

VENERARI CONTENDERE ADICERE.
ROMAN EMULATION, INTERGENERATIONAL RECIPROCITY,
AND THE ANCIENT IDEA OF PROGRESS*

ABSTRACT. Over the past few decades, the successful emergence of intertextuality, with its careful investigation of the dynamics of imitation, allusion, and emulation, has effectively challenged the Romantic notions of creativity and individual authorship. In the wide-open field left by the post-modern ‘death of the author’, however, the territory of *culture* as a network of patterns hiding behind the text has often been restricted within the boundaries of *literary* culture. In this paper, I will attempt to enlarge such a text-centred perspective by highlighting the often neglected connections between family education, intergenerational reciprocity, and aesthetic thought in Roman culture. Indeed, long before the *neoteroi* started to seed their poems with ‘Alexandrian footnotes’, there existed at Rome a culturally embedded set of patterns providing concrete instructions on how a Roman had to imitate his models and compete with them. As emblematically attested in aristocratic epitaphs, a young Roman was expected to consciously situate himself in the line of his *genus*, striving to imitate, and possibly to surpass, the virtues of his ancestors – the *maiores* immortalized by the masks in the *atria*. By reassessing Cicero’s, Seneca’s, and Quintilian’s approaches to *aemulatio* and their underlying sociological backgrounds, I will point to several conceptual traits which cross the boundaries between cultural and literary memory and shape the *Bildung* of such learned writers as Horace: from the faith in the endlessly advancing progress of generations to the fear of reproducing ancestral vices, from the depiction of previous models as stimulatingly imperfect portraits to the creative manipulation of genealogical identities.

1. *Competing and Alluding: from Theory to Epigraphy (and Back)*

Over the past few decades, the investigation of the dynamics of imitation, allusion, and emulation has grown into a cornerstone of Latin literary studies. A catalyzing role has been played by the successful emergence of intertextuality as an interpretive approach going significantly beyond the Romantic notions of creativity, originality, and individual authorship¹. Following the insightful surveys of Gian

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¹ The rise of intertextuality as an alternative approach to language and the making of literature is strictly connected with the critical work of Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and the so-called *Tel Quel* group. As Giere 2009, p. 3, pointed out, «intertextuality was a product of the cultural and political upheaval in France in the 1960’s». When building on the earlier theories of Bakhtin and other Russian Formalists, post-structuralist critics «attempted to intellectually subvert what they perceived to be the bourgeois, elitist power structures of

Biagio Conte, Stephen Hinds, and Richard Thomas, it has become common knowledge among Latinists that a Roman literary text can be defined as such – was perceived as such in its own context – on the basis of its relationship to a long-standing tradition of models². As Conte put it, «*imitatio* and *aemulatio* tend to converge in much of classical poetry. The essential point, however, is not that the imitator-poet desires to surpass his model but that ‘tradition’ is a necessary precondition for both emulation and allusion»³. Poetic memory and culture stand out as essential dimensions of the Hellenistic and Roman practices of literary composition, far beyond the author’s awareness and explicit intentions⁴.

In the wide-open field left by the post-modern ‘death of the author’⁵, however, the territory of *culture* as a network of patterns hiding behind the text has often been restricted within the boundaries of *literary* culture. It is true that, according to Conte himself, the reader’s «culture, and the historical values embedded in it, are ‘interrogated’ by allusion, which forces on its interpreters a consciousness of their immersion in history»⁶. But in many common examples of intertextual analysis – as well as in several theoretical discussions of Latin intertextuality – history is, first of all, the history of literature, and an author’s culture is the multi-faceted spec-

their context by reexamining some of the basic elements of culture, the understanding of ‘text’ being one such element». For a useful overview see Allen 2011.

² Conte 1986; Hinds 1998, and Thomas 1999. One should add at least Farrell 1991 and Barchiesi 2001, to mention just some items of an ever-expanding scholarly universe.

³ Conte 1986, p. 37, who goes on to observe that if one overcomes the diametrical opposition between *traditio* and *aemulatio*, «there will no longer be a linguistic compulsion to believe that every later poet must feel a competitive ambition to outdo all predecessors. (Such mental routines may be a legacy left by people who have supposed that language exists only as a means to creativity)». Conte’s bitter polemic against idealist criticism and its author-centred method should be read in view of the enduring influence of Benedetto Croce’s school over Italian scholarship.

⁴ The claim that intertextual relationships do not necessarily reflect an author’s conscious intentionality has marked the transition from previous studies on ‘allusion’ (such as Pasquali 1968, II, pp. 275-283) to intertextuality *sensu proprio*. Still, there seems to be no unanimous consensus on this issue among classicists. Thomas 1999, p. 66, for instance, restates the idea that «intention is demonstrably at the heart of a literature whose building blocks are the prior literary tradition. To deny such intention is merely game playing».

⁵ This now ubiquitous image was used by Roland Barthes in his all-too-quoted 1968 essay *La mort de l’auteur*. Arguing against biographical criticism and emphasizing the reader’s creative potential, Barthes maintained that «literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes» (cf. Barthes 1977, p. 142).

⁶ Conte 1986, p. 57. Conte’s analysis (pp. 185-195) of Verg. *Aen.* 10.496-499 (the description of Pallas’ baldric) in connection with the topos of *mors immatura* reflects indeed a thorough understanding of the interactions between cultural models and literary rhetoric. It may also be worth noting that in Kristeva 1986, p. 37 (one of the most recurrent references in intertextual studies, originally published in French in 1966), the basic assumption that ‘any text is the absorption and transformation of another’ is neatly complemented by a wider historicizing perspective: according to Kristeva, «the word as minimal textual unit turns out to occupy the status of *mediator*, linking structural models to cultural (historical) environment, as well as that of *regulator*, controlling mutations from diachrony to synchrony, i.e., to literary structure».

trum of writings produced in earlier periods. «A text», Conte claims, «can be read only in connection with, and in opposition to, other texts. [...] Readers or imitators (also a type of reader) who approach the text are themselves already a plurality of texts and of different codes, some present and some lost or dissolved in that indefinite and generic fluid of literary language»⁷.

In what follows, I am going to argue that a deeper understanding of the Roman notions of literary competition, imitation, and progress can be gained if one leaves this *circular* view of literature as a self-referential microcosm – at times resembling Borges' *Library of Babel*⁸ – and one focuses instead on the conceptual links connecting the social models of intergenerational reciprocity with the rhetorical representation of *aemulatio*. In present-day sociology, intergenerational reciprocity is defined as the process by which different generations establish a mutual exchange relationship, shaping individual choices and behaviours on the basis of recognized models⁹. Students of ancient society have long acknowledged the influence of interpersonal reciprocity, family traditions, and memory on the Roman idea of history as a competitive arena¹⁰. Yet far less attention has been paid to the metaphorical manipulation of this system of values within the *hortus conclusus* of literary craftsmanship.

Indeed, long before the Hellenistic taste for erudition and allusion entered the Latin literary debate – long before the Romans started to seed their texts with 'Alexandrian footnotes', as David Ross had them¹¹ – there existed a culturally embedded

⁷ Conte 1986, p. 29. For a resolute limitation of the role of socio-historical analysis in the interpretation of Latin texts see Fowler 2000, pp. 109-167. According to Fowler (p. 112), «anything which has meaning has fallen into the symbolic and become text: it can no longer just 'be'. [...] if, say, I try to frame a text within the context of Roman social relations, 'Roman social relations' consist in a set of texts, not in an impossible mystic reality outside textuality». An even more radical approach, calling for an entirely reader-based hermeneutics, has been put forth by Edmunds 2001.

⁸ I owe this fitting comparison to Guastella 1999, p. 73.

⁹ Joint analyses of the ideas of justice, mutual exchange, and trans-generational obligation are very frequent in contemporary social sciences – which is not surprising, given the high political relevance of issues such as old age care and youth unemployment. As Thompson 2009, p. 108, remarked, «the idea that justice is a matter of reciprocity between interacting generational cohorts is attractive not only because benefits and burdens can move in both directions between co-existing groups, but also because reciprocity is the basis for most accounts of filial duties». As we shall see, the Roman conception of intergenerational reciprocity usually considers a larger chronological range (and hence a wider spectrum of duties) than post-modern accounts – which, again, is not surprising, given the pivotal role of family memory in the patrilineal structure of Roman culture. On the problem of intergenerational justice and its theoretical foundations see also Wade-Benzoni 2002; Gosseries and Meyer 2009, and Izuhara 2010.

¹⁰ For a recent attempt to show how even the 'ethnic' memory of the *gentes* contributed to intense political competition see Farney 2007. A fascinating picture of the ideological connections between kinship, memorialization, and competitive spirit in republican Rome is offered by Hölkeskamp 2010, pp. 98-124.

¹¹ According to Ross 1975, p. 78, the use of expressions like *ferunt* in texts referring to previous traditions serves as an incorporated 'Alexandrian footnote'. On this «mannerism, by no means peculiar to Roman literature, but especially well-developed in Roman literature» see also Hinds 1998, pp. 1-5.

set of patterns providing concrete instructions on how a Roman had to imitate his models and compete with them. As is well known, by the time of the birth of Latin literature, Greek writers had already developed a sophisticated reflection on the aesthetics of mimesis and the sources of artistic rivalry¹². Still, when such reflection arrived in Rome and started to influence its intellectual elites, it merged with an ancestral patrimony of norms and habits, faithfully mirrored by a distinctive vocabulary. Under the lens of socio-anthropological analysis, Roman society appears as a strongly competitive culture – as a culture in which, to borrow Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp's words, «competition was truly omnipresent, as it even defined and determined one's position and rank within one's family and above all among one's own ancestors»¹³. However, the moral rules presiding over kinship relationships, the transmission of family heritage, and the making of aristocratic identity exert a much more substantial influence on the realm of literature than we are usually led to assume. Classicists interested in intertextuality have largely drawn on the methods and theories of French (post-)structuralism, but it is precisely the twentieth-century tradition of discourse analysis which urges us to explore the reciprocal connections between language and society – between the historical structures of social interaction and the forms of human communication¹⁴.

There is every reason to agree with Susan Treggiari that «the insistence on the

¹² For a thought-provoking treatment of the Greek view of mimesis and its place in the history of Western aesthetics see Halliwell 2002. According to Halliwell (p. 7), at least by the fourth century BCE, a «representational-cum-expressive character» provided all the so-called 'mimetic arts' (poetry, painting, dance, etc.) with a common foundation, so that in Greek culture the idea of mimesis became very similar to a 'unified conception of 'art''. Like other students of ancient aesthetics, Halliwell does not deal with the effects of competition (even less of *aemulatio*) as an ingredient of literary imitation. It is perhaps no accident that, despite the book's wide-ranging scope, the evidence from Roman authors is marginal to the argument. On the Greek representation of rivalry as a psychological and social attitude with both positive and negative consequences see Allan-Cairns 2011, and Fisher 2011 (focusing on Homer's *Iliad* and classical Athens, respectively). The ambivalent prominence of rivalry in the Greek debate on poetry and the status of the arts is already evident from the famous statements of Hes. *Op.* 11-26.

¹³ Hölkeskamp 2010, p. 123.

¹⁴ The shift from 'classical' structuralism to the post-structuralist approach of Lacan, Foucault, and Ricoeur seems to strengthen this claim for a less universalist, and more historically determined, understanding of cultural phenomena. Cf. Williams 1999, p. 63: «for structuralists like Barthes or Lévi-Strauss the transferal of the concepts of linguistics without fundamental re-elaboration leads to the retention of the idea of human nature as a specific object and as an explanatory principle. In this respect structuralism remains entrenched in Enlightenment philosophy. The post-structuralists [...] reject such a conception of subject, and their 'anti-humanism' involves the abandonment of the modernist position involving the transcendental subject». There are, of course, several studies in intertextuality which pay consistent attention to the social and cultural contexts of textual practices. Hutchinson 2013, for instance, provides exceptionally stimulating insights into the times, places, and frameworks of Graeco-Roman textuality – but see already Barchiesi 2001, pp. 147-149, for an effective reconciliation of formalist and historicist readings on the basis of the view that «the more literature talks about itself, the more it talks about the world».

moral ancestry of the individual is peculiarly Roman», as this «cannot be paralleled in Greek thought to anything like the same extent»¹⁵. A young Roman from a well-known family was expected to consciously situate himself in the line of his *genus* (his stock or descent), striving to imitate, and possibly to surpass, the virtues of his ancestors, the venerated *maiores*. The most remarkable evidence can perhaps be found in the epitaphs and the *laudationes* of such renowned families as the Scipios, the Claudii, and the Metelli¹⁶. The inscription on the sarcophagus of Scipio Hispanus, from the second half of the second century BCE, is a case in point, for it describes the tension to emulate ancestral glory as a necessary act of reciprocation recognized and enjoyed by the ancestors (*ILLRP* 316, trans. S. Treggiari):

By my character I added to the acts of courage of my family.
I begot offspring. I emulated the deeds of my father.
I maintained the praise of my ancestors so that they rejoice I was born
from their line. Honour has ennobled my stock.

*Virtutes generis meis moribus accumulavi,
progeniem genui, facta patris petiei.
Maiorum optenui laudem ut sibi me esse creatum
laetentur; stirpem nobilitavit honor.*

As in other commemorative celebrations, the morality (*mores*) of the deceased and his strenuous dedication to social duties are assessed in light of the virtues of his stock (*virtutes generis*). At the very beginning of the inscription, special emphasis is put on the fact that this unfortunate representative of the *genus* – who, differently from his father and grandfather, could not achieve any higher post than the praetorship¹⁷ – made his own contribution to the glory of the Scipios. The imagery and vocabulary employed to depict the ‘genealogical’ trajectory of progress are even more noteworthy, for they find consistent echoes in literary texts. Scipio Hispanus (or, more properly, the inscription’s *persona loquens*) maintains that he added his merits to the ‘heap of virtues’ of his ancestry (*accumulavi*), thereby offering an analogical representation of the symbolic capital of his *gens* which is clearly modelled

¹⁵ Treggiari 2003, p. 162.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive contextualization of *laudationes*, *elogia*, and *tituli* see Flower 1996, pp. 128-184.

¹⁷ Since the reconstruction of Münzer 1900, scholars have agreed that Scipio Hispanus died around the age of forty, that is, soon after his praetorship. Although he was awarded prestigious *honores* such as the priesthood of the *decemviri sacris faciundis*, he did not live long enough to become a consul like his father Scipio Hispallus and his grandfather Scipio Calvus. The warm praise in the *elogium* may thus imply a rhetorical strategy of concealment and apology, as Flower 1996, pp. 169-170, and Hölkeskamp 2010, pp. 108, 115-116, have suggested. Even more relevant to our present inquiry is the remark by Bettini 1991, pp. 182-183, that this text «illustrates in exemplary fashion the relationship that joins the identity of the individual with that of the family in aristocratic culture».

after the ideas of post-harvest storage and cross-generational enrichment¹⁸. If the contest of *virtus* and the emulation of previous *facta* may appear firmly grounded in the domain of political discourse, the desire for praise (*laus*) and the ambition to make a glorious tradition even more well known (*nobilitavit*) have clear connections with the conceptual landscape of Latin literature. Until recently, scholars debated over the possible relationships between aristocratic epitaphs and the origins of Roman poetry – especially of epigram¹⁹. But more intriguing pathways of communication between the codes of literature and the patterns of society are likely to be found in the all-embracing background laying the foundation of both such worlds – that is, in the web of rules, practices, and beliefs which ethno-anthropology labels as *culture*²⁰.

2. *Dead and Alive Again: the Author's Mask*

In commenting on Scipio Hispanus' reference to his ancestors' pride, Harriet Flower notes that «the recording of such a sentiment reflects the importance of the ancestors, especially as represented at the funeral, in summing up a career and recognizing an individual as a worthy part of a long tradition»²¹. As Maurizio Bettini has shown with ample documentation²², at Rome the *exempla* provided by the *maiores* through memorable deeds, words, and inclinations formed a gallery of prescriptive and inspiring models immortalized by both the narratives of collective memory and the severe portraits of aristocratic houses. With passionate admiration, Pliny the Elder recalls that the wax masks (*imagines*) of the ancestors exhibited in the entrance halls (*atria*) of noble *domus* were «a huge incitement» (*stimulatio ingens*) reproaching every day un-warlike owners²³. If one bears in mind the general

¹⁸ It is hardly necessary to mention that in Roman culture agricultural richness and the progressive acquisition of estates provided a fundamental model for the very notions of heritage and social goods. The metaphorical shift from material to symbolic possessions is at the core of Pierre Bourdieu's now widespread concept of *symbolic capital* – a concept that Bowditch 2001, pp. 39-50, and Hölkeskamp 2010, pp. 107-124, have gainfully applied to the milieu of Roman society. For the use of *accumulo* in its traditional 'agricultural' sense (strictly connected with *cumulus*, «heap») see e.g. Plin. *Nat.* 17.124,139; 18.230,295; 19.83-84,139. The climax in Cic. *Agr.* 2.59 (*auget, addit, accumulati*), presenting the huge patrimony of the Numidian prince Juba as «heaps of money» (*acervos pecuniae*), attests very well to the metaphorical bond between on-farm storage and capital accumulation.

¹⁹ See e.g. Van Sickle 1987, 1988, who includes the *elogium* of Scipio Hispanus among his evidence.

²⁰ On the stimulating opportunities offered by the dialogue between classics and anthropology see Bettini 2009. On the history and the methodological implications of this dialogue see Humphreys 1978; Cartledge 1995, and Tutrone 2015.

²¹ Flower 1996, pp. 169-170.

²² Bettini 1991, pp. 180-193.

²³ Pliny, *Nat.* 35.6-7. Pliny holds that the *imagines* continued to exert a psychagogic effect even when

sociological principle that within a system of intergenerational reciprocity «the norms set by a previous generation of decision makers can set a powerful example with effects carrying over many generations»²⁴, it is anything but surprising that, as an ancient patriarchal culture, Rome was permeated by intergenerational exchange dynamics and their symbols. What is often overlooked in classical scholarship is that the Latin vocabulary of family reciprocity displays a number of telling similarities with the more famous terminology of literary emulation.

For the purposes of the present paper, it may suffice to recall the ‘code of conduct’ prescribed for junior *nobiles* and ambitious Roman youths. As a rule, not only was a conscientious nobleman required to have knowledge of, and compete with, the traditional patterns of his *genus* – a nicely ambiguous word for both the rhetoric notion of genre and the pre-existing idea of stock – but he was also encouraged to draw his inspiration from illustrious ancestors, who were commonly recalled as *domestica exempla* or *domestici auctores*. When in his speech for Murena Cicero tries to appease the prosecutor, the notoriously inflexible Cato the Younger, he conjures up a *domesticum exemplum* which had already been used by his opponent. According to Cicero, far from being an unyielding kind of Stoic sage, Cato the Elder (the great-grandfather of the younger Cato) was a moderate and mild-mannered man (Cicero, *Mur.* 66, trans. C.D. Yonge):

I might say the same of Lucius Philus, and of Caius Gallus; but I will conduct you now into your own house. Do you think that there was any man more courteous, more agreeable; any one whose conduct was more completely regulated by every principle of virtue and politeness, than Cato, your great-grandfather? And when you were speaking with truth and dignity of his virtue, you said that you had a domestic example to imitate. That indeed is an example set up for your imitation in your own family; and the similarity of nature ought rather to influence you who are descended from him than any one of us; but still that example is as much an object for my imitation as for yours.

Possum de L. Philo, de C. Gallo dicere haec eadem, sed te domum iam deducam tuam. Quemquamne existimas Catone, proavo tuo, commodiorem, communiorem, moderatiorem fuisse ad omnem rationem humanitatis? De cuius praestanti virtute cum vere graviterque diceres, domesticum te habere dixisti exemplum ad imitandum. Est illud quidem exemplum tibi propositum domi, sed tamen naturae similitudo illius ad te magis qui ab illo ortus es quam ad unum quemque nostrum pervenire potuit, ad imitandum vero tam mihi propositum exemplar illud est quam tibi.

Interestingly, Cicero reasserts the moral principle that a paradigm of virtue such as the elder Cato can be legitimately imitated by all the members of the community. Cato is placed before the eyes (*propositum*) of both the insiders of the *genus*,

the house passed into the hands of another family. As we shall see, the Roman mentality was remarkably well disposed towards the reciprocal assimilation of different *genera*, and this cultural attitude seems not unrelated to the Latin writers’ interest in inter-generic dialogues and «generic enrichment» (Harrison 2007).

²⁴ Cf. Wade-Benzoni 2012, p. 184.

who can contemplate his wax portrait at home (*domi*), and the external practitioners of the same art of living. It is, of course, no accident that in his later *De Senectute* Cicero will extol Cato as an *exemplum* of wisdom and morality providing the whole dialogue with «greater weight» (*maior auctoritas*)²⁵. At Rome, the evocative power of ancestral figures was not a matter of ‘private’ family memories in any modern sense. Rather, this power overstepped the limits of the *atria* and the *armaria* to inform the imagery of competing social actors²⁶.

The same point is given clearer political significance in the *Pro Sestio*, Cicero’s ambitious (and failed) programme for the renewal of the *res publica*. Towards the end of the speech, Cicero appeals both to those who have illustrious ancestors and to those who have the right to choose their models. He suggests that the non-aristocratic youths capable of achieving celebrity (*nobilitas*) through their *ingenium* and *virtus* should follow in the footsteps of previous successful *homines novi* (Cicero, *Sest.* 136, trans. C.D. Yonge):

But in order that my speech may have some termination, and that I may cease speaking before you are weary of listening to me with attention, I will finish my argument about the party of the best men and about their leaders and about those who are the chief defenders of the republic. I will stir you up, young men, especially you who are of noble birth, to the imitation of your ancestors and I will exhort you who have the opportunity of arriving at high rank by the exercise of genius and virtue to adopt that line of conduct by which many new men have become crowned with honour and glory.

Sed ut extremum habeat aliquid oratio mea, et ut ego ante dicendi finem faciam quam vos me tam attente audiendi, concludam illud de optimatibus eorumque principibus ac rei publicae defensoribus, vosque, adulescentes, et qui nobiles estis, ad maiorum vestrorum imitationem excitabo, et qui ingenio ac virtute nobilitatem potestis consequi, ad eam rationem in qua multi homines novi et honore et gloria floruerunt cohortabor.

By exhorting the young *nobiles* to imitate their forefathers, Cicero simply restates a common rule of Roman culture. More intriguing is the rational strategy (*ratio*) recommended to the aspiring *nobiles*, as this strategy, too, remains firmly within

²⁵ Cf. Cic. *Sen.* 3. A very similar argument is developed in *Verr.* 2.4.81, with regard to Scipio Africanus. According to Cicero, Scipio was so great a man that «he should be entrusted not to a single family but to the whole community of citizens (*ut non uni familiae sed universae civitati commendatus esse debeat*)». As a successful *homo novus*, a consular, and a politically engaged intellectual, Cato the Elder was idealized by Cicero for various purposes throughout the years. As van der Blom 2010, p. 246, has pointed out, both in the *Pro Murena* and in the *De Senectute*, «the literary Cato becomes the medium through which Cicero can express his vision and thus functions as a personal exemplum of Cicero». On Cicero’s self-fashioning as a new man, resuming and at the same time transgressing traditional prototypes, see also Dugan 2005.

²⁶ Suffice to mention the assertion of Polybius, *Hist.* 6.53.3, that during the *laudationes funebres* the audience «was moved to such sympathy that the loss did not seem a private sorrow of the mourners, but a public event affecting the whole community» (ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γίνεσθαι συμπαθεῖς ὥστε μὴ τῶν κηδευόντων ἴδιον, ἀλλὰ κοινὸν τοῦ δήμου φαίνεσθαι τὸ σύμπωμα).

the ambit of *aemulatio*. This is the pathway chosen by Cicero himself at the start of his career, when he was an energetic *homo novus* from Arpinum following in the footsteps of Cato the Elder. The Roman youths lacking the support of noble ancestry are advised to re-adapt the aristocratic practice of intergenerational competition into the wider scenario of political history: since they do not have famous *maiores* to look back to, they can only emulate virtuous unrelated heroes such as the earlier *homines novi*.

In order to understand more deeply Cicero's injunction, it is necessary to turn to another *locus classicus* of Roman social theory, the preface to Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum*. After touching upon the moral usefulness of historiography as a quintessentially «memorial» genre (*memoria rerum gestarum*), Sallust offers a nostalgic reconstruction of the psychagogic power of the *imagines* in the middle Republic, and proclaims that the social advancement of the *homines novi* has been made possible by a fruitful extension of the aristocratic practice of emulation (Sallust, *Iug.* 4.5-7, trans. J.C. Rolfe):

I have often heard that Quintus Maximus, Publius Scipio, and other eminent men of our country, were in the habit of declaring that their hearts were set mightily aflame for the pursuit of virtue whenever they gazed upon the masks of their ancestors. Of course they did not mean to imply that the wax or the effigy had any such power over them, but rather that it is the memory of great deeds that kindles in the breasts of noble men this flame that cannot be quelled until they by their own prowess have equalled the fame and glory of their forefathers. But in these degenerate days, on the contrary, who is there that does not vie with his ancestors in riches and extravagance rather than in uprightness and diligence? Even the 'new men', who in former times already relied upon worth to outdo the nobles, now make their way to power and distinction by intrigue and open fraud rather than by noble practices.

Nam saepe ego audiui Q. Maxumum, P. Scipionem, praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, quom maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem accendi. Scilicet non ceram illam neque figuram tantam vim in sese habere, sed memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari, quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequaverit. At contra quis est omnium his moribus, quin divitiis et sumptibus, non probitate neque industria cum maioribus suis contendat? etiam homines novi, qui antea per virtutem soliti erant nobilitatem antevenire, furtim et per latrocinia potius quam bonis artibus ad imperia et honores nituntur.

In the introductory section of the *Iugurtha*, we are reminded of the same symbolic function of the ancestor masks which had been highlighted by Polybius in his description of the Roman funeral. Polybius had been unequivocal in stating that the public procession of masks into the Forum and the following eulogy at the *rostra* activated a beneficial competition between generations which perceived themselves as links in a chain of achievements²⁷. Sallust pushes the issue a step further by not-

²⁷ Cf. esp. Pol. *Hist.* 6.53.9-54.3. On the paramount cultural relevance of the parade of *imagines* and the funeral eulogy see Bettini 1991, pp. 186-193; Flower 1996, pp. 91-158, and Picone 2012, pp. IX-XII. On

ing that the Roman inclination to competitive imitation extended from junior *nobiles* to proactive newcomers, a point underlying also Cicero's exhortation in the *Pro Sestio*. The political ascent of the *homines novi*, Sallust argues, was originally supported by their willingness to «surpass nobility through virtue» (*per virtutem nobilitatem antevenire*), and it was the degeneration of this contest which led to the crisis of the late Republic. According to the moralizing interpretation of 'internal' observers such as Cicero and Sallust, the *homines novi* made up for their lack of family *imagines* by emulating the living images of colleagues and predecessors. They could even draw their inspiration directly from the ancestors of aristocratic families who had become part of Rome's cultural memory²⁸. From a socio-anthropological perspective, this shared perception confirms that the Romans established a functional analogy between *vertical* and *horizontal* competition, that is, between the *diachronic* comparison with the ancestors and the *synchronic* interpersonal contest²⁹.

In Sallust's eyes, however, the danger exists that vices become the object of *aemulatio*. Even the traditional *contentio* with the ancestors can be (and has been) perverted into a shameful race for material richness. Sallust, of course, has the political men of the late Republic in mind, but his sharp caveat finds an echo in the Roman cultural debate *sensu lato*. In the most famous Latin discussions of the aesthetics of literary imitation, from Cicero's *De Oratore* to Horace's *Epistulae* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, readers are repeatedly warned against the risk of vying with flawed models and reproducing their faults³⁰. In his typically sententious

Polybius' specific outlook see Champion 2004, pp. 94 f., with further references. Though highly idealized, the dialogue between Scipio Aemilianus and Polybius (31.23-24) shows that the Greek historian was fully aware of the concerns which such competitive system raised among the noble youths striving to be «worthy of their house and their forefathers (τῆς οἰκίας ἄξιός καὶ τῶν προγόνων)».

²⁸ On the notion of cultural memory see Assman 2011. Consistent evidence is also provided by Gaius Marius' speech in Sall. *Iug.* 85. As a proud *homo novus*, Marius emphasizes his distance from the *nobiles* «with an ancient lineage, many masks (*multarum imaginum*), and no military experience» (85.10; cf. also 21-25; 29-30; 36-38). He claims that the *homines novi* consciously emulate the ancestors of the *nobilitas* of their day (*nos illorum aemulos*, 85.37), whereas the haughty aristocrats exploiting the fame of their *maiores* embrace a very different lifestyle. See Picone 1976; Flower 1996, pp. 16-23, and Sordi 2002, pp. 245-248.

²⁹ In the Roman world, the connection between ancestral traditions and political debate was primarily founded on the use of family memories on the part of candidates and magistrates: see Wiseman 1971, pp. 107-116; Treggiari 2003, pp. 139-148, and Hölkeskamp 2010, pp. 107-124. Of course, these symbolic associations constituted an important part of the Romans' culturally specific approach to competition, which resulted in a rich vocabulary (Marchese 2017). Though ostensibly grounded in the biological background of human beings, the drive to competition takes on different forms in different societies, and it is in these variations that cultural historians are likely to find the most interesting materials for their analyses. For a more biology-focused approach to ancient competition see van Wees 2011, with the criticisms of van Nuffelen 2012.

³⁰ Cf. Cic. *De orat.* 2.90-91; Hor. *Ep.* 1.19-12-20; Quint. *Inst.* 10.2.14-18, to mention just three *loci classici* on what seems a capital maxim of Roman aesthetic theory. On the socio-political side, an effective caveat against the imitation of vices is given by Cic. *Off.* 1.121. See Fantham 1978, and Perry 2002, pp. 158-159.

style, Horace remarks that a model which may be imitated for its vices is bound to deceive its imitators (*decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile*, *Ep.* 1.19.17), and this deep-rooted fear of emulating vices is clearly connected with the recurring precept of choosing only the best from among varied sources³¹.

The identification of substantial similarities between social and artistic *aemulatio* relies on the assumption that, in the minds of Latin writers, literary models had a distinctively individual character comparable to that of family ancestors and political predecessors. By contrast, some modern scholars have claimed that poetic memory and emulation should not be considered the product of a relationship between two subjectivities – between two individual authors – and have argued that this approach diverts our attention from the «structural reality of the text»³². Fortunately enough, alternative views have also emerged in recent times. In his perceptive discussion of plagiarism in Latin literature, for instance, Scott McGill points out that «in the Roman concept of *imitatio*, the process was firmly author-centric: later writers drew from earlier ones, not from an authorless tradition, from abstract cultural discourse, or from a generic code»³³. To be sure, in the consciousness of educated readers and writers, there was a continuing tradition of models perceived as a relatively coherent system of norms, practices, and experiences. But just as the uninterrupted line of the *genus* was made up of individual characters and personalities – of the admonitory masks of the ancestors – the heritage of previous literature was assembled, canonized, and memorialized as a collection of authoritative *personae* (the old Etruscan word for ‘masks’), which taken all together formed the body of poetic codes. As classicists of the twenty-first century, we should perhaps prepare to welcome that «friendly return of the author» which Roland Barthes announced almost fifty years ago³⁴.

³¹ See also Hor. *Od.* 4.2.27-32, and Sen. *Ep.* 84.3-5. As Perry 2002, p. 161, notes, «Quintilian’s essential point is that no single rhetorical model is wholly perfect and universally accepted as such. For the Romans, then, the best speaking and writing called for a judicious blend of the influences contributed by numerous literary models». The prominence of this theme in the extant theoretical discussions of *imitatio* is also pointed out by Russell 1979, p. 5.

³² See e.g. Conte 1986, pp. 37-39. On the «structural reality of the text» see esp. pp. 27 f.

³³ McGill 2012, p. 19. In nt. 70, McGill goes on to remark that «it is striking how consistently confident they [Latin critics] were in taking a biographical line and maintaining that an author intentionally imitated a predecessor». A very similar situation can be observed in ancient canonical enumerations, which, unlike modern canons, «list authors rather than works, and consequently do not normally allow for value differentiation among the works of a single author» (Vardi 2003, p. 146).

³⁴ Contemporary inquiries into Barthes’ theory and the post-structuralist view of subjectivity have called for more careful consideration of the preface to *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Barthes 1971), where Barthes claims that «the pleasure of the Text also includes a friendly return of the author (‘un retour amical de l’auteur’)» as body and object of desire. See Burke 1992 and Gallop 2011.

3. *The Good Son's Legacy: Towards a Sociology of Literary Emulation*

The Latin term for «author», *auctor*, can itself be used as an intriguing *trait d'union* between the world of social values and that of literary representations. First and foremost, *auctor* designates the progenitor or founding father of a pluri-generational breed, taking on a prominent position in retrospective reconstructions on the basis of his role of initiator³⁵. By definition, an *auctor* is well-known (*nobilis*) and is endowed with enduring *auctoritas* – the quality of *augere*, which etymologically combines causal agency and persuasive power³⁶. Usually, an extended range of *auctores* is reputed to substantiate the history of families, groups, and communities, including Rome as a whole³⁷. According to Cicero, for example, a noble Roman man like Pompey can feel reassured by the established precedent of a *domesticus auctor* when taking publicly relevant decisions, but he is also expected to find legitimation in a wider gallery of communal models, from Marius and Crassus to Sulla and Metellus³⁸. Indeed, the need to carefully identify a set of ethical-aesthetic references – going beyond the borders of one's *genus* if necessary – is one of the most visible points of contact between social praxis and artistic endeavour.

In his *De Officiis*, Cicero explains with particular cogency that a virtuous individual should innovate and enrich the legacy of his *patres* and *maiores*. Resourceful sons like Scipio Aemilianus, who «crowned (*cumulavit*) his inherited military glory with his own eloquence», are praised because they have performed the canonical actions of *addere* and *adicere*³⁹. Cicero maintains that sometimes the natural inability to engage in ancestral practices leads the members of the later generations to creatively emulate their models and to make the most of personal qualities⁴⁰. As

³⁵ For *auctor* as the founder of a human stock see e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.2 (*auctor nobilitatis*); Verg. *Aen.* 4.365 (*generis auctor*); 7.49 (*sanguinis ultimus auctor*); Ov. *Fast.* 3.157 (*propaginis auctor*); Suet. *Claud.* 25 (*Romanae gentis auctoribus*); Ner. 1 (*auctorem originis itemque cognominis*).

³⁶ For an updated etymological survey of *augeo* and its derivatives see Clemente Fernández 2012. The distinctiveness of the Roman attachment to the *auctores* and their *auctoritas* is captured by May 1988, pp. 6-7: «it is highly doubtful that the typical Athenian at the height of the radical democracy [...] could have been constrained by respect for authority in the same way or to the same degree as a Roman, whose life from early childhood was shaped by the customary practice of deferring to the judgment of a higher *auctor*, be it his *paterfamilias*, his patron, a magistrate, or the Senate».

³⁷ In *Sest.* 138-139, Cicero admits into his studiously enlarged canon of *auctores civitatis* all those who are willing to defend the unstable *res publica*. In the traditional view, however, the *auctores civitatis* were, first of all, the most eminent *optimates* – another label that Cicero rhetorically enlarges. See Narducci 2009, pp. 243-256.

³⁸ *Balb.* 51.

³⁹ *Off.* 1.116: *Quidam autem ad eas laudes quas a patribus acceperunt, addunt aliquam suam, ut hic idem Africanus eloquentia cumulavit bellicam gloriam, quod idem fecit Timotheus, Cononis f., qui cum belli laude non inferior fuisset quam pater, ad eam laudem doctrinae et ingenii gloriam adiecit.*

⁴⁰ *Off.* 1.121. Cicero cites the case of Scipio the Augur (the son of Scipio Africanus the Elder and

in many ‘technical’ treatments of rhetorical imitation, the awareness of one’s limits is thus presented as an incentive to refashion the heritage of the past and to forge an original ethos for oneself⁴¹. To mention just one example, in Book 10 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian reaffirms the hierarchic principle that «whatever is like another object must necessarily be inferior to the object of its imitation (*quidquid alteri simile est necesse est minus sit eo quod imitatur*)», but also adds that «no development is possible for those who restrict themselves to imitation (*nihil autem crescit sola imitatione*)». According to Quintilian, «even those who do not aim at supreme excellence ought to press toward the mark (*contendere*) rather than be content to follow in the tracks of others (*sequi*), for the man whose aim is to prove himself better (*prior*) than another, even if he does not surpass his competitor, may hope to equal him (*etiam si non transierit, aequabit*)». The acts of equalling and surpassing, and of imitating and competing, may appear notably different to a modern observer. But they were part of a wholly coherent system of representations in Roman culture⁴².

Far from being a tentative scholarly deduction, the assimilation of literary and family *aemulatio* is already evident in the work of Cicero and other Latin authors. In his defence speech for the Greek poet Archias – a very elaborate panegyric of the moral value of poetry at the border between epideictic and forensic rhetoric – Cicero presents himself as an educated kind of *homo novus* compensating for his lack of aristocratic *imagines* by imitating literary *exempla* (Cicero, *Arch.* 14, trans. C.D. Yonge).

For if I had not persuaded myself from my youth upwards, both by the precepts of many masters and by much reading, that there is nothing in life greatly to be desired, except praise and honour, and that while pursuing those things all tortures of the body, all dangers of death and banishment are to be considered but of small importance, I should never

adoptive father of Aemilianus), whose competitive aspirations were frustrated by ill health. The difficult situation of the Africanus’ son as a high-born man who could only achieve the priesthood of *flamen Dialis* (or augur) is mirrored by the implicitly apologetic tone of his epitaph (*ILLRP* 311). The inscription insists on the premature death of this unlucky exponent of the Scipios, whose potential to reach higher *honores* was doomed to remain unexpressed: «if you had enjoyed a longer life», so the epitaph goes, «you would have easily surpassed the glory of your ancestors (*quibus sei in longa licuisset tibe utier vita, | facile facteis superases gloriam maiorum*)». See Coarelli 1972, and Hölkeskamp 2010, pp. 87, 122 f. For a different identification of the epitaph’s dedicatee see McDonnell 2006, pp. 35-37.

⁴¹ On Cicero’s view of *ethos* and *ethopoia* as essential dimensions of both political life and rhetorical discourse see May 1988. The strong connection between social and literary characterization in Cicero’s works is perceptively noted by Dugan 2005, p. 7: «how the *De officiis* presents the self in theatrical and literary terms, combined with *decorum*’s ambiguous status as both an ethical and aesthetic term, lays the foundation for Cicero’s use of literary aesthetics to construct a self within his rhetorical theory».

⁴² Marchese 2017, p. 29: «*aequare* un altro non significa fermarsi (*insistere*) sulle sue orme, significa provare a muovere un passo avanti a quelle orme, anche se poi non si riesce effettivamente a collocarsi più avanti. [...] In questo particolare senso attribuito al meccanismo competitivo, sforzarsi di diventare primi conta in assoluto, anche se altri sono stati primi ‘prima’ di noi». See also Raina 2008.

have exposed myself, in defence of your safety, to such numerous and arduous contests, and to these daily attacks of profligate men. But all books are full of such precepts, and all the sayings of philosophers, and all antiquity is full of precedents teaching the same lesson; but all these things would lie buried in darkness, if the light of literature and learning were not applied to them. How many images of the bravest men, carefully elaborated, have both the Greek and Latin writers bequeathed to us, not merely for us to look at and gaze upon, but also for our imitation! And I, always keeping them before my eyes as examples for my own public conduct, have endeavoured to model my mind and views by continually thinking of those excellent men.

Nam nisi multorum praeceptis multisque litteris mihi ab adulescentia suasissem nihil esse in vita magno opere expetendum nisi laudem atque honestatem, in ea autem persequenda omnis cruciatus corporis, omnia pericula mortis atque exsili parvi esse ducenda, numquam me pro salute vestra in tot ac tantas dimicationes atque in hos profligatorum hominum cotidianos impetus obiecissem. Sed pleni omnes sunt libri, plenae sapientium voces, plena exemplorum vetustas; quae iacerent in tenebris omnia, nisi litterarum lumen accederet. Quam multas nobis imagines non solum ad intuemdum verum etiam ad imitandum fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt! quas ego mihi semper in administranda re publica proponens animum et mentem meam ipsa cogitatione hominum excellentium conformabam.

For Cicero, the works of Greek and Latin writers are able to fulfil the psychagogic function of wax masks, as they metaphorically present readers with the portraits (*imagines*) of the great men of the past⁴³. Roman citizens like Cicero who have not grown up among the imposing memories of a noble house can absorb from literature the same ideals of traditional education – the self-sacrificing passion for *laus* and *honestas* which leads to risking one's life and defeating public enemies like Catiline⁴⁴. For the sake of moral improvement, it is of basic importance to move beyond the level of simple observation (*intueri*) and embrace the practice of conscious imitation (*imitari*), which is founded on the mental act of keeping the *exempla* before one's eyes (*sibi proponere*)⁴⁵. The use of memory and mental images for creative

⁴³ See Dugan 2005, p. 57: «the *Pro Archia* co-opts the prestige and presumed semiotic stability of these wax masks and thus uses this aristocratic sign-system for Cicero's own, more egalitarian, form of cultural self-fashioning. Within this speech, the *imagines* are signifiers that are not only reliable conveyers of meaning, but of meaning that is transformative». Cicero's use of literary education as a means for self-legitimation in the eyes of the *nobilitas* sharply distinguishes him from one of his role models, the self-declaredly 'practical' man C. Marius (cf. van der Blom 2010, pp. 181-183). On the cultural and political programme inherent in the *Pro Archia* see Porter 1990; Berry 2004, and Vanhaegendoren 2004. In discussing our passage, Berry 2004, pp. 305 f., cites for comparison Sall. *Iug.* 4.5, and argues for a «possible reminiscence» of the Ciceronian passage in Sallust. However, the affinity between the two texts can be more convincingly explained by the influence of a common anthropological background than by Sallust's supposed allusion.

⁴⁴ Since the *Pro Archia* was delivered in 62 BCE, Cicero's references to the dangers of death and exile should be read in light of his fight against Catiline's conspiracy (November-December 63). For a different date see Bellemore 2002.

⁴⁵ Notably, this theme recurs in both the *rhetorica* and the *philosophica* of Cicero: see e.g. *Mur.* 66

purposes is a well-known technique of Greek and Latin rhetoric, discussed by both Cicero and Quintilian, among others⁴⁶. Cicero's twofold profile as a statesman and writer in the *Pro Archia* reminds us that similar intellectual practices could be syncretically assimilated by Romans to their ancestral customs.

Cicero's analogical reasoning also implies that the re-enactment and veneration of literary *exempla* urge the imitator to embark on at least equally commendable undertakings. The contemplation of the *personae* crystallized in literary texts instils a desire for emulation comparable to that inspired by ancestors – who, in the *De Officiis*, are said to shape the *personae* of their descendants⁴⁷. It should be recognized, however, that the most striking evidence about the Roman association of family and literary *aemulatio* is provided by Seneca. In *Epistle* 64, Seneca reports to Lucilius that he has read, together with a group of friends, a thrilling book by the proudly Roman philosopher Quintus Sextius⁴⁸. Like other great authors of the past, Sextius is said to provide a benefit to his readers with a work of high moral value, which is not only a literary model but also a powerful incitement to personal improvement. In order to illustrate the correct attitude to assume towards such moral-aesthetic paradigms, Seneca makes an explicit comparison with the experience of intergenerational reciprocity (Seneca, *Ep.* 64.7, transl. R.M. Gummere):

Hence I worship the discoveries of wisdom and their discoverers; to enter, as it were, into the inheritance of many predecessors is a delight. It was for me that they laid up this treasure; it was for me that they toiled. But we should play the part of a careful householder; we should increase what we have inherited. This inheritance shall pass from me to my descendants larger than before. Much still remains to do, and much will always remain, and he who shall be born a thousand ages hence will not be barred from his opportunity of adding something further.

Veneror itaque inventa sapientiae inventoresque; adire tamquam multorum hereditatem iuvat. Mibi ista adquisita, mibi laborata sunt. Sed agamus bonum patrem familiae, faciamus ampliora quae accepimus; maior ista hereditas a me ad posteros transeat. Multum adhuc restat operis multumque restabit, nec ulli nato post mille saecula praecludetur occasio aliquid adhuc adiciendi.

(*exemplum tibi propositum*); *De orat.* 2.93 (*aliquem sibi proponerent ad imitandum*); *Off.* 1.116 (*magna sibi proponunt*).

⁴⁶ Cf. Cic. *De orat.* 2.354-360, and Quint. *Inst.* 11.2. On the importance of mnemotechnique and its cognitive foundations for ancient literature and rhetoric see Penny Small 1997, pp. 85-103, and Webb 2009, pp. 87-130.

⁴⁷ On the Stoic theory of 'social masks' or *personae* (a pivotal issue in the thought of Panaetius of Rhodes) and its reception in Cicero's *De Officiis* see Gill 1988, 2008 and Guastella 2005.

⁴⁸ *Ep.* 64.1-2. On Quintus Sextius, the founder of the so-called Sextian school and father of Sextius Niger, see Capitani 1986 and Lana 1992. On the importance of 'reading communities' for the culture of Seneca's day see Johnson 2010.

The term *inventores sapientiae* is a purposely comprehensive description of the writer's predecessors, whatever their field of action and inquiry. *Sapientia* is the philosophical wisdom of daring thinkers like Sextius as well as the corpus of medical insights referred to in the subsequent chapter⁴⁹. The common rule which should preside over these areas of knowledge apparently far apart from each other is the dynamic law of reciprocity established by virtuous Roman families. Just as a *bonus pater familiae* has the moral duty to preserve and enlarge the legacy received as a sign of gratitude to his fathers and ancestors, the wise reader – be he a doctor, a philosopher, or a man of letters – is called upon to imitate, and in the end to surpass, his textual models. When deploying the images of the *hereditas*, of the ancestors' *labor*, and of the sons' *occasio adiciendi*, Seneca is fully aware of their psychological impact on Latin readers. He aims to rouse the addressee's socio-cultural imagination and ultimately to improve the didactic efficacy of his ethical message by setting it against a 'familiar' imaginative background.

Seneca's assertion that every future generation will have the opportunity to add something new to the ancestors' heritage has clear implications for our understanding of the ancient idea of progress. Interpreting such assertion in conjunction with the similarly impressive statements on the infinity of progress made in the *Natural Questions*, Ludwig Edelstein has claimed that Seneca «gives a clearer and more comprehensive picture of what the ancients meant by progress than does any other author»⁵⁰. This may well be true but, as I have tried to show elsewhere⁵¹, we should always be aware of the historically distinctive milieu which lays the foundations of Senecan optimism. Far from being an isolated sage anticipating the visions of Condorcet, the Enlightenment, and positivist progressivism, Seneca develops a careful reflection on the social sources of knowledge and epistemic advancement which is strongly indebted to the traditional Roman idea of intergenerational reciprocity⁵².

⁴⁹ Cf. 64.8, where a list of medical applications based on previous knowledge is made in order to show that «one thing will be always new: the application and the scientific study and classification of the discoveries made by others» (*hoc semper novum erit, usus et inventorum ab aliis scientia ac dispositio*).

⁵⁰ Edelstein 1967, p. 169. The most interesting passages in the *Natural Questions* are 6.5.2-3; 7.25.3-7; 7.30.4-6.

⁵¹ Tutrone 2014.

⁵² Some interpreters have indeed tended to portray Seneca as a kind of Condorcet *avant la lettre*: see e.g. Cailleux 1971 and Nisbet 1994, pp. 44-46. Edelstein (p. 175) proclaims that «for Seneca, the ideal of progress was an expression of the highest aspirations of man and mankind, and in explaining it and defining its scope he argued very much in the manner of the thinkers in the eighteenth century who were preoccupied with the same ideal». In this as well as in many other fields of classical scholarship one should try to avoid what Finley 1998, p. 85, poignantly called «the teleological fallacy»: an error of perspective consisting «in assuming the existence from the beginning of time, so to speak, of the writer's values [...] and in then examining all earlier thought and practice as if they were, or ought to have been, on the road of this realization; as if men in other periods were asking the same questions and facing the same problems as those of the historian and *his* world».

In the *Natural Questions*, the author acknowledges that the ancients (*veteres*) held some views which may appear crude and inexact (*parum exactas et rudes*) to the people of the Neronian age. Yet Seneca's contemporaries should listen indulgently to the ancients (*cum excusatione veteres audiendi sunt*), for it is thanks to the ancients that human knowledge has started to progress. Mankind ought to pay tribute to the earliest inquirers not because they are absolutely perfect models, but because they have initiated, hopefully, a never-ending cross-generational process⁵³. Indeed, just like the *imagines* of the ancestors displayed in the *atria* – which could occasionally look faded or «smoky» (*fumosae*) to Cicero himself⁵⁴ – the conceptual patterns of the past deserve veneration in so far as they are an incentive to enter into a constructive contest.

It is very meaningful that towards the end of *Epistle* 64 the celebration of the innovative potential of individuals merges with a further exaltation of the value of devotion (Seneca, *Ep.* 64.9-10):

Our predecessors have worked much improvement, but have not worked out the problem. They deserve respect, however, and should be worshipped with a divine ritual. Why should I not keep portraits of great men to kindle my enthusiasm, and celebrate their birthdays? Why should I not continually greet them with respect and honour? The reverence which I owe to my own teachers I owe in like measure to those teachers of the human race, the source from which the beginnings of such great blessings have flowed. If I meet a consul or a praetor, I shall pay him all the honour which his post of honour is wont to receive: I shall dismount, uncover, and yield the road. What, then? Shall I admit into my soul with less than the highest marks of respect Marcus Cato, the Elder and the Younger, Laelius the Wise, Socrates and Plato, Zeno and Cleanthes? I worship them in very truth, and always rise to do honour to such noble names.

Multum egerunt qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non peregerunt. Suspiciendi tamen sunt et ritu deorum colendi. Quidni ego magnorum virorum et imagines habeam incitamenta animi et natales celebrem? quidni ego illos honoris causa semper appellem? Quam venerationem praeceptoribus meis debeo, eandem illis praeceptoribus generis humani, a quibus tanti boni initia fluxerunt. Si consulem videro aut praetorem, omnia quibus honor haberi honori solet faciam: equo desiliam, caput adaperiam, semita cedam. Quid ergo? Marcum Catonem utrumque et Laelium Sapientem et Socraten cum Platone et Zenonem Cleanthenque in animum meum sine dignatione summa recipiam? Ego vero illos veneror et tantis nominibus semper adsurgo.

⁵³ Cf. *Nat.* 6.5.2-3. Seneca refers in particular to the history of seismology, which he selectively reconstructs from its early beginnings to more recent developments. However, the conception of authority and knowledge creation expounded in the passage is entirely consistent with the evidence from the *Epistles* and other sections of the *Natural Questions*. See e.g. *Ep.* 33.7-11; 80.1; 102.30. On Seneca's view of human progress see also Motto 1993 and Williams 2012, pp. 263-276.

⁵⁴ In *Pis.* 1, Cicero blames the aristocratic Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus for exploiting «the commendation of his smoky family portraits» (*commendatio fumosarum imaginum*), which he resembles only in his swarthy complexion.

The *imagines* which Seneca is hinting at here may be both those of the Roman aristocratic houses and those worshipped by the Epicureans, who were famous for their custom of cherishing Epicurus' portraits and celebrating his birthday⁵⁵. It is precisely this intersection of literary, philosophical, and socio-political horizons which mirrors the general *cultural* significance of Seneca's views. In the moral consciousness of a Latin writer, the respect owed to Laelius, the two Catos, and the praetor is not substantially different from the reverence shown for Plato and Cleanthes⁵⁶. In all such cases, the relationship to the *auctor* and his *auctoritas* is expected to rely on both *veneratio* and *aemulatio*, since the dominant Roman model, while recommending respect for laws and authorities, regards totally passive submission as fruitless, unwholesome, and unworthy of a free man. The political and gender overtones of this model, ingrained in a patriarchal and post-monarchic society, are all too clear⁵⁷. But their influence on literary ideologies is much greater than often recognized⁵⁸.

The very same network of ethical, aesthetic, and social values surfaces in *Epistle* 84, Seneca's best-known treatment of *imitatio*. When elucidating his theory about creative imitation and the moral usefulness of reading, Seneca employs a wide range of analogical arguments to show that good readers should make the most of different sources, reorganize the information gained, and ultimately blend their results into a unitary and original whole⁵⁹. The classical image of the author-bee cul-

⁵⁵ On the philosophical and cultic meaning of these Epicurean habits see Clay 1983, 1986, who takes into proper account the evidence provided by Seneca about Epicurus' *contubernium*.

⁵⁶ Note that, for Seneca, Cleanthes is not only a philosophical authority but also a literary model. In *Ep.* 107.11, Seneca translates into Latin Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (*SVF* 1.527), thus engaging in the traditional practice of *vertere* – one of the earliest forms of Roman *imitatio* (see Traina 1970; McElduff 2013, and, for an anthropological approach, Bettini 2012). As Mazzoli 1970, p. 91, remarked, «questi *priores*, questi *auctores* che Seneca [...] venera e si ripropone di imitare, appartengono essenzialmente alla sfera dei saggi, dei filosofi, e sono per lo più i suoi maestri stoici. Ma non sono esclusi dalla rosa degli eletti i più grandi poeti».

⁵⁷ On the «ideological connection between heroic insubordination and fear of kingship or tyranny» in Roman republican culture see McDonnell 2006, pp. 195-205. Mc Donnell points out the Romans' difficulties in reconciling the militaristic aggressiveness of *virtus* and *virilitas* with obedience and subordination to the state. He also sums up (pp. 165-168) the results of previous studies which have successfully identified an opposition between dominant or hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinities: «these studies are agreed that masculinities they have identified were elite, public, involved social performance, competition, the constant scrutiny and judgement of others, and issues of sexuality». See especially Edwards 1993, pp. 63-97, and Williams 2010, pp. 137-245.

⁵⁸ For an interesting (albeit necessarily fragmented) analysis of the symbolic connections between genre and gender in Latin literature see Batstone-Tissol 2005. The interdependence of literary admiration and competitive spirit in Roman poetry is reaffirmed by Russell 1979, p. 10, against the misleading tendency «to treat 'imitation' and 'emulation' as fundamentally different, the one passive and negative, the other positive and original». Yet, like many other critics, Russell shows no interest in the socio-cultural roots of ancient rhetorical debates.

⁵⁹ On Seneca's view of literary imitation see Mazzoli 1970, pp. 87-96; Setaioli 1985, pp. 830-856, and Martina 1992.

ling the honey of poetry – which is variously re-used in the ancient tradition, from Pindar and Plato to Callimachus, Lucretius, and Horace – is discussed in special detail by Seneca⁶⁰, but other similes are also invoked to embody the ideals of erudition, assimilation, and dissimulation. The *exempla* of bodily digestion, mathematical reckoning, and choral harmony are interlaced with a reference to filial resemblance which seems to capture the kernel of Senecan doctrine (Seneca, *Ep.* 84.8):

Even if there shall appear in you a likeness to him who, by reason of your admiration, has left a deep impress upon you, I would have you resemble him as a child resembles his father, and not as a picture resembles its original; for a picture is a lifeless thing. «What», you say, «will it not be seen whose style you are imitating, whose method of reasoning, whose pungent sayings?». I think that sometimes it is impossible for it to be seen who is being imitated, if the copy is a true one; for a true copy stamps its own form upon all the features which it has drawn from what we may call the original, in such a way that they are combined into a unity.

Etiā si cuius in te comparebit similitudo quem admiratio tibi altius fixerit, similem esse te volo quomodo filium, non quomodo imaginem: imago res mortua est. «Quid ergo? non intellegitur cuius imiteris orationem? cuius argumentationem? cuius sententias?». Puto aliquando ne intellegi quidem posse, si magni vir ingenii omnibus quae ex quo voluit exemplari traxit formam suam impressit, ut in unitatem illa competant.

In the preceding section, Seneca had emphasized the value of individual talents and efforts – of the *ingenii cura et facultas*, 84.5 – and had explicitly suggested concealing one's models and sources⁶¹. From the perspective of Seneca and his audience, however, concealment is not mystification. Rather, it is the most suitable way to combine the elements of continuity and discontinuity implicit in any cultural product. As Tim Whitmarsh has pointed out, after the establishment of the Roman dominion over the Greek East, a very nuanced debate arose about the rules of mimesis and the functions of literary memory. Particularly widespread was the perception that «any imitation of a paradigm necessarily marks the difference between past and present at the same time as it proclaims the sameness. Or, to put the matter in a way that brings out more strongly the relevance to cultural identity: the *assertion* of continuity with the past indicates (by simultaneously asserting the *need* to assert) the presence of discontinuity»⁶². What may perhaps sound like a lo-

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 84.3-5. Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.53-54; Plat. *Ion* 534a-b; Callim. *Hymn. Ap.* 110-112; Lucr. 3.10-13; Hor. 4.27-32. For further references and examples see Murray 1996, p. 117. On Seneca's learned elaboration of the bee symbolism in *Epistle* 84 see Berrens 2015.

⁶¹ Cf. *Ep.* 84.7: «this is what our mind should do: it should hide away all the materials by which it has been aided, and bring to light only what it has made of them (*hoc faciat animus noster: omnia quibus est adiutus abscondat, ipsum tantum ostendat quod effecit*)».

⁶² Whitmarsh 2001, p. 47 (author's emphasis), recalling the lesson of Derrida 1982, pp. 320 f. Whitmarsh focuses on the imitative ideology of the Second Sophistic as an essential component of Roman imperial

gical paradox to the ears of modern interpreters reflects instead a central belief of Roman (and, in Whitmarsh's terms, Roman Greek) culture, a belief cogently exemplified by the co-existence of identification and differentiation impulses within the father-son relationship. Although a good Roman son is expected to look like his father, both in a physical sense and in a moral sense, he cannot – and should not – slavishly reproduce his predecessor's traits⁶³. Perfect imitation is the typical quality of an artificial picture (*imago*), not of «a man of great talents» (*magni vir ingenii*)⁶⁴. As we have seen, the role of ancestor portraits in the Roman universe is radically different: they serve as semiotic resources leading children and descendants to perform glorious deeds which are both similar to, and different from, the ancestors' accomplishments. Seneca's use of verbs such as *figere* and *imprimere* is perhaps reminiscent of the Roman custom of moulding portrait masks and affixing them in the *armaria*. In the imaginative texture of the epistle, however, the emulator is invited to superimpose his own traits on those of the *exemplar*, as if the model's mask were continuously recreated by its eager observer striving to establish a new sense of unity. Once again, by resorting to a 'familiar' epistemic scenario, Seneca enhances the didactic efficacy of his message. But in so doing he also restates the symbolic correlation between literature, kinship, and society.

In his much-discussed book *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom uses the father-son relationship as a metaphor for «the absorption of the precursor» on the part of poets. Bloom claims that his main subject in the book is precisely this «battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads»⁶⁵. Notwithstanding Bloom's classicizing imagery, it should be recog-

literature, but his reference to Virgil's *Ecloques* in the same context is emblematic of the relevance of his analysis to post-classical ancient writing *tout court*. For other thorough remarks on the identitarian implications of Roman *imitatio* see Vogt-Spira 1999.

⁶³ The Romans' cultural expectation that a child – above all a male heir – would look like his father is discussed, with all of its attendant difficulties, by Beltrami 1998, pp. 19-22, and Lentano 2007, pp. 147-192. As Catullus, 61.209-223; Virgil, *Aen.* 4.327-330, and Seneca himself, *Troad.* 647-648, attest, the respected son of a respected father should primarily display (or «bring back», *referre*) a family likeness in his face and mien (*os, vultus*). In addition, young scions ought to carry on the moral tradition of their families – which, in such famous cases as the stubborn Manlii, the haughty Claudii, and the gracious Valerii, is thought of as stable in the long term (van der Blom 2010, pp. 98-99). Yet, they should do this industriously and creatively. The *exemplum* of filial resemblance (and all of Seneca's theory) has a second lease on life in the Renaissance: the humanist Paolo Cortesi deploys the father-son simile to describe his relationship to classical models and accuses Agnolo Poliziano of imitating the classics in the manner of an ape – to which Poliziano replies that, far from being a parrot or a magpie, he has learned from Cicero to be himself. See McLaughlin 1995, pp. 202-227.

⁶⁴ Note, again, the intrusion of gender and social patterns in Senecan discourse: the expression *magni vir ingenii* joins the exaltation of 'virile' creativity with the originally aristocratic idea of innate qualities.

⁶⁵ Bloom 1973, p. 11. According to Bloom, only Shakespeare succeeded in the gigantic enterprise of the «absolute absorption» of his precursor (Christopher Marlowe), and that is why Shakespeare's poetry is

nized that the most distinctive representations of literary *aemulatio* in the Roman world have little (if anything) in common with the violence of parricide. At Rome – many centuries before the titanic ambitions of the Romantic genius – fathers and sons were neither powerful equals nor bloody fighters. Less heroically (but perhaps more humanly), they thought of themselves as masks and heirs⁶⁶. As Seneca claims in another of his *Epistles*, later Latin writers working on well-known themes should even be happy at their condition. On the one hand, in fact, «what is already discovered does not hinder new discoveries (*inventuris inventa non obstant*)», and on the other hand, «he who comes last has the best of the bargain (*condicio optima est ultimi*): he finds already at hand words which, when marshalled in a different way, show a new face (*novam faciem habent*). And he is not pilfering them, as if they belonged to someone else, when he uses them, for they are common property (*nec illis manus inicit tamquam alienis; sunt enim publica*)»⁶⁷. The mortal duel between Shakespeare and Marlowe celebrated by Bloom is a distant prospect. But the domestic *atria* of Sallust and Cicero are just a step behind Seneca's teachings.

4. *Valuing the Heritage: Latin Writers on Authority, Canonicity, and Posterity*

In his perceptive discussion of the dynamics of imitation in Callimachus' first *Iambus*, David Konstan has shown that a tight connection exists between the Hellenistic poets' construction of the notion of genre and their concomitant identification of the founding figures of their genres. According to Konstan, «by the very gesture of appropriating the archaic poets as the *founders* of their genres, the Hellenistic poets were signalling a rift with the past – since they themselves were not likewise originators in this respect – in the act of invoking continuity with it»⁶⁸. Konstan's

excluded from the argument of *The Anxiety of Influence*. Also telling is Bloom's repeated description of the literary model as «parent-poem» in the initial synopsis (pp. 14-16).

⁶⁶ Du Quesnay 1979, p. 37, is certainly right in contending that «all our post-Romantic notions and ways of thinking about the relationship between a Roman writer and his model must be discarded. [...] Literature is what literature is agreed to be at any time in any culture and if we wish to read any literature but our own we must learn the appropriate conventions as we try to learn the idioms and social registers of a new language».

⁶⁷ *Ep.* 79.6. On the use of Roman legal imagery in Seneca and early imperial literary criticism see Peirano 2013. It may be worth citing for comparison Horace's precept in *Ars P.* 128-135, with its reference to the *operis lex* and the *publica materies privati iuris*. On Seneca's *imitatio* of his own father's works see Trinacty 2009. It goes without saying that the use of the father-son bond as a symbol of identity and differentiation has strong psychoanalytic resonances. For a fine treatment of the topic at the border between social rules, psychic life, and textuality see Ellmann 1994, esp. pp. 39-102, a volume which counts Julia Kristeva and Harold Bloom among its contributors.

⁶⁸ Konstan 1998, p. 136 (author's emphasis). The Hellenistic view of genres, norms, and literary traditions has been the subject of several investigations. A notably comprehensive survey is offered by Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004.

remarks about the sense of continuity and discontinuity characterizing Alexandrine poetry might seem to anticipate those of Tim Whitmarsh about the identitarian concerns of Greco-Roman imperial literature. And the question may arise whether it is possible to mark any relevant differences between Hellenistic μίμησις/ζήλωσις and Roman *imitatio/aemulatio*. A complete answer to this question is clearly beyond the scope of the present paper, but the cultural constants pointed out so far contain *in nuce* a partial answer, as they bear witness to distinctive attitudes, contexts, and discourse modes which rework the lines of Greek authorial self-fashioning. In addition, a closer (albeit synthetic) examination of the approaches of Virgil, Quintilian, and Horace to the issues of authority and creativity can further clarify the relationship between Latin literary practices and anthropological structures.

Callimachus' first *Iambus* is indeed representative of the wider Hellenistic tradition, as it stages the author's desire to place his work within a generic context. As is well known, Callimachus imagines that the sixth-century poet Hipponax comes back from Hades to Alexandria and invites the Museum's philologists to abandon competitive enmity. In order to introduce a new and milder form of *iambos*, Callimachus revives the founding father of iambic invective and makes him repudiate the personally insulting tone for which he had become famous⁶⁹. This piece of poetic fiction is, of course, a function of Callimachus' erudite reflection on the idea of literary heritage. To cite Konstan once again, «by invoking Hipponax as having founded the genre, Callimachus inevitably presents him as engaged directly with the world rather than as a practitioner of an established art form that must be mastered, like that of the scholar-poets of Callimachus' own time»⁷⁰. Readers are thus presented with a fundamental division of the literary discourse into two main levels. On the one hand, there is an archetypal founder – an οἰκιστής in the classical Greek sense – dominating the generic tradition and delivering authoritative instructions by virtue of his *canonical* status. Hipponax is just one of the several earlier iambographers known to Callimachus' readers, but, together with Archilochus and Semonides, embodies the very essence of *iambos* in the Alexandrian canon⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Cf. Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004, pp. 8 f.: «Callimachus' Hipponax not only reveals, with a keen sense of history, that he knows that invective poetry was closely linked to the specific context where it was produced (the culture of archaic Ionia), but he also reflects, within the scope of his new poetic programme (and that of Callimachus), a sense of the progressive elimination of personal polemic, which had marked the evolution of comic and satirical literature from iambic poetry to Middle and New Comedy». On Callimachus' re-creation of Hipponax's profile see also Hughes 1996.

⁷⁰ Konstan 1998, p. 136.

⁷¹ On the Hellenistic elaboration of literary canons and the ancient debate about canonicity see Finkelberg-Stroumsa 2003. Valuable insights are also offered by Easterling 2002 and Hägg 2010. On the fundamentally triadic canon of iambic poetry fixed by Callimachus and his successors in Alexandria see Rotstein 2010, pp. 25-60. Taking up the idea of Vardi 2003, p. 140, that ancient canonical enumerations are characterized by «a stable core with flexible periphery», Rotstein notes that «the ancient canon of iambographers was

On the other hand, there is an extended range of poetic imitators who can express such distant views as those of Callimachus and his fellow-philologists, but share a *secondary* position in so far as they place themselves on a crucially different level than their models. Indeed, even if the Hellenistic poets aim to be (and are proud of being) original and innovative, they do not feel the need to emphasize the values of communal belonging and cross-generational continuity, nor do they envision an evolution (or an extension) of their canon in the future⁷².

The Hellenistic representation of literary authority – often combined with a claim to originality in a specific respect – is variously re-used by later authors, particularly in the Roman world. As for the iambic tradition, Horace's depiction of Archilochus as a generic paradigm, both reaffirmed and challenged, is a case in point⁷³. Still, it would be over-simplistic to assume that the Roman discourse on models, emulation, and canonicity consists of a sophisticated re-adaptation of the Alexandrian two-level reasoning. Students of Virgil's *Georgics*, for instance, have shown that «the most complex and typically Virgilian type» of reference to previous *auctores* is «conflation or multiple reference»⁷⁴. As Joseph Farrell has pointed out, Virgil's allusive programme «possesses an integrative function, linking poetic traditions that might normally be regarded as discrete»⁷⁵. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Virgil competes with an extensive and chronologically disparate gallery of models, ranging from Homer, Hesiod, and Apollonius Rhodius to Varro, Catullus, and his own earlier works. By doing so, not only does the poet place himself in the same line of descent as his predecessors, but he also constructs a heterogeneous

made up of Archilochus as central member, Hipponax and Semonides as secondary members, and Ananius as peripheral» (p. 28). The arbitrary (and historically determined) nature of this selection is not hard to recognize: «explicit evidence (true, not always strong) helps us to establish that from the seventh to the fourth centuries BCE at least ten poets were active in the genre of *iambos*. Rather than a picture of demise, this is a picture of continuity. Through the centuries the emphasis was mainly on the trio Archilochus, Semonides, Hipponax. Their status in the literary system overshadows that of any other iambic poet» (p. 53).

⁷² As Bing 1988, p. 75, has shown, the allusiveness of the Hellenistic poets «reflects the profound desire to compensate for a perceived epigonality and artistic disjunction». At the same time, however, «the very mastery that the Hellenistic poets are so zealous to establish and display is itself a sign of rupture». See also the discussion of the emblematic case of Apollonius Rhodius in Goldhill 1991, pp. 284-289.

⁷³ Cf. Hor. *Ep.* 1.19.22-25, a passage which combines allusivity and *primus*-Motiv (and should, of course, be read in light of Horace's stance in the *Epodes*). See Johnson 2012, p. 32: «by applying Callimachus' reintroduction of Hipponax to Archilochus, Horace is making an iambic response to Callimachus. Callimachus is returning to qualities found in archaic iambic, Callimachus back to Hipponax. Horace can do better. He can push beyond Callimachus/Hipponax and take iambic back to its foremost artist: Horace to Callimachus to Hipponax to Archilochus».

⁷⁴ Thomas 1988, p. 5. Through a careful study of the imagery of *Georgics* 1, Thomas 1986 has identified a variegated typology of Virgilian allusions to both Greek and Latin models.

⁷⁵ Farrell 1991, p. 216, adding that «Vergilian allusion functions in similar ways at the level of verse-craft and with respect to larger discursive structures».

genealogy in which every literary ancestor displays both merits and flaws, alternatively imitated, avoided, or surpassed.

What is implicit in the literary consciousness of Virgil and other Latin poets becomes noticeably explicit in the Roman discussions of canonicity. It has often been noted that, as a consequence of the above-mentioned sense of rupture and revival, the Greek canons written from the Hellenistic era onwards normally rule out post-classical authors. The list in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *De imitatione* does not cite any Hellenistic writer⁷⁶, and more inclusive canons never overstep the limits of the late third/early second century BCE⁷⁷. In his Greek reading list, Quintilian himself does not discuss later poets other than Euphorion and Nicander⁷⁸, but such a classicistic approach stands in stark contrast with Quintilian's own structuring of the Latin canon. As Amiel Vardi observed, «for almost every genre in his list of Roman writers Quintilian mentions some very recent authors, and though he makes a point of not including living persons, he nevertheless praises the achievement of his contemporaries, whose names, he says, would appear in the canons of future generations»⁷⁹. To cite only a few instances, Quintilian praises an unnamed «man worthy of being remembered through all ages: he will be celebrated in the future and is appreciated today (*uir saeculorum memoria dignus, qui olim nominabitur, nunc intellegitur*)» – perhaps Fabius Rusticus⁸⁰. He claims that the Flavian orator Iulius Secundus (one of the characters in Tacitus' *Dialogus*) «would have certainly attained a great reputation among posterity (*clarissimum profecto nomen oratoris apud posteros foret*) if he had lived longer» – a line of argument strikingly resembling the epitaphs of Scipio Hispanus and Scipio the Augur⁸¹. Even more notable, Quintilian makes the optimistic statement that «subsequent writers on the history of oratory (*qui post nos de oratoribus scribent*) will find abundant material for praise among the orators who flourish today: for the law courts can boast a glorious wealth of talent. Indeed, the consummate advocates of the present day are serious rivals of the ancients (*consummati iam patroni ueteribus aemulantur*), while enthusiastic effort and lofty ideals lead many young students to tread in their footsteps and imitate their excellence (*eos iuuenum ad optima tendentium imitatur ac sequitur industria*)»⁸². Vardi explains this disparity in Quintilian's treatment of Greek and Roman canons as the product of a

⁷⁶ Fr. 6.II.204-214 Usener-Radermacher.

⁷⁷ See Steinmetz 1964, pp. 464-466, who, for this reason, highlights the originality of Quintilian's «Sicht der griechischen Literatur, die ohne Markierung eines epochalen Einschnitts die archaische, die klassische und die Hellenistische Literatur zu einem einheitlichen Komplex zusammenfasst».

⁷⁸ Cf. *Inst.* 10.1.56, with the comments of Citroni 2006a, pp. 7 f.

⁷⁹ Vardi 2003, p. 148.

⁸⁰ *Inst.* 10.1.104.

⁸¹ *Inst.* 10.1.120-121. Cf. above, ntt. 17 and 40.

⁸² *Inst.* 10.1.122.

nationalistic ideology which tends to contrast the past glories of Greek literature with the fervid activity of Roman rivals. Additionally, Vardi notes that in the Flavian period literary canons are still usable «social instruments», serving the elite both as a token of identity and as an educational tool. This is no doubt true, but we should also be prepared to recognize behind Quintilian's claims a culturally distinctive belief in the value of intergenerational continuity, reciprocity, and progress⁸³.

Sometimes even Roman poetical texts go beyond the boundaries of a deliberately ambiguous *arte allusiva*⁸⁴ and present their readers with explicit literary genealogies. To take just one representative example, in Book 1 of Horace's *Sermones*, the need to define the author's position within the less 'institutionalized' tradition of satire results in the depiction of a heterogeneous (and thus characteristically Roman) line of descent (Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.1-13, trans. H.R. Fairclough):

Eupolis and Cratinus and Aristophanes, true poets, and the other good men to whom Old Comedy belongs, if there was anyone deserving to be drawn as a rogue and thief, as a rake or a cut-throat, or as scandalous in any other way, set their mark upon him with great freedom. It is on these that Lucilius wholly hangs; these he has followed, changing only metre and rhythm. Witty he was, and of keen-scented nostrils, but harsh in framing his verse. Herein lay his fault: often in an hour, as though a great exploit, he would dictate two hundreds lines while standing, as they say, on one foot. In his muddy stream there was much that you would like to remove. He was wordy, and too lazy to put up with the trouble of writing – of writing correctly, I mean; for as to quantity, I let that pass.

*Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae
atque alii, quorum comoedia prisca virorum est,
siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.
hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus,
mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque, facetus,
emunctae naris, durus componere versus.
nam fuit hoc vitiosus: in hora saepe ducentos,
ut magnum, versus dictabat stans pede in uno.
cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles;*

⁸³ A culturally specific worldview seems to influence also the deviation of Quintilian's Latin canon from the standard Greek practice of listing each author only once – a practice followed by Greek critics even if several authors have written in a number of different genres. According to Vardi 2003, p. 146, «the explanation for this apparent anomaly might be that the relatively young and not all that rich Latin literature could not provide Quintilian with enough authors to enumerate for each genre». Again, there is truth in this. But the Roman belief that emulative successors should embark on new and different areas of action in order to outdo their models – an idea well attested in Cicero and Seneca – is also likely to have played a role.

⁸⁴ To use the seminal definition of Pasquali 1968, II, pp. 275-283 (a reprint of his famous 1942 article).

*garrulus atque piger scribendi ferre laborem,
scribendi recte: nam ut multum, nil moror.*

Horace's genealogy of satire starts with three grandiose Greek names, occupying an entire hexameter and immediately taking the shape of manly heroes (*virorum*, 1.4.2). The Hellenistic canon of Old Comedy, composed of a core triad and a more flexible periphery (*alii*), is re-used to draw the portrait of an admirably archaic (*prisca*) array of ancestors. Canons of comic authors had been assembled at Rome at least since the time of Volcacius Sedigitus and Aurelius Opillus (late second century BCE), who applied to Latin literature the selection schemes of Greek critics and grammarians⁸⁵. Yet Horace's reconstruction is much more ambitious than any erudite anthology. By presenting Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes as his forerunners, Horace intentionally transcends the generic borders of satire and ennobles his work with the established reputation of an older *genus*. He thus adopts a symbolic strategy very similar to that of the newly emerging *gentes* mentioned by Pliny the Elder. In his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny reports that Roman parvenues attempted to enhance their pedigree by displaying in their *atria* the *imagines* of more glorious dynasties such as the Scipios. Though blamed by two exponents of the aristocratic Messala family, the creation of fictitious connections in the *stemma* is praised by Pliny, according to whom «even laying a false claim to the masks of illustrious men (*mentiri clarorum imagines*) revealed some love for virtue (*aliquis virtutum amor*)»⁸⁶. Pliny's willingness to support the practice of genealogical assimilation is, after all, not surprising, for the history of Rome itself as a whole is typically represented as a controversial sequence of unions, transfers, and inter-ethnic fusions⁸⁷. As Maurizio Bettini has shown, even the venerated legacy of the *mos maiorum* – the mainly oral heritage of norms, memories, and *exempla* validated by the ancestors' authority – is subject to continuous negotiation and revision in Roman

⁸⁵ See now Citroni 2006b, pp. 214-216.

⁸⁶ Plin. *Nat.* 35.8. As Bettini 1991, p. 175, observed, the Roman genealogical discourse is quite the contrary of the «impassive impartiality» of modern historical research, as it reflects a form of «generative memory»: «'to counterfeit images' (*mentiri imagines*) is to some degree ingrained in the very genealogical custom». The Romans' remarkable freedom in choosing the ancestor masks to display (or to obscure) in the *atrium* is well attested by Cic. *Fam.* 9.21 (a text which has no ironic overtones, *pace* Shackleton Bailey 1977, pp. 326-330). See also Mart. *Epigr.* 2.90, on the kind of man who «wishes to surpass the social status of his forefathers (*patrios vincere census*) and crowds the halls of his houses with extravagant ancestor portraits (*atria inmodicis artat imaginibus*)».

⁸⁷ The reconstructions of Rome's early history in Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, which are clearly based on older materials, provide very eloquent evidence in this regard. As Gotter 2009, p. 115, remarked, already Cato the Elder's *Origines* emphasized *a posteriori* the positive effects of genealogical blending: «Cato takes the histories of the Italic peoples transmitted by the Greeks and assigns them a place in the context of Roman history. [...] The people of Italy are thus rendered as individual entities which have, in different measures, contributed their moral qualities to this ethno-political melting pot».

society⁸⁸. To be sure, when seeking a Greek ancestry for what Quintilian considers an indigenous Roman genre, Horace takes part in the ancient scholarly debate. But he also exploits a system of cultural representations that intrinsically legitimates the establishment of inter-generic relationships⁸⁹.

As in most Roman genealogies, in *Sat.* 1.4 the evocation of a distant Greek past is followed by the depiction of a recent Latin descent. According to Horace, Lucilius – the founder of satire as an autonomous *genus* – is «wholly descended» from the stock of the Attic play-writers (*hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus*, 1.4.6). Still, by adopting new metrical and rhythmic patterns, Lucilius offered an original reinterpretation of the model embodied by his forefathers. Horace's remark that this is the only innovation (*tantum*, 1.4.7) made by his predecessor presents Lucilius as a classical Roman scion anchoring his creative efforts within a pre-existing tradition⁹⁰. From Horace's chronological perspective, Lucilius is a later ancestor who, like all ancestors, has both virtues and vices. At 1.4.6-13, Horace puts special emphasis on Lucilius' status as *vitiosus* (1.4.9) – a very meaningful term encompassing ethics, social judgement, and aesthetics – but it would be wrong to interpret this section of the satire as a purely deconstructive attack. Horace's portrait of Lucilius starts with the appreciative observation that the archaic poet was a man «with a keen-scented nose» – or, more literally, «with a well-wiped nostril» (*emunctae naris*, 1.4.8). Such physical detail, which has inherent moral connotations in ancient folklore⁹¹, bears witness, once again, to the Roman perception of the earlier *auctores* as individual 'masks' and 'bodies'. Even the term *durus* entails positive connotations, since, when used in reference to ancient peoples and primitive mankind, this adjective points to the qualities of vigour and hardiness⁹². Just like the unpolished pio-

⁸⁸ Bettini 2011, pp. 87-130.

⁸⁹ The Romanness of satire is famously claimed by Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.93. On the ancient controversy over the origins of satire as reflected in the works of Quintilian and Horace see Freudenburg 2005. Of course, Horace's likening of satire with Old Comedy is made possible by the existence of several consistent similarities between the two genres: see Ferriss-Hill 2015.

⁹⁰ On the «social and political ramifications» of Horace's portrayal of Lucilius and the comic-satiric tradition see Barchiesi-Cucchiarelli 2005, pp. 212 f., who note that «in clear contrast to Lucilius' descent from Old Comedy's highest nobility, Horace finishes the poem with a contrasting portrait of his father. Whereas Lucilius took his habits of free speech (*multa cum libertate notabant*, 5) from his Old Comic ancestors, the young Horace took his (*liberius / iocosius*) from his freed-slave father (103-6)». On the sociological background of *Sat.* 1.4 and Horace's awareness of Lucilius' condition as *eques* see Oliensis 1998, pp. 18-26, according to whom «it is within Horace's overarching argument for moral and social distinctions that the issue of aesthetic discrimination finds its place». Cf. also Freudenburg 2001, pp. 44-51, and Cucchiarelli 2001, pp. 56-118.

⁹¹ On the folkloric association of the well-wiped nose (or, metonymically, nostrils) with practical intelligence (*sagacitas*, *prudencia*, and *calliditas*) see Tondo 2007, pp. 176-190, who also discusses the portrait of Aesop in Phaedr. *Fab.* 3.3.14-15, and that of Horace in Pers. *Sat.* 1.116-118.

⁹² See, e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.101; Lucr. 5.926; Verg. *Georg.* 1.63; *Aen.* 3.94; 5.730; Ov. *Met.* 1.414. In *Satires* 1, Horace himself defines the resilient Italic grape-gatherer as *durus et invictus* (1.7.29-30).

neers of scientific knowledge referred to by Seneca, Lucilius appears rough and flawed to more recent generations. If closely examined, his image is that of a «wordy» (*garrulus*), «lazy» (*piger*), and «muddy» (*lutulentus*) man (1.4.11-12) – all traits that would perfectly fit in the depiction of an ancestor who served as statesman, soldier, and *patronus*⁹³. Yet, from the point of view of Horace and his readers, none of these notes amounts to total disapproval. As we have learned from Seneca, younger imitators ought to show reverence and gratitude to their forefathers precisely because these, with their mixture of merits and limits, have paved the way for further improvement. It is no accident that Horace carefully circumscribes Lucilius' «vices» within a definite sphere (*nam fuit hoc vitiosus*, 1.4.9) and that he acknowledges the peculiar elegance and wittiness (*facetus*, 1.4.7) of his predecessor.

Of course, Horace is also aware that the cross-generational line of the *genus* will continue after his work. Whether or not satire, and poetry more generally, will improve depends on the choices of other imitators. Immediately after his portrayal of the Roman father of satire, Horace condemns the gracelessness of Crispinus, a compulsively prolific poet who does not abstain from emulating the ancestral vice of wordiness, thereby violating a well-known cultural rule. Instead of competing constructively with the *facetus* but annoyingly *garrulus* Lucilius, Crispinus challenges a contemporary like Horace to a contest of literary productiveness⁹⁴. Enlightened by his deeper consciousness and finer taste, Horace declines such inappropriate challenge and goes on with his plan to enhance the heritage of satire⁹⁵. The misleading and unpromising tendencies of contemporary *imitatores* seem to be a major concern of Horace⁹⁶. By polemically referring to his own imitators, the author of

⁹³ Cf. Freudenburg 2001, pp. 49 f.: «Lucilius' project, as Horace constructs it in *S.* 1.4, is an exact mirror image of the poet's swaggering, late-republican, elite-male self: politically engaged, hyper-confident, unchecked, not niggling over details, prolific. That is Lucilius' problem, this poem says».

⁹⁴ *Sat.* 1.4.16-21. With an elaborate ironic metaphor, Horace encourages Crispinus to imitate (*imitare*, 21) the air commonly used for the manufacturing of iron products. The image may well be reminiscent of educated models such as Homer and Aristophanes (as suggested by Cucchiarelli 2001, pp. 49 f., and Gowers 2012, p. 158), but its connection with matters of social status should also be considered. By indulging in verbosity and stylistic negligence, Crispinus' poetry symbolically degrades itself to the level of humble craftsmanship – for in the Roman view slavish imitation makes a man unworthy of such illustrious ancestors as the republican *equus* Lucilius.

⁹⁵ Cf. Oliensis 1998, p. 22: «to issue a challenge is to concede the fact (but not the justice) of one's inferior status. By casting himself not as Lucilius' challenger but as Crispinus' challengee, Horace preserves his authority intact. And instead of encountering Crispinus on the level (to accept a challenge is to grant the challenger a provisional parity), Horace pretends to concede victory, depreciating his talents in language that Crispinus would approve».

⁹⁶ See especially *Ep.* 1.19.17-23, and *Ars P.* 128-135. The socio-political overtones of Horace's critique in *Ep.* 1.19 are captured by McCarter 2015, p. 246, with special regard to the slave/citizen and patron/client dichotomies: «Horace simultaneously occupies two social poles, that of the wealthy patron/model, on the one hand, and that of the poet who must pimp himself out, on the other».

the *Satires* and the *Epistles* casts a tense gaze into the future of poetry and urges his audience to maintain that fruitful balance between tradition and innovation which is the core of Roman *aemulatio*, both social and literary. Indeed, like several other writers before and after him, Horace knows that the only way to make one's predecessors happy is to meet their standards and, if possible, surpass them. For, as Statius claims, echoing the cultural universe of Scipio Hispanus' epitaph, when a man of noble *genus* excels in virtue, his lineage «is defeated by the light that follows it and is glad to yield to its great progeny (*luce sequente vincitur et magno gaudet cessisse nepoti*)»⁹⁷. Strange as it may sound to our modern ears, the key to the construction of a solid literary empire lies in the moral pleasure of this defeat.

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⁹⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 1.4.68-70, celebrating the recovery (and *cursus honorum*) of Rutilius Gallicus, Domitian's urban prefect. As Bernstein 2015, p. 139 pointed out, Statius' choice of praising Gallicus for achieving nobility, instead of exalting the honorand's ancestry, plays on the generic expectations of readers and «exemplifies the newly expanded social mobility of the first century CE». But since even the noblest youths had always been required to enhance their family status, this is not a totally unexpected or unconventional play.

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