says he chose Cato 'to give the dialogue more *auctoritas*', than a mere *fabula* would have had. Taken as a unit, the *Cato Maior* and the *Laelius* construct a vertical chain of transmission that extends down from Fabius Maximus and the time of the Second Punic War, through Cato Maior, Laelius, to Mucius Scaevola, and finally to Cicero, whose prefatory address to Atticus implies yet further disseminations. The chain of transmission creates a feeling of analogy between moments that dominates these two dialogues: as Cato provides for Laelius and Scipio a window into the world of memory, transmitting the *exempla* that are to guide their behaviour in the future, so Laelius in turn plays the instructor for Fannius and Scaevola, and Scaevola in his turn repeats the story of the dialogue to Cicero. Cato's grief for the beloved son who died prematurely is echoed by the mourning of Laelius for Scipio, which gives the dialogue on friendship its occasion. It is an analogy between the first dialogue and the second that gives Laelius' grief its pathetic force: instead of reaching the old age that we have watched Cato training him to live, Scipio has died suddenly, violently, in the middle of his *viriditas*. The future of the *Cato Maior* has become the present of the *Laelius*, but the future is not as it was imagined in the past.

This model of dissemination, a hierarchical, from-the-top-down picture of how a Roman hands on *exemplaria* to his juniors, is obviously much closer to the picture of literary dissemination that emerges from Cicero's letters. In trying to make a home for philosophy in Latin, Cicero did not trouble himself with winning over provincials like Cilicians, Etruscans, or Campanians: he did not circulate his works among professional philosophers; he did not even address his opponents—Romans who preferred to write in Greek—in the matter. So far as he could manage it, his readership was at the apex of the social pyramid, among men he considered his equals, and his ideas were to be disseminated to those who would magnify his reputation by adopting them. Aristocratic readers like himself, not tradesmen in Puteoli, were the ones he chose to spread the prestige of Latin philosophy through the state. To ask the question 'how did the recipients of Cicero's works further his agenda?' projects onto Cicero a category of modern political experience that does not translate smoothly to ancient Rome. The protocols of literary transmission as they worked in Roman culture dictated a very different approach, one regulated by hierarchies of social status and *auctoritas*.