TENUE EST MENDACIUM

Rethinking Fakes and Authorship in Classical, Late Antique & Early Christian Works
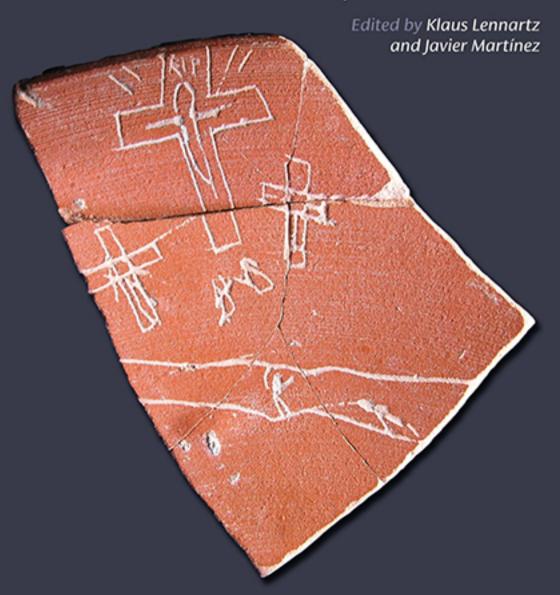
Edited by **Klaus Lennartz**
and **Javier Martínez**

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edited by

KLAUS LENNARTZ

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JAVIER MARTÍNEZ

AD EMERITUM ANTONIUM GUZMANEM

Gratias tibi agimus, magister qui scientia tua nos aluisti.
Natus in Gaditana terra per multos et frugiferos annos
in Academia Complutensi doctrinam tradidisti,
doctus inter doctos, tuorum tutor, consili plenus,
scaenae Graecae antiquae studiosus. Nunc tibi
tempus est dulci otio perfruendi. Ita di faciant!

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Cover image: Third century A.D. pottery shard found in the Roman ruins at Iruña-Veleia with an early depiction of the crucifixion. The carving has been proven to be a modern addition, see pp. 315ff of this volume (Image credit: DFA/AFA).

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The Poet as a Forger:
Fakes and Literary Imitation in Roman Poetry

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Much has been written about the fundamental role played by *imitatio* in the formation of Latin literature.[1] Good attention has also been paid to the language for competition in Roman literary culture.[2] In recent times, reception studies have concentrated on the interrelationship between imitation, *aemulatio,* and competitiveness in the process of canonization of a classical text. The reception of Cicero in the declamation schools serves as illustrative of how imitation and literary rivalry were crucial factors in the transformation of the historical figure of the republican orator into an icon of language and prose style.[3] As demonstrated by Robert Kaster,[4] in the school environment, Cicero, "regarded not as the name of a man, but of eloquence itself,"[5] became the embodiment of a classic, entering the canon of *idonei auctores* as the symbol of Latin's stylistic excellence. In reducing Cicero to intellect and pure form and reconfiguring him as verbal *ingenium,* students turned the republican orator into a new authorial figure. And "becoming" Cicero was thought as essential to the acquisition of power and prestige in Roman elite society.[6]

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[1] West-Woodman 1979 provides the more general study on the notion of imitation. See also Reiff 1959; Segal 1986. Recently Whitton 2019 has investigated the culture of literary imitation in Latin prose, with special emphasis on Pliny the Younger's epistolary world and its textual relationship with Quintilian's *Institutio*.

[2] For the idea of competition in the Roman world, see Fisher-van Wees 2011. About the Latin language for competition, see now Formisano-Marchese 2017, 14–29 (also Tutrone 2019).

[3] On the reception of Cicero in the declamation schools, see also Keeline 2018 and La Bua 2019 (esp. 3–5; 106–25).

[4] Kaster 1998.

[5] Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.112 (*Cicero iam non nominis nomen sed eloquentiae habeatur*).

[6] As Kaster (1998, 262) notes, "probably not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, the classic takes on the properties of a mirror: the celebrant casts his gaze upon the icon reverently and sees himself."

Beyond offering a telling test case for the importance of imitation and competition to the continuing vitality of a classical text, Cicero also sheds light on imitation as an antagonistic and creative act and illuminates the close relationship between reception and the production of pseudepigrapha and literary fakes,[7] correctly seen as "extreme manifestations" of ancient practices of *imitatio*.[8] We are well informed about role-play and fictionality in rhetorical education and the process of "creative supplementation" in the declamation schools, a process whereby students adopted the persona of a fictional speaker and reperformed the voice of their master-author through the composition of impersonating exercises, filling up blank spaces in the model.[9] Along with Seneca the Elder's paradoxical re-readings of Cicero's *Philippics* in *Controversia* 7.2 (on Cicero and Popillius) and *Suasoriae* 6 and 7 (on Cicero's deliberation whether to beg Antony's pardon), the *corpus* of Ciceronian pseudepigrapha includes texts that purport to supplement Cicero's political biography. As expected, the Catilinarian conspiracy (*Fifth Catilinarian,* the *Responsio Catilinae*, the *Declamatio in L. Sergium Catilinam*), Cicero's exile (*Pridie quam in exilium iret*) and his relationship with the young Octavian (*Epistula ad Octavianum*)[10] elicited interest from students and practitioners who reinvented Cicero and "fictionalized" him as a historical and political figure.[11] Again, Sallust's perceived hostility to Cicero was exploited in the declamation rooms, as demonstrated by the *Invective against Cicero* (*Invectiva in Ciceronem*), ascribed to Sallust, and Cicero's purported reply, the *Invective against Sallust* (*Invectiva in Sallustium*), both of them spurious scholastic exercises in the form of *prosopopoeiae,* to be dated presumably to the Augustan age or early Roman Empire.[12]

Ciceronian pseudepigrapha help us to define literary forgeries as acts of imitation and rivalry, pointing also to the rich intertextual exchange between the model and its textual recreation. Put in parallel with mythological and secular centos in late antiquity, fakes and pseudepigrapha may be labelled as patchwork texts whose authors move from imitation (and alteration) of single passages or verse units of the model to the reassemblage of the borrowed material in a new

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[7] Modern literature on pseudepigrapha and classical forgeries is abundant. Here I cite only Speyer 1971; Mülke 2008; Peirano 2012; Martínez 2018 (with further bibliography); Guzmán-Martínez 2018.

[8] Peirano 2012, 7.

[9] Peirano 2012, 10.

[10] For a fresh reconsideration of this Ciceronian *pseudepigraphon,* see Van der Velden 2020.

[11] On the importance of these pseudepigraphic sources to the reception of Cicero, see Keeline 2018, 147–51.

[12] On the pseudo-Sallustan invectives, see Novokhatko 2009. See also La Bua 2019, 103–108.

narrative.[13] Within this process of literary "metamorphosis," the text of the model (and its author) is refashioned and transformed into a new textual product (and a new authorial figure). Taking over style, language, and topics of his exemplar and reproducing it in novel forms, the imitator aims to reperform and rewrite a text that could have been written by his author, not rarely supplementing his source's biography. From this perspective, literary forgeries (whether or not intentionally deceptive) entail a virtual dialogue between the imitator, his author, and cultured readers, invited not only to question issues of authenticity but also to dissect macro- and microtextual allusions to the model in order to evaluate the degree of artificiality and originality of the new narrative.

Building upon these preliminary assumptions, this chapter focuses on the notion of literary forgery as an act of creative imitation and draws attention to the interconnection of imitation, *aemulatio,* and competition as crucial to our understanding of the phenomenon of literary fakes in early and late Empire poetic literature. It starts by briefly readdressing the practice of *mimesis,* as it is theorized in Seneca the Younger's epistle 84 and Quintilian's *Institutio* (10.2). Then it moves on to provide a picture of the poet-forger at work by relying essentially on Pliny the Younger's epistolary corpus. As we shall see, the poet, at the very moment in which he emulates his model and offers a creative reading of it, acts—and implicitly portrays himself—as a potential forger. In imitating the text of the model or even fictionalizing the biography of the emulated author, the "Plinian" poet reinvents himself and invites his readers to participate in the fiction, a poetic simulation designed to create a new text and, above all, a new authorial persona. Most importantly, the imitator thinks of himself as winning and surpassing his predecessor. By emulating and competing with his model he does not limit himself to canonizing and immortalizing his *auctor.* Imitation and competition imply recognition of the superiority of the "new" author over his exemplary model.

Imitation, Competition, and Forgery

As Donald Russell notes, a successful *imitatio "*needs critical intelligence" and "the power to comprehend thoroughly not only the words of the model but their purposes and methods."[14] Far from being a simple replication of tones and themes of the text-model, imitation requires textual competences and skills from the writer-imitator, who competes with and revitalizes his master-source, takes material from it, and reconstructs it in new forms. It is in this textual transformation

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[13] The centonist method of composition is well illustrated in McGill 2005.
[14] Russell 1979, 6.

that resides the essence of literary forgery. Seneca the Younger's epistle 84, a text of some significance to the philosopher's ideas about the correct and "moral" style of speaking and writing,[15] provides us with good insights into the notion of imitation and its interpretation as deliberate forgery.[16] After drawing an analogy between the activity of bees and the process of literary appropriation which implies ingestion of as many texts as possible and subsequent harmonization of style features, exempla, and themes into one,[17] Seneca observes that the creation of this choir of different textual voices prevents readers from recognizing the origin of any single feature (84.5–6):

> *Sed ne ad aliud quam de quo agitur abducar, nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congessimus separare (melius enim distincta servantur), deinde adhibita ingenii nostri cura et facultate in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat. Quod in corpore nostro videmus sine ulla opera nostra facere naturam* **6**. *(alimenta quae accepimus, quamdiu in sua qualitate perdurant et solida innatant stomacho, onera sunt; at cum ex eo quod erant mutata sunt, tunc demum in vires et in sanguinem transeunt), idem in his quibus aluntur ingenia praestemus, ut quaecumque hausimus non patiamur integra esse, ne aliena sint.*

But I must not be led astray into another subject than that which we are discussing. We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us—in other words, our natural gifts—we should so blend those several flavors into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came. This is what we see nature doing in our own bodies without any labour on our part; the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden; but it passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form. So it is with the food which nourishes our higher nature—we should

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[15] Together with epistles 40, 100, and 114 (the celebrated epistle on Maecenas), epistle 84 represents a manifesto of Seneca's ideas on style and language: see Berti 2018. On Seneca's self-fashioning in the letter and the creation of an "epistolar ego," see Correa 2015.

[16] On Seneca's epistle 84, see Graver 2014 and Graver-Long 2015.

[17] On Virgil's account of bee-behaviors in the fourth book of Georgics, see now Hardie 2020.

see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us.[18]

Later on, insisting again on the metaphor of digestion, Seneca encourages his disciple to "digest" (*concoquere*) the food that nourishes human mind and nature, the food taken from good reading and writing that we must absorb and make our own, "so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements" (*adsentiamur illis fideliter et nostra faciamus, ut unum quiddam fiat ex multis* § 7). Then, the philosopher claims that our mind "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* § 8). Defining the relationship between the text-model and the new text produced by imitation in parental terms, like a father-son relationship, Seneca, finally, notes that the origin of the material from which a "true copy" (*vera imago*) is formed is hardly detectable, 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" (*haec enim omnibus, quae ex quo velut exemplari traxit, formam suam impressit, ut in unitatem illa competent* § 9).

To Seneca's eyes, imitation is not a passive act. Devotion to the model generates a process of appropriation and consequent recreation of the text imitated. But what is most significant is the deliberate concealment of the material taken from the model, so that any reader looks at the product resulting from imitation as a new, original text and a progress, in Senecan terms, towards intellectual and moral maturation.[19] The practice of *mimesis* involves then not only the absorption of original texts but also the creation of a new artistic composition. The author-imitator accomplishes something extraordinary: he imitates, competes with, and surpasses his predecessor and, above all, hides away his model. A sort of literary camouflage, the new work covers up its indebtedness to its source. In a sense, it belongs to the category of the literary forgeries.

Imitation and competition are closely interrelated in Quintilian's theory of *mimesis* as well. After a systematic, literary survey of the *optimi auctores,* both Greek and Latin, in the first chapter of Book X,[20] Quintilian elaborates on the notion of imitation, reassessing its importance to the rhetorical training and the

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[18] Latin text and English translation: Gummere 1917.

[19] On imitation of the good *exempla* in Seneca, see Inwood 2005 (esp. 271–301); Roller 2015.

[20] For a good analysis of Quintilian's survey of Greek and Latin authors in Book X, see Taekema 2003; Citroni 2005. See also Citroni 2006 (on the system of literary genres in Quintilian's pedagogical project); Baier 2017.