‘Discuss.’

Dr Weiss’s guide to the Cambridge ‘prac. crit.’

There is *no one way* to write a good practical criticism: we instructors have seen a great variety of successful pieces (frequently on the same text) that take very different steps in analysis and organization, but here are some ideas to get you started. Be sure to check out the examiners’ criteria that follow and the specimens.

1. *contextualize* your piece by considering:
   - historical context
   - literary precedent
   - place of piece in author’s corpus (and especially in the given text)
   - place of the piece among the texts you are studying in your course: are there connections?

2. *analyze* your piece by considering:
   - does the passage constitute a complete entity or is it some portion (likely) of some thing?
   - consider the distinction between materials and treatment: ask yourself ‘How else could this passage have been written?’
   - any particular occasion (or imagined occasion) involved?
   - is a particular form or literary tradition involved: does your text constitute adherence to or departure from the norm?
   - is there an explicit addressee/audience?
   - who is the implied audience? (see Booth below)
   - note any *topoi* (‘commonplaces’ or *loci communes*—do not confuse this word with *trope*, as so many do)
   - note any *tropoi* (‘tropes’, i.e. figures of speech: *figurae* and σχήματα, chiefly metaphor and metonymy [see Lanham et al. below])
   - what of the author’s ‘voice’ or literary *persona*?
   - where is the place in the plot, if applicable?
   - how is any characterization (ἦθος) rendered through the passage?
   - look for narrative problems, e.g. what is the ‘point of view’ of the narrator?
   - is it a ‘showing’ passage or a ‘telling’ passage? (see Booth below)
   - is there any allusion to other texts or authors?
   - are there any key words: go through the passage and circle words you feel you must address
   - any major topics evident in your passage? if so how do these topics surface in your passage?
   - as for formal verbal and syntactic patterns look in particular for:
     - sentence, clause and phrase: any isocola or ascending/descending cola?
     - organization within the cola, e.g. anaphora, epanaphora, homoioteleuton
     - zeugma
     - polyptoton
   - note any larger-scale rhetorical elements you see, e.g. (see Kennedy books below):
     - *captatio beneuolentiae*
     - *praeteritio*
     - hyperbole
   - logical elements:
     - metaphor and metonymy, transferred epithet
     - *argumentum ad absurdum, a minore, a maiore, ex hypothesi* (Wikipedia s.vv. ‘Argumentation theory’ and ‘Informal logic’)
   - note any larger-scale formal elements, e.g.:
     - a ‘set piece’, i.e. a traditional, expected element, e.g. the narrative in a messenger speech in drama
     - know the formal divisions of a typical Greek play: prologue, parodos, episode, stasimon, exodos
     - *rhesis* (extended speech in trimeters)
     - *agon*
     - *stichomythia*
     - *ekphrasis*
     - *locus amoenus*
     - know the conventional names for portions of speeches, e.g. πρόλογος, διήγησις, πίστις, ἐπίλογος
     - identify digressions

   - consult Lanham, Quinn, rhetoric.byu.edu and Lausberg for extensive lists and example of these terms

   other techniques for analysis
   - segment your text; mark out each sentence: what does it actually say and mean?
   - delineate any sequence of ideas or events from top to bottom
   - note very carefully any connecting particles (or lack thereof)
   - write a brief, one sentence summary of the whole
   - for drama: envision a production of the lines
   - if poetry: you must identify the meter and observe any interesting *caesura* or *diaeresis*

In sum: assume that an author is somehow responsible for this text and that you are analyzing his or her performance: ask yourself ‘How else could this have been done?’ Alternatively, how is the text affected if you remove these lines, i.e. what is their function?

3. *synthesize* your ideas by:
- organizing your points into an argument (several short ones): try to be persuaded and persuasive
- it may help your thinking to imagine giving your prac. crit. a title of its own
- connecting your text to other texts you have read and other critical problems you have encountered (esp. in your year)
- always know the exact dates of your texts, where possible, and supply this knowledge somewhere in your prac. crit.

4. *stylize* your essay:
- it's okay to use the first person: don't be ashamed of *your* impressions
- qualify your statements: you are not necessarily an omniscient authority or world expert here but a learned commentator, open to reason and employing reason: do not try to write an encyclopedia entry!
- imagine your own audience to be a well-informed colleague but not necessarily even a Classicist
- don't quote more than a word or a phrase: just use the line numbers for referring to a sentence (block quotes look great)
- ALWAYS use the line numbers: they are provided for your convenience, even for a piece of prose

5. recommended reading (roughly in order of accessibility and importance)

Wikipedia s.vv. 'Literary criticism' and 'Rhetoric'.

rhetoric.byu.edu: 'Silva rhetoricae: the forest of rhetoric': dated but good for terminology

Oxford Classical Dictionary s.vv. 'literary criticism in antiquity', 'literary theory and classical studies', and 'rhetoric, Greek' and 'rhetoric, Latin'

D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, *Ancient literary criticism: the principal texts in new translations.* (seminal; abbreviated as *Classical literary criticism* in the Oxford World Classics series)

J. Culler, *Literary theory: a very short introduction.* (the basic principles and history of literary criticism will help you write a really effective prac. crit.)

R. Lanham, *A handlist of rhetorical terms.* (worth buying: a detailed but handy reference to the terminology)

A. Quinn, *Figures of speech: 60 ways to turn a phrase*. (worth buying: a very friendly intro to the terminology)

H. Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric.* (scholarly and authoritative: recommend for your College library)

Cambridge history of Classical literature. (dated but comprehensive and very useful)

O. Taplin, ed.: *Literature in the Greek world, Literature in the Roman world.* (less comprehensive but more recent and friendly)

Thomas Schmitz: *Modern literary theory and ancient texts*. (very useful and eye-opening if you're new to theory)

Francis Cairns, *Generic composition in Greek and Roman poetry.* (constrictive but significant)

R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of literature.* (worth owning; dated but stimulating and seminal)

Cambridge history of literary criticism. (multivolume: the most recent vol. on 20th C criticism is well worth reading)

Wayne C. Booth, *The rhetoric of fiction.* (on the novel and very long but explains 'showing' vs 'telling' *inter alia*)

Wayne C. Booth, *The rhetoric of rhetoric*. (if you're really into rhetoric!)

Irene J. F. De Jong, *Narratology and Classics: a practical guide*. (interesting)

Edward J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical rhetoric for the modern student.* (a textbook overview of rhetoric)

W. K. Wimsatt and M. Beardsley, *The verbal icon: studies in the meaning of poetry.* (dated and dense but seminal: affective and intentional fallacies addressed)

I. A. Richards, *Practical criticism.* (written by a Cambridge English don in 1929: very dated now but the book that started it all)

N.B. also the fundamental work of George A. Kennedy on Classical rhetoric:

The art of persuasion in Greece
The art of rhetoric in the Roman world
Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times
A new history of classical rhetoric

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some important literary terms (definitions from LSJ*,* L&S*, rhetoric.byu.edu and the* Oxford English Dictionary*)*

the three main forms (εἴδη) of rhetoric (ῥητορική) / oratory (*oratio*) (see Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.3 & Quintilian 3.4):
1. **symbouletic** (συμβολευτικὸς λόγος) = deliberative = legislative: *What should we do?*
2. **dicanic** (δικανικὸς λόγος) = forensic (*forensis*) = judicial: *Who is guilty?*
3. **epideictic** (ἐπιδεικτικὸς λόγος) = ceremonial: *What a lovely city!* (includes encomium [ἐγκώμιον = *laudatio*] and πανηγυρικός)

anaphora (ἀναφορά): repetition of a word (or part of speech) at the beginning of a phrase or clause
anacolouthon (ἀνακόλουθον < ἀκολουθέω): a break in the grammatical sense of a sentence, usually marked with an em dash: —
anastrophe (ἀναστροφή): any inversion of word order (also hyperbaton)
apo koinou (ἀπὸ κοινοῦ): a construction wherein two clauses have a word or phrase in common (cf. zeugma)
apocope (ἀποκοπή): usually in Homeric studies: the elision of the last letter of a disyllabic preposition
apostrophe (ἀποστροφή): the speaker or author addresses some figure either present or absent
arthrous: a word that appears with its article (ἄρθρον); a word without an article is **anarthrous**; predicates tend to be anarthrous
asyndeton (ἀσύνδετον): omission of a conjunction (σύνδεσμος = *coniunctio*)
brachylogy (βραχυλογία): any kind of condensed expression
caesura (< *caedo*): a gap between two words within a foot; usually used of the main caesura of a hexameter in the 3rd or 4th foot
chiasmus (χιασμός): an A B B' A' arrangement
clausula (< *claudo*): a rhythmical pattern at the end of a (prose) sentence, in Cicero commonly a cretic + cretic (or spondee or trochee)
colon (κῶλον): plural cola (κῶλα): lit. 'limb', 'member' i.e. body part: any sequence of words forming a metrical or grammatical unit
dicolon: plural dicola, **tricolon**: plural tricola, **tetra**- etc.; **isocolon** (plural isocola) is a member of a period with cola of equal length (not to be confused with colon [κόλον] = intestine)
comparatio compendiaria or **compendiosa**: a comparative clause with some grammatical or logical omission in the second element
constructio ad sensum (κατὰ σύνεσιν): an intelligible but not grammatically correct phrase or clause
diaeresis (διαίρεσις): 1) a division (and symbol) between vowels, e.g. πάϊς for παῖς
2) coincidence of word end and foot end (a **bucolic** diaeresis, named after pastoral Theocritus, is such at the end of the 4th foot)
diegesis *narratio*: the narrative portion of a speech or narrative more generally
ekphrasis (also ecphrasis) *descriptio*: any description but frequently used of a description of a work of art, e.g. the Shield of Achilles
ellipsis (ἔλλειψις): an omission of some expression that is to be understood or supplied
enallage (ἐναλλαγή): any substitution, usually of grammatically different but semantically equivalent constructions (e.g. passive for active)
enargeia (ἐνάργεια): any vivid description or vividity per se
enthymeme (ἐνθύμημα): any probable argument or more strictly a syllogism in which one premise is suppressed
epistrophe (ἐπιστροφή): repetition of a word (or part of speech) at the end of a phrase or clause
ethopoeia (ἠθοποιία): representation of a person's character
figura etymologica: a phrase with two words of the same origin e.g. δίκας δικάζομαι
figures of speech (*figurae orationis* = σχήματα λέξεως): any indirect (or 'oblique') expression put for a direct expression
gnome (γνώμη) *sententia*: a concisely expressed truism (hence 'sententious'); also **aphorism**, **apophthegm** or **epigrammatic** expression
hendiadys (ἓν διὰ δυοῖν): one idea expressed through two words, e.g.: 'despite the rain and weather' for 'despite the rainy weather'
hephtemimeral caesura (ἑφθημιμερής 'seven half portioned' = 3½): one which falls in the fourth foot
homoioteleuton (also homoeoteleuton ὁμοιοτέλευτον): a series of words with the same endings
hyperbaton (ὑπέρβατον): any inversion of word order (also anastrophe)
hyperbole (adjective 'hyperbolic'; ὑπερβολή): exaggeration
hypotaxis (adjective 'hypotactic'; ὑπόταξις): any grammatically subordinate structure
hysteron proteron (ὕστερον πρότερον): when a logically subsequent expression comes first (or vice versa)
inconcinnitas: antiparallelism, particularly as cultivated by Thucydides and his followers
litotes (λιτότης): a negative expression for an emphatic positive, e.g. 'no small accomplishment'
meiosis (μείωσις): understatement (lit. 'lessening), the opposite of hyperbole
metaphor (μεταφορά): a substitution of one term for another based on similarity, e.g. 'chariot' for car
metonymy (μετωνυμία) = **synecdoche** (συνεκδοχή) = **pars pro toto**: a substitution of one term for another based on contiguity: 'wheels' for car
paronomasia (παρονομασία): a play on words that sound alike, a pun
parataxis (adjective 'paratactic'; παράταξις): any grammatically coordinate structure
penthemimeral caesura (πενθημιμερής 'five half portioned' = 2½): one which falls in the third foot
period (περίοδος): a sentence the meaning of which is not complete until the end, usually exhibiting intervening clauses
pleonasm (adjective 'pleonastic'; πλεονασμός): any unnecessary expression
polyptoton (πολύπτωτον): repetition of a word in a different form (πτῶσις means inflectional ending)
polysyndeton (πολυσύνδετον): the use of many conjunctions (typically forms of 'and') in succession
prolepsis (adjective 'proleptic'; πρόληψις): inter alia when a word appears in advance of the clause to which it properly belongs
prosopopoeia (προσωποποιία): impersonation: speech delivered in the character of another person
syllepsis (σύλληψις): like zeugma, supplying an expression that belongs strictly to one clause to another
syllogism (συλλογισμός): an argument, in particular one featuring two premises and a conclusion based on them
symploce (συμπλοκή): an A B A' B' arrangement
synaloephe (συναλοιφή): contraction of two syllables into one, either by synaeresis (opposite of diaeresis), crasis or elision
synizesis (συνίζησις): melting of two vowels into one without alteration of letters
tautology (ταὐτολογία): saying the same thing twice in different words
tmesis (τμῆσις): usually the separation of a verb from its prepositional prefix in Greek Epic
topos (τόπος *locus*): a commonly occurring idea; a general argument applicable to many particular cases
traductio: repetition of the same word with different meanings (**antanaclasis** in dialogue)
trope (τρόπος): any figure of speech but best as any metaphor or metonymy
Wackernagel's law: an unemphatic pronoun sits in the second position in a clause
zeugma (ζεῦγμα): when a single word applies to at least two clauses, e.g. 'I left in tears and a taxi' (cf. apo koinou)

some important grammatical terms:

- demonstrative words (e.g. οὕτως or *sic*) have either **anaphoric** or **cataphoric** force i.e. they point 'up the page' or down the page
- adjectives normally have either **attributive** or **predicative** force: 'the cornered cat attacked' vs 'cornered, the cat attacked'
- **substantives**: typically an 'adjective in the dictionary but a noun in a sentence'
- a **clause** is part of a sentence that contains a finite verb
- a **phrase** is a typically short string of grammatically related words, e.g. noun phrase, prepositional phrase, verb phrase

CRITICAL DISCUSSION

Class	Marks – Alphabetic	Marks – Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α	Normally 70 to 80	Shows a detailed knowledge and understanding of the passage and keeps the focus of the discussion on the passage at hand, but can indicate where and how such a discussion might be relevant for work as a whole. Displays independent thought. Can conduct a coherent and persuasive argument for the way, or ways, in which to read the passage and what the value of such reading(s) may be. Where appropriate, engages confidently with the passage for its philosophical, historical, archaeological, or linguistic interest. If appropriate, can discuss detailed syntactical and linguistic matters accurately and in a way that makes them relevant to the wider discussion of the passage. The very best answers may include cogent remarks made independently of the secondary literature on the texts.	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive and thoughtful
II.1	$\beta^{+}$to $\beta^{++}/\beta\alpha$	60-69	Shows a good understanding of the passage and can contextualise it relevantly, but displays less evidence of independent thought than that found in First Class scripts Where appropriate, engages with the passage for its philosophical, historical, archaeological, or linguistic interest If appropriate, can argue for a particular reading, but, where relevant, shows some awareness that this might not be the only way of approaching the passage. Clear evidence of a good understanding of the passage in the original and an awareness of its key linguistic features as they relate to the interpretation of the passage.	65-69: resourceful use of material 60-64: good basic
II.2	γβ/β to β (including β?+)	50-59	Shows a fair understanding of both the passage and the work as a whole, but also likely to make some mistakes. May display a tendency to use the passage as a stepping stone to a discussion of the work as a whole, although still some attempt is made to engage with the passage for its literary, philosophical, historical, archaeological, or linguistic interest Some ability to perceive and discuss points closely related to the language of the passage.	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration
III	γδ/γ to γ++/γβ	40-49	Shows a poor or faulty understanding of the passage with some evidence of patches of incomprehension of the original. Has some knowledge of the text as a whole but is insufficiently able to engage with the passage at hand.	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
Fail	Leading δ (and below)	0-39	Shows no knowledge of the text and little or no understanding of the passage in the original; answers which show no familiarity with the text from which the passage is taken. A script which is significantly incomplete or even blank.	30-39: very thin 20-29: significantly incomplete script 0: blank script

Please note that not every script of a particular standard will necessarily exhibit all the features typically associated with performance at that level. Candidates' performances may often be uneven, exhibiting features characteristic of more than one class (variation may occur within a single answer or as between answers to different questions). In such cases examiners will balance stronger and weaker elements to determine the overall mark on the paper. Thus, for example: a wide-ranging script evidencing plenty of independence and ability to make connections but also some confusion, irrelevance and weakness in analysis might be judged II.1 overall; similarly, a seriously incomplete script showing evidence nonetheless of knowledge and abilities typical of at least second-class standard would probably be judged deserving of a III.

Provide a critical discussion of the following passage.

You may (if you wish) draw attention to features of language and style that are of interest. Where appropriate you may illustrate your interpretation by providing an English translation of particular clauses, but you are not expected to translate the passage as a whole.

‘mulier, quid tibi cum Caelio, quid cum homine adulescentulo, quid cum alieno? cur aut tam familiaris fuisti ut aurum commodares, aut tam inimica ut uenenum timeres? non patrem tuum uideras, non patruum, non auum, non proauum, non <abauum, non> atauum audieras consules fuisse; non denique modo te Q. Metelli matrimonium tenuisse sciebas, clarissimi ac fortissimi uiri patriaeque amantissimi, qui simul ac pedem limine extulerat, omnis prope ciuis uirtute, gloria, dignitate superabat? cum ex amplissimo genere in familiam clarissimam nupsisses, cur tibi Caelius tam coniunctus fuit? cognatus, adfinis, uiri tui familiaris? nihil eorum. quid igitur fuit nisi quaedam temeritas ac libido? nonne te, si nostrae imagines uiriles non commouebant, ne progenies quidem mea, Q. illa Claudia, aemulam domesticae laudis in gloria muliebri esse admonebat, non uirgo illa Vestalis Claudia quae patrem complexa triumphantem ab inimico tribuno plebei de curru detrahi passa non est? cur te fraterna uitia potius quam bona paterna et auita et usque a nobis cum in uiris tum etiam in feminis repetita mouerunt? ideone ego pacem Pyrrhi diremi ut tu amorum turpissimorum cotidie foedera ferires, ideo aquam adduxi ut ea tu inceste uterere, ideo uiam muniui ut eam tu alienis uiris comitata celebrares?’

CICERO *Pro Marco Caelio* 33-34

SAMPLE

This specimen is merely that: an *example* of how a prac. crit. could be done. It is not a guide or a template; it is only meant to provide students with a general idea of what a prac. crit. can look like. — *Dr Weiss*

This passage constitutes the complete speech of Appius Claudius Caecus within Cicero's *Pro Caelio*, appearing here by way of προσωποποιία: 'impersonation', or putting a speech into another's mouth. Plato immortalized the technique in the *Crito*, with Socrates' famous impersonation of the laws of Athens, yet Cicero had also used the technique in his *In Catilinam 1*, delivered in 63 B.C., when the consul impersonated the *res publica*, ironically chastising himself for not being tougher on Catiline.

Just as there the technique is designed to address and ultimately disarm an opponent's strongest arguments, so here the προσωποποιία gives Cicero a chance to isolate Clodia's impressive family line and use it to his advantage: 'yes, she is from a distinguished line, you may say, but in reality this is hardly to her credit!'

The choice of her most famous ancestor would of course have appealed to the most conservative members of the jury: Appius himself supplies a miniature *res gestae* in his final sentence (ll. 14-16) if anyone were in doubt. Here Cicero cleverly, even humorously slanders Clodia with each of her ancestor's most recognizable achievements: in three stylish *isocola* the peace of Pyrrhus is contrasted with her low *foedera*, an aqueduct with her impurities and Appius' famous *via* with her sordid journeys to Baiae. And the choice of the ancient Appius gives Cicero a chance to remind Clodia of all of her ancestors since then, not just those whose *imagines viriles* decorated the home (l. 9), but the women as well (one a Vestal Virgin, to boot).

Yet it is not only her ancestors: Cicero has Appius remind Clodia of her recently dead husband Metellus (l. 4) as well, here adorned with typical Ciceronian superlatives (l. 5—who is actually speaking: Appius or Cicero?), a particularly sore point since Clodia was suspected of poisoning him in 59 B.C.; his inclusion here arguably strengthens the impression that Clodia, the *Palatina Medea*, is skilled in poison (l. 2): *venenum* being one of the elements on which the prosecution has based its case against Caelius.

The passage comes as part of the *praemunitio* ('build-up') of the *Pro Caelio* (sections 3-50); as a whole the speech is unusually structured, without a formal *narratio*, partly due perhaps to the fact that Caelius and Crassus had already provided narrative versions of events to the jurors, but also due to the fact that Cicero's own stated goal (right from the *exordium*) is to attack Clodia, in particular her *libido* and *odium*. We might compare the defence's strategy of chastising Caelius for being a young man as a way of diminishing the significance of the charges against him; letting Appius do this here arguably puts Clodia on a level with Caelius: all of this is tawdry and does not merit serious attention. (We must also remember that Catullus is busy with his *nugae* right now: even if his Lesbia is not this Clodia he gives us memorable insight into elite ideas and ideals of behaviour.)

The passage also arguably lends a solemn note to the *Pro Caelio*: Appius appears practically as a ghost in the speech, reminiscent of such scenes as Darius' sad ghost in Aeschylus' *Persae*, brooding over the fate of his son Xerxes, or Odysseus' interviews with the dead in the *Odyssey*. I even wonder whether the passage might not have sat at the back of Vergil's mind in creating Hector's ghost for *Aeneid* 2. The scene is poignant and Appius is upset: the entire passage consists of questions (a mix of direct interrogatives and sentence-questions, all indicative, nothing rhetorical here!) save one curt sentence at line 8: *nihil eorum.*

Yet even in the midst of such solemnity we find humour: 'Why has Caelius become so connected to you? Is he a relative?' (ll. 7-8) It is unclear whether Appius is familiar with the rumours of Clodia's incest with her brother: it's a more powerful reading if we take him not to be.

A direct attack on Clodia is not enough: though Cicero will come at the end of the *praemunitio* to call Clodia a *meretrix* pure and simple—even *proterva* and *procax*—having Appius put these harsh questions to his descendant is a very vivid way of casting doubt on her motivations and therefore the entire case of the prosecution. It is so successful, perhaps, that Cicero cannot help but do it again with yet another προσωποποιία in the mouth of Clodius, closely following this section. If the tone there is lighter and comic, then this is more serious, even tragic. Cicero must always vary the tone.

Yet the real impersonation of the *Pro Caelio* is arguably that of Cicero himself: it's the 4th of April, 56 B.C.: Cicero had returned from exile just in August of the previous year and seems to exult in finding his way back to prominence, back to his old self. The Conference of Luca is about to take place, confirming the triumvirate, and Cicero has here successfully protected the interests of what may have been the ultimate target of the prosecution, Pompey. Little would Cicero know, of course, that the impending deaths of Julia (54 B.C.) and Crassus (53) would bring the opportunities for such fun to an end.

SAMPLE

SECTION B

*Answer **one** question.*

B1 *Discuss:*

etenim si mecum patria, quae mihi uita mea multo est carior, si cuncta Italia, si omnis res publica loquatur: “M. Tulli, quid agis? tune eum quem esse hostem comperisti, quem ducem belli futurum uides, quem exspectari imperatorem in castris hostium sentis, auctorem sceleris, principem coniurationis, euocatorem seruorum et ciuium perditorum, exire patiere, ut abs te non emissus ex urbe, sed immissus in urbem esse uideatur? nonne hunc in uincla duci, non ad mortem rapi, non summo supplicio mactari imperabis? quid tandem te impedit? mosne maiorum? at persaepe etiam priuati in hac re publica perniciosos ciues morte multarunt. an leges quae de ciuium Romanorum supplicio rogatae sunt? at numquam in hac urbe qui a re publica defecerunt ciuium iura tenuerunt. an inuidiam posteritatis times? praeclaram uero populo Romano refers gratiam qui te, hominem per te cognitum, nulla commendatione maiorum tam mature ad summum imperium per omnes honorum gradus extulit, si propter inuidiam aut alicuius periculi metum salutem ciuium tuorum neglegis. sed si quis est inuidiae metus, non est uehementius seueritatis ac fortitudinis inuidia quam inertiae ac nequitiae pertimescenda. an, cum bello uastabitur Italia, uexabuntur urbes, tecta ardebunt, tum te non existimas inuidiae incendio conflagraturum?” his ego sanctissimis rei publicae uocibus et eorum hominum qui hoc idem sentiunt mentibus pauca respondebo.

CICERO *In Catilinam* 1.27-29

This specimen is only an *example* of how a prac. crit. could be done. It is not a guide or a template; it is only meant to provide students with a general idea of what a prac. crit. can look like. — *Dr Weiss*

This passage features the second *prosopopoeia* of *In Catilinam* 1; this is the Ancient Greek rhetorical term for 'impersonation'. The first such *prosopopoeia*, also featuring the voice of the *patria*, appears in earlier in the speech and is addressed to Catiline. There the fatherland's tone is plaintive and fearful: through her voice Cicero neatly summarizes the atrocities (*facinora*, *scelera*) that Catiline is capable of and begs the conspirator to leave Rome so that, in her words, 'at length I may stop fearing'.

By this point in the speech, however, the *patria* seems to have lost patience with the situation and now addresses Cicero himself: it is as though she has been among the senators in the temple of Jupiter Stator on the 8th of November this whole time, listening to the consul as he outlines the desperate crisis of the autumn of 63 B.C. — and she has had enough. It is as though *she herself* is persuaded by the speech so far; it is as though *she* becomes Cicero's guide to the senators as to what *they* ought to be thinking as well. After all, if the *patria* thinks such things, if *cuncta Italia* (ll. 1-2) and the *res publica* (l. 2) feel this way, then who can disagree?

What is her complaint? That Marcus Tullius Cicero (note the formality of *M. Tulli* in line 2 — no intimate *cognomen* here!), given the extreme risk to Rome, is guilty of *inertia* and *nequitia* (l. 17) because he hasn't yet arranged for the execution of Catiline and his fellow conspirators. Her words here echo Cicero's own words at the beginning of the speech, where he blames himself for exactly these two things, *inertia* and *nequitia* (perhaps a hendiadys for 'reprehensible inactivity'), and so these words (inter alia) form a kind of ring composition that keeps the senators' attention by signalling the end (*peroratio*) of the speech, as well as reinforcing the general argument.

Cicero is using this argument as a way to anticipate and outflank those who think the conspirators deserve capital punishment immediately. From Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, written some twenty years later, we could conclude that there very well may have been such a sentiment among the senators (cf. Cato's speech). But strategically speaking, at least, this argument is being used to strengthen the main argument of the speech: Catiline and his followers must leave Rome immediately.

It is of course a curious irony of history that Cicero is *not* arguing for capital punishment in what came to be his most famous speech (Sallust called it *luculentam atque utilem rei publicae*) but it was the execution of the conspirators that ensured Cicero's exile just a few years later at the instigation of his great enemy Clodius in 58 B.C.

The speech of the *patria* consists of twelve sentences, eight of which are questions: she is remonstrating with Cicero.

After a blunt *quid agis?* lines 2-5 feature three balanced cola, followed by a second set of three noun phrases, all framed in characteristically periodic style by the main subject and main verb of the sentence:

TU (l. 2)

A. *quem…comperisti*

B. *quem…vides*

C. *quem…sentis* (longer)

AA. *auctorem*

BB. *principem*

CC. *evocatorem* (longer)

PATIERE (l. 5)

A result clause forms a brief coda to the sentence, featuring the crystal-clear antithesis of

*em*issus *ex urbe*

versus

*im*missus *in urbem*

as well as Cicero's famous favourite clausula (resolved cretic + trochee) *esse videatur* (l. 6).

SAMPLE

(A senator may well wonder who is speaking: the *patria* or the consul? Or did Cicero make any attempt to distinguish his own personal voice from that of the *patria*? Or would that have risked a kind of absurdity? This kind of information is lost to time and we know that Cicero published *In Catilinam* 1 later but there should be no doubt of the importance of oratorical delivery to Cicero or any Roman politician for that matter, given the evidence from his own rhetorical essays as well as authors such as Quintilian and Seneca the Elder.)

This grandiloquent period, at any rate, is followed by a volley of rapid-fire phrases (*duci*, *rapi*, *mactari*) and questions, perhaps less glamorously constructed, but conveying thereby an increased anger in the voice of the *patria* and culminating in an exasperated *tandem* (l. 8) that echoes the first sentence of *In Catilinam* 1.

Now the *patria* briefly raises three 'straw man' arguments that will of course be immediately demolished: 'What's holding you back, Cicero?' 1) *mos maiorum* (l. 8): as if the *patria* could advise anything contrary to the 'traditions of our ancestors'! 2) *leges* (l. 9): yet conspirators have by definition surrendered any citizen rights! 3) *invidia* (l. 11): if this is a genuine concern then the opportunity for action is almost lost!

Cicero's sequence of ideas here is important, ranging from broad to narrow; putting the personal element last is appropriate but it also gives him a chance to elaborate this point and protect his position; he even manages to get the *patria* to pay him a compliment as a *novus homo* who rose to consul at the earliest age permitted (ll. 12-14). This is of course irrelevant and even vain, perhaps, but it cleverly insinuates the intimacy between Cicero and the state and at least addresses the issue of his motivation.

The *patria* becomes more agitated now (note the sound of *persaepe…privati…publica…pernciosos*, ll. 8-9) and these arguments sound a little extreme: *qui a re publica defecerunt* (l. 11) is hardly a genuine legal category and have the conspirators actually lost their rights? *praeclaram* (l. 12) is clearly sarcastic. The two conditional sentences here (ll. 12-17) feature simple indicative verbs, textbook examples of 'Logical' Latin conditionals; the stern, legalistic tone is strengthened by the epigrammatic (ll. 16-17):

> *non est vehementius severitatis ac fortitudinis invidia quam inertiae ac nequitiae pertimescenda.*

The grammatical pattern here:

> genitive AC genitive <u>nominative</u> QUAM genitive AC genitive <u>nominative</u>

with *invidia* supplied to both clauses by syllepsis wraps up her argument with an irresistible knot.

She (and Cicero) can only top this brief but powerful speech with a vivid metaphor, exactly what we find with *invidiae incendium* in line 18: there is fire imagery elsewhere in the speech and we know from Sallust that the conspirators had in fact torched buildings in Rome prior to the speech.

If the *patria* pleads with Catiline earlier as a vulnerable female figure then here she has become an angry *matrona / dea* figure, chastising her consul and perhaps echoing Homer's severe Hera and even prefiguring Vergil's jealous Juno: her very words, after all, are sacred: *his…sanctissimis…verbis* (l. 19).

How can Cicero possibly reply? As the speech continues (*pauca respondebo*, l. 20) he can now use these intense arguments – very cleverly not his own – to target the 'soft' element in the senate: those who would countenance clemency. As we learn from Sallust this circle would include Julius Caesar, neither the first nor last Roman to fight against a Roman army.

This *prosopopoeia* is effective from practically any perspective, but it is not surprising to learn that it is not a common technique in the preserved oratory in Cicero: *In Catilinam* 1 with its exciting apostrophe to Catiline at the beginning and its unusual structuring throughout is an exceptional speech. But the most learned senators will have detected by now an allusion to Plato's *Crito*, where Socrates anticipates his interlocutor's arguments by imagining what the Laws of Athens would have to say about any attempt to escape the death sentence that an Athenian jury has just passed. The *prosopopoeia* there is far more extensive but the strategy seems similar, and Cicero would not mind it if a senator compared him to noble Socrates.

The historical irony here of course is that a martyrdom no less glorious awaited Cicero some twenty years later at the hands of a tyrant no less brutal and no less popular.

SAMPLE

B2 *Discuss*:

dixit, et ut serpens in longam tenditur aluum
durataeque cuti squamas increscere sentit
nigraque caeruleis uariari corpora guttis
in pectusque cadit pronus, commissaque in unum
paulatim tereti tenuantur acumine crura.
bracchia iam restant: quae restant bracchia tendit,
et lacrimis per adhuc humana fluentibus ora,
'accede, o coniunx, accede, miserrima,' dixit,
'dumque aliquid superest de me, me tange manumque
accipe, dum manus est, dum non totum occupat anguis.'
ille quidem uult plura loqui, sed lingua repente
in partes est fissa duas, nec uerba uolenti
sufficiunt, quotiensque aliquos parat edere questus,
sibilat: hanc illi uocem natura reliquit.
nuda manu feriens exclamat pectora coniunx:
'Cadme, mane teque, infelix, his exue monstris!
Cadme, quid hoc? ubi pes? ubi sunt umerique manusque
et color et facies et, dum loquor, omnia? cur non
me quoque, caelestes, in eandem uertitis anguem?'
dixerat; ille suae lambebat coniugis ora
inque sinus caros, ueluti cognosceret, ibat
et dabat amplexus adsuetaque colla petebat.
quisquis adest (aderant comites), terretur; at illa
lubrica permulcet cristati colla draconis,
et subito duo sunt iunctoque uolumine serpunt.

OVID *Metamorphoses* 4.576-600

END OF PAPER

This passage falls in the second half of Book 4 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, after the daughters of Minyas have exchanged several stories among themselves and then transformed into bats.

Much of Book 4 has a distinctly Theban emphasis, Bacchus being ever present; this began with Cadmus' founding of Thebes at the opening of Bacchus-heavy Book 3 (in myth-time this is around 1500 B.C.). This passage features the transformation of the archetypal *ktistes* into a snake and so comes as a kind of closure to the beginning of Book 3: this is in keeping with Ovid's varied practice of using and alternatively avoiding book beginnings and endings as termini for stories.

The sad narrative of Cadmus' daughter Ino precedes this passage; in the lines immediately preceding Cadmus reviews his sufferings; just as at the beginning of Book 3 Cadmus was a *profugus* from Sidon (searching for his sister Europa) now he is a *profugus* from Thebes wandering in Illyria. (Ovid doesn't say this but the learned reader might know that Cadmus has been fighting there as an ally to the Enchelii, or 'Eel-people', appropriately enough.)

It is an intriguing echo of Ovid's own status as exile starting from A.D. 8, since Roman Illyria extended from the Adriatic to the Danube and Tomis (or Tomi) was at the mouth of the Danube. But this could be an accident as it seems clear that Ovid had been working on the *Metamorphoses* after the publication of the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* around A.D. 2 and before his banishment.

A connection with Aeneas is also intriguing:

qui primus ab oris

Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit

litora

Aeneas is also an exile and the founder of a famous city. And we might consider the transformations of other leaders here, like Caesar's catasterism or Augustus' predicted apotheosis in Book 15.

Yet the transformation of Cadmus is at the same time introduced in a characteristically arbitrary way. As with any transformation in the some 250 transformations featured in Ovid's poem we are always encouraged to wonder, 'Why is this here?' Frequently but not always the answer is that a transformation supplies an *aition*, a reason for something, e.g. why the mulberry tree has purple berries.

But beyond concluding the 'house of Cadmus' *fabulae* this passage fulfils a puzzling statement of Minerva at the beginning of Book 3: as Cadmus gazes there on the corpse of the fantastic serpent he must slay in order to found Thebes he is told that he too will become a snake (or at least resemble one): *et tu spectabere serpens!*

And so this transformation has its place in what is effectively a fifteen-book catalogue of transformations that draws heavily on a Greek didactic tradition stretching from Hesiod's *Ehoiai* (and Book 2 of the *Iliad*) to Aratus' *Phaenomena*, Callimachus' *Aetia* and Nicander's *Heteroeumena*. The form anticipates Ovid's no less didactic calendar poem the *Fasti* and it is easy to think of these two great poems as a reflection of Ovid's poetic position after the publication of Horace's *Odes* and Vergil's *Aeneid*—with *Odes* Book 4 coming as recently as 11 B.C.

SAMPLE

But the element of arbitrariness here (and throughout the poem) reinforces the conceit that Ovid's narrative really is in the hands of the Muses, as he implies at the beginning of the poem:

di coeptis (nam mutastis et illas)

aspirate meis!

Though the Latin of the *Metamorphoses* is unmistakably Ovid's in its vocabulary, phrasing and metrical smoothness, we are miles away from the controlled argumentation of the *Ars amatoria* or the *urbanitas* of the *Amores*.

Ovid is imitating the tone as well as the form of Greek *epos*—in particular the pious, naïve tone of Muse-inspired poets from Hesiod to Nicander, Roman imitators included.

But not only does Minerva's statement anticipate this transformation: Cadmus' fate as a snake was well known in antiquity (so Dionysus also tells Cadmus he will become a snake in Euripides' *Bacchae*). And though no other poetic narrative of the transformation has reached us today it is intriguing to consider whether Ovid is following a model closely or not: we can compare the narrative of Mars and Venus earlier in Book 4, which is very obviously modelled on *Odyssey* 8.

But if questioning the status of an *aition* engages the reader's attention we can say the same of the links from *fabula* to *fabula*: and here the rule, as everywhere in this poem it seems, is *variatio*, Ovid's own attempt to reproduce the famous Greek aesthetic of *poikilia*.

Some links between stories are tenuous, some links are tight: in the lines preceding these Cadmus is seen commiserating with his (curiously unnamed) wife Harmonia, appropriately enough after the tale of his daughter Ino—of which he is ironically unaware! To paraphrase, 'that must have been a sacred snake I killed when I founded Thebes and so all this we are suffering is the vengeance of the gods' (*cura deum*).

And so this is a transformation by association: here too there are manifold distinctions among the transformations that also show delightful variety. Some transformations seem symbolic: so Clytie becomes the heliotrope. And it is not often that we see Ovid giving direct voice to issues of right and wrong in a given transformation, in keeping with the naïve tone of *epos*, but it is common for characters within the narrative to express strong feelings, not least about the justice of the gods.

The lines are typical of the *Metamorphoses*; as frequently in the poem here we find a combination of vivid narrative and short direct speech: it is at the warmer end of the emotional range of temperatures in the text.

The passage begins with seven lines of detailed narrative; Ovid's *enargeia* ('vividity') in such passages is bound to evoke comparison with Homer and Vergil. Each line here seems devoted to a particular body part (line 577 is delightfully 'hissy') and our attention is drawn to Cadmus' actual experience of the transformation: *sentit* (577). Note too the vivid use of the present tense in almost every line here.

Ovid ends the 'bullet-point' or 'list style' of transformed body parts with a clear 'strong' caesura in line 581:

bracchia iam restant ||

SAMPLE

this pause elegantly leads the way for a brief speech, Cadmus' pathetic final words as a human being, appropriately broken with frequent pauses and repetition (*accede … accede … dum … dum*). The scene is reminiscent of Cadmus' grandson Acteon's miserable transformation in Book 3.

We might pause to wonder what exactly Cadmus is asking for here from his wife: the transformation is of course taking him by surprise: 'take my hand—while it's still a hand!' to paraphrase 584-585. There is a touch of humour here, it seems.

Ovid now resumes the narrative briefly for five lines as the final transformation takes place: the most important part of a human, at least for a poet, is the *lingua* (586): so Cadmus' tongue is very graphically split in two and we finally see the perfect tense literally splitting a noun phrase:

in partes est fissa duas (587)

and we get another highly (and appropriately!) sibilant passage.

It is interesting to see a typically Ovidian *sententia* at the conclusion of the transformation:

hanc illi vocem natura reliquit. (589)

The finality is strengthened by a golden line here at 590:

nuda manu feriens exclamat pectora coniunx

Harmonia now replies with a brief speech of almost the same length and in the same intense tone as her beloved Cadmus. She seems even more surprised but manages an extraordinary phrase:

teque, infelix, his exue monstris! (591)

'shed yourself of this portent!': of course *exuo* is normally used of a snake shedding its skin. Harmonia's focus on Cadmus' now missing feet really completes the list of body parts that begins the passage and again it is hard to resist seeing a bit of humour here: 'where is your foot and your shoulders and your hands and your complexion and your face—and while I'm speaking—where is *everything*?' (592-593)

The polysyndeton here and again the clipped phrases reinforce the intensity of her feelings and her request to the gods is poignant (and in keeping with her very name): 'turn me into a snake as well!'

It is remarkable to think that with these words addressed to the *caelestes* (594) Harmonia is actually addressing her parents as well, Mars and Venus, whose love affair was of course told by one of the daughters of Minyas earlier in Book 4. This subtle, unspoken connectedness is characteristic of the *Metamorphoses*.

The next three lines of narrative are univocally cast in the imperfect as Ovid slows the narrative down but draws our attention to a series of delicate and intimate actions: for a moment Cadmus has become his wife's pet: he licks her face and wraps himself around her neck! (Her new 'snake necklace' is perhaps an evocation of her famous cursed necklace.) The sweet scene reminds me of Catullus' description of Lesbia's pet sparrow and it certainly comes as a refreshing contrast to the horrible Tisiphone, who in the prior *fabula* sends insanity in the form

SAMPLE

of serpents into the minds of Athamas and Ino. (We might also think of the horrible twin snakes who destroy Laocoon in *Aeneid* 2.) Others would fear such a snake but Harmonia pets it (*permulcet* 599)!

As Ovid now puts it, suddenly (*subito* 600) she is turned into a snake and the poet wastes no more time: 'they are two and they creep along with joined twisting', *volumine* reminding us that we are dealing with a text and a hyperliterate author. (It must have been tempting for Ovid to remind us that Cadmus imported the alphabet into Greece!) And this is, after all, a couple in love and we can't help but think of other tight couplings in Book 4: Mars and Venus, to be sure, but particularly Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.

In the lines that immediately follow this passage Ovid goes on to note that Cadmus and Harmonia retain human sentience (in keeping with Pythagoras' wild speech in Book 15?) and they are comforted with the success of their grandson Dionysus: we don't see too many of these happy endings in the *Metamorphoses* and I am reminded of Baucis and Philemon in Book 8.

Nor are these the last snakes we will see in Book 4, as Medusa's head is full of them in the *fabula* that is to follow. But it is remarkable that we have seen a pair of snakes coupling earlier in the *Metamorphoses*: in Book 3 Tiresias famously struck a pair of mating snakes and became a woman and then seven years later a man again. Again, the subtlety is characteristic of this finely woven (cf. *deducite* 1.4) and complex *carmen*. We know that Ovid must have drawn on Nicander's *Heteroeumena* in composing this poem but here he might equally be drawing on that poet's now lost *Ophiaca.*

SAMPLE