

## Between Familiar and Foreign: Quotation and *Romanitas* in Cicero *Ad.Fam.* 7.6

This paper explores Cicero's self-conscious quoting practices in *Ad.Fam.* 7.6. This letter, dated to 54 B.C.E, is the first of several addresses that Cicero writes to the jurist Trebatius, who is on campaign with Caesar in Gaul (*Ad.Fam.* 6-22). Most of the letters in this series quote extensively, a feature of Cicero's epistolary style reserved for more informal addresses (Fraenkel; Jocelyn). After promising that he has sent many recommendations to Caesar, Cicero insists that the homesick Trebatius quit his longing for Rome and its refinement (*desideria urbis et urbanitatis deponere*). Cicero then turns to quoting Ennius' *Medea* three times. Previous treatments have read the quotations in this letter in terms of witty moralizing (Leach, 147) or as "telegraphing Roman culture" (Čulík-Baird, 144). In my reading, I argue that Cicero negotiates issues of *Romanitas* through tensions in the form and content of his quotations.

On the one hand, an act of quoting incorporates something 'other' into the text. Hence, Čulík-Baird speaks of Cicero's entire prose corpus as "synthetic," (14), and Behrendt characterizes quotes in the letters as "*fremde Rede*" (9). On the other hand, quotations, particularly those which are frequently repeated, can be familiar to an audience. Modern texts distinguish an author's own words and the quoted words of others through quotation marks and attribution. However, Roman texts lacked any punctuation for quotation (Feeney). Thanks to different assumptions about authorship and literary ownership, Cicero's letter operated in a literary culture which was comfortable with quoters forgoing verbal exactitude and precise attribution.

With attention to these aspects of Roman quotation culture, I investigate how tensions between foreign and familiar manifest in Cicero's modes of quotation. At first, he subtly blends

the lines of poetry into his prose by incorporating the quotations into his own syntax. He lets the shift from prose to poetic meter, the archaic features of vocabulary and style (Jocelyn; Shackleton Bailey), and the mythic references serve as signal enough that these words are someone else's. In introducing his last quotation, Cicero draws attention to the letter's quotational work by remarking, *quonian Medeam coepi agere*. This theatrical metaphor is particularly potent since Cicero quotes from a work of drama. By likening himself to an actor, Cicero reflects on how, as a quoter, he speaks words that are not his own. This final aside also invites a meta-literary reading of his quotations.

Accordingly, I trace how these problems of otherness and foreignness relate to the addressee's situation. Trebatius is among the Gauls, who are often archetypal 'foreigners' in the Roman historical imagination. Yet, the letter complicates such a neat distinction between Roman and foreign. For example, the first quotation equates Cicero and Trebatius' other friends—certainly elite, politically-involved Romans—with Corinthian women. At the same time, Trebatius is made to take on the role of the archetypal mythic foreigner, Medea. Rather than a Roman among foreigners, he shifts into a foreigner among locals.

Amidst all of the shifting between 'them' and 'us' that the quotations elicit, it also bears remembering that Cicero is drawing from a canonical author, Ennius. In a letter so concerned with delineating *Romanitas*, it is striking that Cicero never attributes the lines to Ennius. Perhaps Cicero expected his addressee to recognize the material. Indeed, he introduces his final quotation with the distal *illud*, which might suggest that the line he adduces is a familiar sentiment, widely circulating in the culture apart from any original poetic context. The lack of attribution might also serve to defamiliarize the quintessentially Roman poet.

Cicero's three quotations in *Ad.Fam.7.6* may perform some of the *urbanitas* that Trebatius misses from afar. Still, I suggest that the letter is not a fixed memento of *Romanitas*. Instead, Cicero's quoting exposes the boundaries between the author's text and the words of another. Furthermore, the quotations' content deals with problems of foreignness. Through the tensions of these quotations, Trebatius negotiates the boundaries of his Roman identity. Ultimately, my reading of this letter shows how, for Cicero and his elite audiences, *Romanitas* is something learned through and defined against its boundaries.

#### Works Cited

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