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## PEREGRINANTUR, RUSTICANTUR

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## MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

1. Biographical account of Cicero's life.
2. Cicero's place in the early literature of the Roman world.
3. Cicero's influence in the Christian era of the Roman world.
4. The Ciceronian Latin of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and early modern period.
5. Cicero and James Madison.

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born in 106 B.C. in a small provincial town near Rome. His father moved the family to Rome so that Cicero, who early showed a fondness for study, could enjoy the best available education.

One of his principal teacher was the poet Archias, whom Cicero gratefully refers to as the source of his interest in the fields of philosophy and literature. His early literary training largely consisted of verse writing and making translations from Greek authors. At the age of sixteen, Cicero began the study of law under a succession of the foremost jurists of the day. He also studied oratory from the great leaders at the bar by diligently attending the courts and legislative assemblies.

His first appearance as an advocate was in 81 B.C. at the age of twenty-five. He immediately established his reputation as a forensic leader by successfully defending an accused murder suspect with a powerful public denunciation of his accuser, the celebrated Sulla.

The next two years Cicero spent abroad pursuing philosophical and oratorical studies at Athens, in Asia Minor, and at Rhodes. There he enjoyed the instruction of Molo, who was also the teacher of Julius Caesar.

When Cicero returned to Rome, he began a political career, rising through various administrative and financial offices until he reached the highest goal of every Roman, the consulship.

Cicero had begun his public career as a man of the people, but his consulship marked a profound change of attitude and of political associations. He had now become a representative of

the aristocrats.

Cicero was banished from Rome as a result of the political machinations of his enemies, but spent the time productively in Greece. From 57 to 49 B.C., he was comparatively retired from public life and devoted himself largely to rhetorical and philosophical studies. He completed many treatises in this period.

When civil war broke out in 50 B.C., Cicero joined the party that eventually lost. However, he was generously pardoned by Caesar, the winner, after the famous Battle of Pharsalus in 48 B.C.

The next few years were spent mainly in the seclusion of private life and devoted to the composition of philosophical works. He was drawn once more into public life by the high-handed acts of Anthony after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Although he had welcomed Caesar's death as bringing hope for the restoration of the freedom of the republic, his struggle to preserve the old constitution put him on the proscribed list of Antony's enemies. He had also denounced Anthony in the famous *Philippics*, and the latter's emissaries killed Cicero in 43 B.C.

Cicero was not an original thinker, but as an eclectic he expounded in a beautiful literary style the basic ideas of the chief Greek schools of philosophy. In epistemology he followed the New Academy; in ethics, chiefly the Stoics. He rejected both the materialism of the Epicureans and the popular religious beliefs in the gods, but believed in a divine providence and the immortality of the soul. Cicero became the undisputed master of Latin prose style and the creator of Latin philosophical language. He was the first, for example, to employ such basic terms *as essentia*,

*qualitas*, and *materia* in their philosophical sense.

Cicero's influence on subsequent Latin prose style was immediate and very significant because of his central place beside Virgil in the ancient school tradition. Since the ancient Christian writers were trained chiefly in pagan schools, it is only natural that they should reflect Ciceronian influence in both thought and style. Cicero's treatment of Greco-Roman philosophy and religion furnished Christian apologists with arguments that were all the more effective because they were based on a universally acknowledged authority.

Cicero was a man of peace, innately conservative in politics, who found himself deeply involved in the violence that marked the last years of the Republic. Owing to the preservation of most of his voluminous writings, especially of his letters, his life is better known than that of any other ancient personality, with the possible exception of St. Augustine.

Cicero's chief title to fame is as a man of letters. He is not only the most versatile of all Latin writers and the greatest master of style, but also one of the most voluminous. His complete writings comprise more than five thousand printed pages classified as orations, rhetorical works, philosophical works, letters, and poems.

Fifty-seven of his orations have been preserved entirely. Perhaps the most well known is that against Cataline, which every student used to memorize as the epitome of Latin prose. His oration in defense of Archias is also important because Cicero acknowledges his lifelong devotion to literary pursuits as being inspired by that obscure Greek poet from Syria.

Oratory was Cicero's greatest province. Nature had endowed him with rare qualifications in this respect. He had a vivid imagination and an unusual talent for the presentation of his theme. He was never at a loss for words to give exact expression to his thought, and was clear and logical in the arrangement of his topics. His voice and bearing were also commanding. To these natural gifts, he had added the advantages of years of study under the best masters. He continued these studies even after a succession of triumphs in order to attain greater perfection as a public speaker.

Cicero was essentially an advocate, that is, a pleader for his side in a legal case. He had a tendency to be verbose, a defect he consciously strove to eliminate under the prompting of his teachers. He was dazzling in the use of wit, pathos, superlatives, and the persuasive arts of a finely honed legal mind.

Cicero's own thorough discipline in the theory of rhetoric and oratory, combined with his wide practical experience as a public speaker, made him a specially competent authority to present these subjects to the attention of Roman readers. His lessons and leadership in this field are still being taught today from his own works in translation and in the works of others directly inspired by him.

Cicero's *On Oratory* ranks high today not only for the soundness of the views presented, but also for its elegant and polished style. It contains an elaborate discussion on the essential qualifications of an artistic prose style as well as the essentials of verbal eloquence. The exhaustive study of literature and philosophy were absolutely as necessary to the legal orator as were knowledge of the law and historical precedent. All these factors combined to give Cicero the ability to sway

the feelings of a jury.

In that era, a truly educated man had to be fluent in the Greek language, which had become the dominant language of culture throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean during the three and a half centuries since the death of Alexander the Great. Similarly, in the nineteenth century, men of culture had to be fluent in the French language. Authors from Russia, Poland, the German states, the Austrian Empire, and Greece frequently wrote in French to gain a wider audience for their works.

There have been many influential authors down through the ages, but few have retained the mantle of fame beyond their own era.

We are most familiar with authors who wrote in the English language, but English is relatively new on the literary scene. Shakespeare is the first major author whose English we can readily comprehend and whose influence remains great today; but even he was not widely read for long periods until a revival of his works in the 19th century. We read Chaucer mainly as a cherished relic of the past. But who still reads Pope, Addison, Scott, and other literary icons of a particular era whose style and message were eclipsed by their successors?

Cicero produced fifteen philosophical works in the years 46-44 B.C., just before the final struggle against Anthony. The most important were the *De Republica*, *De Legibus*, *De Officiis*, *De Amicitia*, and *De Senectute*. These dealt with political philosophy, constitutional theory, morality, friendship, and old age. They were compilations of ancient Greek philosophy as interpreted by Cicero's teachers in the Stoic, Agnostic, and various schools of his own era. Plato, Aristotle, and

other original thinkers who had flourished in the golden age of Athenian ascendancy were as distant to Cicero in time as Descartes and Locke are to us today.

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The first period of the Golden Age of Latin literature, 80 to 42 B.C., is justly called the Ciceronian. It was Cicero who developed the Latin language from a provincial dialect to an international language capable of expressing abstract and complicated thought with clarity. Subsequent prose style in the Silver Age of Latin literature during the two subsequent centuries was either a reaction against or a return to his style.

The most prominent exponent of Ciceronian Latin of the Silver Age was Quintilian, 35 to 100 A.D., a Roman from Spain whose *Institutio Oratoria* exerted great influence on generations of scholars during the Renaissance and Reformation. This work by Quintilian is an encyclopedia on the art of public speaking and on the interpretation of literature.

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Oddly enough, one of Cicero's most influential works, the *Hortensius*, has not survived. Hortensius himself was a celebrated orator and contemporary of Cicero. The latter's tribute, however, influenced a dissolute African youth to study philosophy three centuries later. St. Augustine, who became the bishop of Hippo (today a destroyed Roman site in Tunisia), has had exceedingly widespread influence on Catholicism even to our own era. The sixteen volumes of his works are a tribute to Ciceronian Latin. St. Augustine's Latin style was paramount among the Church Fathers until the advent of Thomas Aquinas eight hundred years later.



In addition to his many works on philosophy, oratory, politics, and literature, Cicero was a prolific letter writer. Nearly eight hundred of these have survived, as well as about one hundred from correspondents addressed to him. These letters are largely political in content, furnishing an immense source of information on contemporary Roman history. They are not particularly flattering to him personally since they reveal some acts damaging to his character, not in his personal life, but in the disposition of some legal cases. If he suffered from certain defects, he nevertheless possessed many admirable traits. His vanity does not detract from his patriotism and devotion to republican institutions. It was immediately after his death that the Roman Republic of several centuries had collapsed, and the four centuries of the Roman Empire began. The Empire expanded geographically and grew more autocratic until its demise in the fifth century, but the language it took to the remote corners of the known Western World was the Latin of Cicero. Correspondence from Roman Britain, Germany, Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, and the Danube all was sent to Rome in Ciceronian style. When the split with the eastern Empire occurred in the fourth century, inaugurating what became the thousand year long Byzantine Empire, Justinian promulgated his Greek language legal code with a Latin translation to extend that code's understanding beyond the then contracting Hellenic sphere of influence.

When the Roman Empire collapsed in the fifth century after waves of various invading tribes from the East conquered its outlying territories, Christianity had already been a dominant force for at least a hundred years. As Christian fiefdoms survived in the feudal era following the short-lived empires of the Goths, Huns, and others who had destroyed centralized Roman power, the churchmen who supported the ruling lords of these fiefdoms kept Ciceronian Latin alive as the language of communication with other Christian communities. These communicators included monks and priests whose names we know like the Irishman, the venerable Bede, and those we don't, like Peter of Blois, who was secretary to Henry II of England.

St. Ambrose, the Provençal-born Bishop of Milan in the fifth century A.D., was strongly influenced by Cicero in his own writings, but more importantly, passed this on to his star pupil, St. Augustine. The latter's definition of the pagan state, as well as his views on education, are based essentially on Ciceronian theory.

The most influential of all these churchmen, however, were Albertus Magnus of Cologne, 1200-1280, and his star pupil, St. Thomas Aquinas, 1225-74, an Italian whose *Summa Theologica* is the symbiotic fusion of Aristotelian thought and Catholic dogma still dominant today as the guiding light of a billion adherents worldwide.

Cicero's long lasting contribution to the field of philosophical writing was the popularizing of philosophical study among his countrymen. While he was not a deep thinker himself, he succeeded in creating a healthy interest in philosophical questions. He deserves credit as the creator of a choice philosophical vocabulary which greatly enriched and strengthened the Latin language. This philosophical Ciceronian Latin held sway among the few literate scholars in western Europe from the fall of Rome in the fifth century until that of Constantinople in the fifteenth. When the Ottoman Turks destroyed the Byzantine Empire, erudite Greeks fled west to the incubating Renaissance centers of Italy, Germany, Lothringia, and Flanders. Only then, after a thousand years, were the erudite again exposed to the original Greek texts as contrasted with Latin interpretations of Greek philosophy based on Ciceronian models.

Among the more prominent exponents of Ciceronian Latin in the sixteenth century were Erasmus and Copernicus; in the seventeenth century Descartes, Spinoza, and Grotius. This influence of both Cicero and his style of Latin remained strong even into the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

From the beginning of the Renaissance, when his complete works were recovered and studied extensively, Cicero became the universally recognized master of Latin prose style. The cultivation of Ciceronian Latin in the European school tradition exercised a marked effect on the development of vernacular prose style in general. In the late 19th century, Pope Leo XIII gave Ciceronian Latin a basic place in his reform of Papal chancery style. His own encyclicals and those of his successors exhibit the deliberate use of Ciceronian language and stylistic devices.

Those Founding Fathers of the United States of America who had college educations were steeped in the writings of Roman authors, whom they nearly all read in the original Latin. The most noteworthy, perhaps, were John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. We should not forget that the theses for the degrees of Master of Arts at Harvard, William and Mary, Princeton and other colleges were all written in, and orally given in Latin well into the 19th century.

Thomas Jefferson had no fewer than nineteen editions of the various works of Cicero in his private library. Most were in Latin; only a few were in French translations. We know that Jefferson studied Latin as a youth to gain admittance to William and Mary College. We also know that Madison read extensively in the original Ciceronian Latin the legal treatises of Justinian and Grotius as well as Virgil, Sallust, Terence, and Ovid. Madison's classical education included reading the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek.

In the 1940's, students at the Chicago Latin school began their study of the Latin language in the seventh grade. The first two years featured a vigorous curriculum of grammar, vocabulary, and composition. The first readings were Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, one of the best written battle memoirs ever penned. Caesar's language is simple and unadorned, more attuned to the rudely educated Roman of his day rather than the scholarly Hellenophile of the aristocracy. During the four years of high school, we read Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, and other authors from the Golden and Silver Ages of classical Latin.

I continued to study the Latin language throughout my undergraduate years. As one advanced, these courses became one or two person seminars with a full professor, enabling the

student to design his own course of reading. I pursued the vernacular Bible, that is, St. Jerome's Latin translation of the original Greek New Testament, as well as Latin poets and prose authors of the Middle Ages. In graduate school in Switzerland, I studied Latin composition as well as modern languages thanks to the G.I. Bill.

But even this extensive twelve year long background in the Latin language did not adequately prepare me for the project I began some twenty years ago as a dealer in American historical books and manuscripts. In 1980 and again in 1991, I was involved in the purchase of an original printed copy of the Constitution of the United States.

What struck me in reading and re-reading this precise and revolutionary document written by James Madison was that it sounded like a translation from some Latin prototype set down in the Roman Republic. Since Madison was fluent in Latin, a student of Cicero's political works, and learned in the legal texts of the Ancient World, perhaps his Constitution could be turned into Ciceronian Latin. I worked at it for years in my spare time, but was not up to the task. The basic technical skill was still there, but the nuance and grammatical complexity had been damaged by the undoing of my classical education under the influence of Rudolph Flesch. Simplified Anglo-Saxon English, as spoken, has replaced the somewhat stilted Norman-French Latin rooted English that has gone out of style.

I therefore reluctantly searched for the finest modern writer of Classical Latin prose to complete my project. That turned out to be David Kovacs, a professor of Latin at the University of Virginia. His text was edited by the other leading authority of Latin prose composition in this

country, professor John Kevin Newman of the University of Illinois.

Although they completed the task some time ago, including the editing of a short preface I composed, the funds to publish the finished text were not available. However, I am determined that this first Latin edition of the Constitution will appear as a small book in 1997. I hold the finished work here in my hand. It is a modest tribute to Marcus Tullius Cicero, one of the most influential literary figures of western civilization.

Let us listen to this key passage relating to the place of literature in our daily lives. It comes from Cicero's *Pro Archias*, the legal defense of his former teacher of poetry. The final two expressive words, which are the title of this talk, required eleven words in my English translation.

Literary studies nourish the young; entertain the old; embellish success; are a refuge and relief from adversity; are a delight at home and not a hinderance outdoors; they help us pass the night; accompany us in travel, and are with us in the countryside.

At haec studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solacium ~~praebent~~, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.