A COMPARISON OF THE WORKS OF LATIN LITERATURE
THAT INFLUENCED BRITISH AND AMERICAN POLITICAL FIGURES
BETWEEN 1700 AND 1825

by

Ian Merrill

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This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

Dr. Cynthia White
Professor of Classics

5/4/2016
Date
ABSTRACT

Modern Americans look to the Founding Fathers for advice and inspiration in a number of areas, including politics, law, and religion. In a time when there is an intense focus on the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the study of the classical languages stands in a perilous situation, we can look back once more to the Founding Fathers to provide a foundation for the importance of the classical languages. The respect and importance that the Founding Fathers placed on the great works of Latin and Ancient Greek can help to support the relevance of Classics not only in the modern world, but also in American education, in particular. Furthermore, this paper, by demonstrating that the canon is not fixed, but changes with each new generation in each particular societal environment, should help all educators better understand and respond to the changes that have occurred and will occur in the American canon of Latin literature.
INTRODUCTION

Modern Americans look to the Founding Fathers for advice and inspiration in a number of areas, including politics, law, and religion. Thomas Jefferson’s views on the importance of the separation of church and state, ¹ George Washington’s establishment of the tradition of a two-term limit on the presidency, and James Madison and Alexander Hamilton’s views on the correct working of a democratic government, found in the famous Federalist Papers, have exerted an influence on Americans throughout history. ² In a time when there is an intense focus on the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the study of the classical languages stands in a perilous situation, we can look back once more to the Founding Fathers to provide a foundation for the importance of the classical languages. The respect and importance that the Founding Fathers placed on the great works of Latin and Ancient Greek can help to support the relevance of Classics not only in the modern world, but also in American education, in particular.

This paper sets out to understand what texts of Latin literature the Founding Fathers and their British counterparts read and seemed to value. The first chapter will consist of what the Founding Fathers themselves said about Latin, as well as sample reminiscences and Latin quotes that can be found in their writings. Two Founding Fathers stand out as being of particular importance to this discussion: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Both men, like many of the Founding Fathers, were classically educated ³ and preserved a great appreciation for Classics.

² See, for example, Corley, P. C., R. M. Howard, and D. C. Nixon. 2005. “The Supreme Court and Opinion Content: The Use of the Federalist Papers.” Political Research Quarterly 58.2: 329-340, which describes the large influence the Federalist Papers have had on Supreme Court opinions.
³ John Adams, at age six, began to attend a “dame school,” a school in a woman’s house. He later attended Braintree Latin School and finally Harvard University (Ferling 1992: 9-19). Thomas Jefferson, starting at age nine, studied Classics and French with Reverend William Douglas, the rector of St. James Northam Parish, for five years. He
throughout their lives. In addition, both men’s prominence in public life spans a period of about fifty years, from the beginnings of the American Revolution through their combined twelve years as president to their deaths on the same day, July 4, 1826. This lengthy prominence in public service has ensured that nearly everything they ever wrote is not only well preserved, but also widely and easily accessible. Therefore, evidence from John Adams and Thomas Jefferson will make up the bulk of the chapter on the Latin texts read by the Founding Fathers.

However, in order to draw a contrast and add greater depth of analysis, the second chapter will investigate what Latin texts influenced British political leaders between 1700 and 1825, focusing specifically on the leading political figures. Since the great majority of the population of the Thirteen Colonies was of British descent and the Thirteen Colonies were governed by Great Britain until the American Revolution, the comparison of what Latin texts were being read on either side of the Atlantic Ocean is telling. In light of the major political and societal changes that were taking place in the new United States, such as the rejection of aristocracy and the creation of a new republican form of government, this paper seeks to examine how those changes are reflected in the Latin texts political and government leaders were reading.

spent another couple years studying under the Reverend James Maury and finally at the College of William and Mary (Meacham 2012: 13-4).
BRIEF HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN BETWEEN 1700 AND 1825

The struggles over religion and the authority of the monarch that occurred between 1700 and 1825 had their origin in the conflicts of the seventeenth century, which was a period of great tumult. On the religious side, there was an almost constant struggle between Catholics and Anglicans, exemplified by the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 against King James I, the laws suppressing all civic rights of Catholics, and the Glorious Revolution in 1688, in which Parliament overthrew King James II because he was Catholic and replaced him with the Protestants Queen Mary II and King William III. On the political side, there was great controversy over what balance should be struck between the rights of Parliament and the authority of the monarch. The most prominent example is the English Civil War (1642-1651), in which Parliament revolted against the perceived tyranny of King Charles I. The Glorious Revolution was a political as well as religious upheaval: it was precipitated by the view among English Parliamentarians that King James II sought to establish an absolute monarchy.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, on the other hand, the British were generally free of internal or civil wars, but were almost constantly engaged in foreign wars. The Acts of Union in 1707 formally created the Kingdom of Great Britain, by melding the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland. Shortly afterwards, in 1714, the House of Stuart, which had ruled England and Scotland since 1603, failed, resulting in the crown passing to the House of Hanover, distant German relatives of King James I. For the rest of the period under discussion, the House of Hanover ruled Great Britain, including King George I (1714-1727), King George II (1727-1760), King George III (1760-1820), and King George IV (1820-1830), although George IV actually reigned as Prince Regent starting in 1811 because of his father's mental illness. Internally, there were still struggles over political authority, as Parliament and
various prime ministers together vied to transfer power from the monarch to themselves, but the power, both personal and constitutional, of the monarch remained unchallenged.⁴

The real focus of the British leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the building of an empire. Slowly but surely, the British expanded into North American and Asia. They established full control of North America through the “Seven Years’ War” (1755-1764), also known in the United States as the “French and Indian War,” and solidified their control over much of India in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. Following the loss of the American Colonies, the British picked up the pace of expansion, sending fleets into the Pacific in the late 1780s, which began the colonization of Australia and New Zealand. Soon after, the attention of British leaders was focused on Continental Europe as the French Revolution of 1789 erupted and Napoleon attempted to establish a new French empire through military conquest. Napoleon and the French would occupy British attention until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The destruction of the French left the British without a serious international rival, which allowed them to begin a century of rapid imperial expansion, particularly into Africa and Asia.⁵

⁴ See Namier (1962) and Weinbrot (1978) for a discussion of the struggles over power between Parliament, the prime ministers, and the Hanoverians kings.

⁵ The period between 1815 and 1914 has been termed Britain’s “imperial century.” For the term and a history of Britain’s imperial expansion, see Hyam, R. 2002. Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion. London: B. T. Batsford.
CHAPTER ONE:

Americans of the Founding Era and Latin Literature

Education

In examining what Latin texts Americans of the period between 1700 and 1825 were reading, records from the educational system, such as college entrance prerequisites and personal reminiscences of school days, can provide a solid baseline. Through these sources, we can see what texts were considered the central, foundational texts of any Latin education. This investigation will proceed in chronological order, passing from the Latin education in primary and secondary schools to the education in colleges and universities in order to identify the Latin authors students were required to read. This literary corpus will then be compared with the contemporary situation among British political leaders.

Many American students in this period started studying Latin at the age of eight, either in a primary school or with a tutor at home (Wolverton 2004: 36). Because of this early start in Latin, students in primary and secondary schools encountered an impressive and surprisingly varied number of texts. The criteria used by the teachers in selecting these texts seems to have been primarily twofold: to prepare students for college, particularly for passing the rigorous entrance examinations, and to inculcate good morals in their students.

The college entrance exams in Latin typically focused on the ability to translate Latin texts into English, and to describe and explain the rules of Latin grammar. For example, at King’s College, now Columbia University, applicants were required to “give a rational account of the Greek and Latin grammars, read three orations of Cicero and three books of Vergil’s

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6 Entrance requirements from Columbia University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard University will be considered.
7 This will be drawn primarily from the writings of James Madison.
Aeneid, and translate the first 10 chapters of John from Greek into Latin” (Wolverton 2004: 36). Therefore, most teachers placed great emphasis on drilling their students in grammatical rules and on reading the Latin texts that they knew the students would face in the entrance examinations.

One very common method of drilling students on rules of grammar was to have them translate aloud a passage of Latin into English, then write down that translation, and finally translate that English back into Latin, but in a different tense (Richard 1994: 13). The other common method was to teach students grammar in the context of a passage of Latin literature. Although teaching grammar in context is generally a pedagogically sound idea, the drilling, repetitive nature of this teaching of grammar turned many students against Vergil and Cicero; their texts, in particular Vergil’s Aeneid and Cicero’s letters and orations, were most commonly used for grammatical instruction (Richard 2008: 17). Reinhold (1984: 235) reports that there was widespread hostility to Vergil and that Vergil, when read, was not viewed as a poet, but “as a crabbed and difficult exercise in Latin” (1984: 223). Similarly, one student even remarked: “we were reading … the De senectute of Cicero – a beautiful book, but to our tutor it was neither more nor less than a series of pegs on which to hang Zumpt’s rules for the subjunctive mood” (Hofstadter 1952: 17).

With regard to preparing students to read the texts that they would be required to translate on the college entrance examinations, the two authors of greatest importance were Vergil and Cicero, since the two were prized for their style and content (Richard 2008: 17). Thus, the use of these texts as grammatical exercises served two purposes both to familiarize students with the texts and to solidify their knowledge of Latin grammar. In addition, since students generally started their Latin education at such an early age, the texts of a number of other authors are
recorded as being introduced in primary and secondary schools. Donald Robertson, a renowned educator who ran a school in King and Queen County, Virginia from 1758 to 1773 and taught both George Rogers Clark, “the Conqueror of the Old Northwest,” and John Tyler, the father of the future president of the same name, also included the works of Horace, Justinian, Tacitus, and Lucretius in his curriculum (Wolverton 2004: 36). James Madison, who attended Donald Robertson’s school from 1762 to 1767, recalls that, during his time at the school, in addition to Cicero and Vergil, the students read Horace, Justinian, Cornelius Nepos, Julius Caesar, Tacitus, Lucretius, Eutropius, and Phaedrus (Richard 1994: 18).

Furthermore, the Latin curriculum of the Academy of Philadelphia, which was a secondary school attached to the College of Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania, survives. This curriculum envisions four stages of Latin education, which do not necessarily correspond to any particular grade level. In the first stage, students are drilled in vocabulary and grammar and read *sententiae pueriles*. In the second stage, they read selections from the Vulgate Old Testament, Eutropius, Nepos, and parts of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The third stage consists of continued reading in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the reading of Vergil, Caesar, and Sallust. Finally, fourth-stage Latin students give Latin orations and read Horace, Terence, and Livy (Wolf 1976: 68-9). Reinhold (1984: 150) points out that Terence was the only classical dramatist commonly read, due to his inclusion as a secondary-school author. According to James Madison, the “common list of school classics” included Cato’s *Disticha*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Tristia*, the orations, letters, and *De officiis* of Cicero, Florus (or Eutropius or Justin), Horace, and Terence (Reinhold 1984: 26). Finally, Bederman (2008: 17) argues that Sallust and Tacitus frequently held great importance in the curricula of many schools, as some of the above lists indicate.
The reading of Sallust and Tacitus in schools ties directly into the second criteria by which Latin texts were selected: as a tool for moral instruction. Both historians were appreciated for their *sententiae* and Sallust, in particular, was appreciated for his view that moral failings underlie all historical crises (Reinhold 1984: 153). This Sallustian understanding of history, that only a virtuous people can preserve a free society, was held by many, if not most, of the Founding Fathers (Wolverton 2004: 36). Throughout the period between 1700 and 1825, classical histories, both Greek and Roman, were read and valued as texts that could teach morality. In fact, even Benjamin Rush, perhaps the Founding Father most bitterly opposed to the teaching of the Latin and Greek languages, argued that, although the ancient orators and poets are worthless and “impart pleasure only,” the ancient historians “contain much useful knowledge, capable of being applied to many useful purposes in life” (Bederman 2008: 29). Because of this view of history, Livy was also commonly read for moral instruction, although not as often as Tacitus or Sallust, because unlike Tacitus, who can easily be read as a critic of tyranny and empire, and unlike Sallust, who lived during the Republic and laments its corruption and disintegration, Livy was viewed as polluted by his relationship with Augustus and his uncritical acceptance of the end of the Republic (Wolverton 2004: 37). Similarly, Cicero, likely helped by the doubts he expresses about the traditional Roman religion in some of his writings, particularly in his *De divinatione* which is scathing in its attacks on much of Roman religion as no better than baseless superstition, was viewed as a moral exemplar by many Americans of the period between 1700 and 1825. Indeed, Cicero’s *De officiis* was second only to the writings of the historians as a text for instructing students in morals (Reinhold 1984: 150).

Outside of the historians and Cicero, the question of the morality of classical texts was complicated for educated Americans of that period. It is clear that Horace was viewed by many
as a moral instructor and as a source for moral maxims (Reinhold 1984: 151). However, the use of the poetry of other authors in schools was a matter of great contention because many educational institutions, particularly the colleges and universities, were run by various Christian denominations, who feared that these texts undermined Christianity and spread paganism (Reinhold 1984: 158). In fact, Cotton Mather, the famous Puritan minister, frequently attacked the reading of the Latin poets as a “conversation with the Muses that are no better than Harlots” (Reinhold 1976: 38). These doubts about the morality of many of the Latin poets, but not about the morality of the historians or Cicero, help to explain why Cicero and the historians were so widely appreciated in America, whereas many of the poets that seem to be more frequently read today were ignored or condemned at that time.

At the collegiate level, Harvard University’s entrance examination required applicants to be able to “read, construe, and parse Tully, Vergil, or such like classical authors” (Wolverton 2004: 36). As already mentioned, King’s College, now Columbia University, required applicants to translate three orations of Cicero and three books of the Aeneid (Wolverton 2004: 36). Likewise, applicants to the College of New Jersey, now Princeton, had to show “the ability to write Latin prose, translate Vergil, Cicero, and the Greek gospels and a commensurate knowledge of Latin and Greek grammar” (Wolverton 2004: 36). Finally, just as the curriculum of its feeder school, the Academy of Philadelphia, was preserved, an account of the Latin curriculum of the College of Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania, survives. The curriculum runs thus:

The freshmen in the first term read Homer’s Iliad, and Juvenal; in the second term Pindar, selected parts of Cicero and what had not been covered in Livy at the Academy; in the third term Thucydides or Euripides and Dionysius. The second-year-men, then called juniors, studied rhetoric and translated Longinus “critically” in the first term; read Horace’s Art of Poetry and Aristotle’s Poetica,
both “critically,” and selected parts of Quintilian in the second term; and in the third studied composition with Cicero’s Pro Milone and Demonsthenes’ Pro Ctesiphon as models … The seniors devoted the first term to Epictetus’ Enchiridion, Cicero’s De officiis and Tusculanae quaestiones and Xenophon’s Memorabilia. (Wolf 1976: 69-70)

This quote, as well as the evidence from the college entrance examinations in Wolverton (2004: 36), shows the importance that was placed on Cicero and Vergil. The curriculum of the College of Philadelphia also reveals some of the texts that were commonly read, once students had passed those entrance exams.

The Latin Texts That Influenced John Adams

Since this paper seeks to examine what Latin texts Americans of the period between 1700 and 1825 read and seemed to value, it is important to look at more than just the texts that were read in schools and colleges. Therefore, this paper will also draw evidence from John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, two of the most important Founding Fathers and the second and third presidents of the United States, respectively. This section, relying primarily on his own writings, will survey the Latin texts read by John Adams throughout his life in roughly chronological order, proceeding from his youth and education through the period of the Revolutionary War and George Washington’s presidency to the period after his own presidency, in which the majority of the correspondence between Adams and Jefferson is concentrated. Finally, the advice John Adams gave to his own children about what to read in Latin as well as the contents of his library will be examined.

As a young man, Adams thought of becoming a minister. Even on graduating from Harvard University in 1755 with a bachelor’s degree, John Adams had still not chosen a career and thought the ministry might be his true calling. Yet, he records in his diary under the date July
that although he spent four mornings a week studying the Bible, he spent the other three mornings reading a classical Latin author, and often this consisted of about forty lines of Vergil each day (Gunmere 1934: 205). John Adams’s journal provides a wealth of information concerning the Latin texts he was reading as a young man and which of those texts he found most important. For example, at one point he tellingly exhorts himself in his diary to “study Cicero, Seneca, and all other good moral writers” (Adams 1856, 1:45-6). Later, he writes: “December 21, 1758, read aloud Tully’s Four Orations against Catiline: the sweetness and grandeur of the sounds raises my spirits, opens my pores” (Adams 1856, 2:52). In fact, Adams’s appreciation for the power of Cicero would continue throughout his life; MacKendrick (1976: 106) humorously relates that it was well known that Adams, in the tumult of a family quarrel, would declaim Cicero aloud in Latin in order to “compose himself.”

In 1758, when Adams had finally decided upon pursuing a legal career, he was a member of Gridley’s social club of men aspiring to become lawyers, whose members read Justinian to learn the basics of the law and the Ad Herennium (at that time still attributed to Cicero) to shape their oratorical style (Gunmere 1934: 205). This appreciation of Justinian is corroborated by Robathan (1946: 92), who states that Adams, once he realized he wanted to become lawyer, committed to reading Justinian cover to cover. In addition, while studying at Harvard University, John Adams transferred large portions of Sallust’s Bellum Catilinae into his commonplace book8 (Richard 2008: 18). Nevertheless, it is clear that Adams, in his youth, was not solely focused on the writings of Cicero, the historians, and Justinian, since we know that, in 1758, when Adams

was 23, he would frequently spend time reading Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* with the wife of one of his
neighbors in Braintree, MA (Robathan 1946: 92).

As an adult, prior to his assumption of the presidency, Adams shows an appreciation of
many of the same authors from his school days. For example, in a letter to John Jay after the end
of the Revolutionary War, he writes: “I have assumed the *felicis animi immota tranquillitas*”
(“the unmoved tranquility of a happy mind,” Adams 1856, 7:606). This is a quote from Seneca’s
*De ira* 2.12.6, whom, as already mentioned, Adams mentioned as a teacher of good morals. Nor
does Adams forget that other great moralizing writer, Sallust, when he references *Bellum
Jugurthinum* 35.10 in the fourth *Novanglus* essay, subsequently attacking British imperial policies:
“is not the British constitution arrived nearly to that point where the Roman republic was when
Jugurtha left it, and pronounced it, ‘a venal city, ripe for destruction, if it can only find a
purchaser?’” (Adams 1856, 4:55-56) Adams also castigates newspaper reporters assigned to
cover the Revolutionary War for how lackluster their prose and their descriptions are when
compared with Sallust (Adams 1856, 9:437). Adams’s admiration of Cicero continued through
this period, as evidenced by the fact that he spent the summer of 1796, right before the
presidential election in which he was elected, reading various writings of Cicero (Richard 2008:
153). In particular, he records, “Sunday - I am reading a work of Cicero, that I remember not to
have read before. It is entitled, *M. Tullii Ciceronis, si Deo placet, Consolatio*; remarkable for an
ardent hope and confident belief of a future state” (Adams 1856, 3:423). He further relates that

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9 *Novanglus; or, A History of the Dispute in America, from Its Origin, in 1754, to the Present Time* was a set of
deleve essays published in the newspapers in 1774 and 1775 written by John Adams to rebut arguments that
Parliament had absolute authority over the colonies (Ferling 1992: 116-7).

10 Interestingly, it is now firmly established and widely agreed that this text is a forgery created by the Italian scholar
Carlo Sigonio, who claimed that he had found a non-fragmentary version of Cicero’s lost *Consolatio* (Forsyth 1999: 2).
he was also “reading Tully’s Offices. It is a treatise on Moral Obligation. Our word obligation answers nearer and better than duty to Cicero’s word, officium” (Adams 1856, 3:423).

Adams also found defense for the idea of mixed government\(^\text{11}\) in Cicero and Tacitus, whom he most frequently cites, along with Polybius and Dionysus of Halicarnassus, in his discussions of the benefits of mixed government (Walsh 1969: 25). Adams even famously calls the principles underlying the American Revolution, the principles “of Livy and Cicero” (Adams 1856, 4:15), citing Livy as an author who can provide an insight into the working of republican government. Finally, in his *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States*, published in 1787, Adams goes even further in his praise of Cicero and his importance, writing: “all the ages of the world have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher united than Cicero” (Adams 1856, 4:295). In 1813, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson discussing the use and importance of history, Adams states: “Cicero wrote two volumes of discourses on government, which perhaps were worth all the rest of his works” (Adams 1959: 351).\(^\text{12}\) This shows the importance that Adams placed on Cicero’s thoughts about government in comparison with his rhetorical and philosophical writings.

His writings of this time period also demonstrate that he had come to know other Latin authors. In November 1774, something he hears in a sermon reminds him of a note of the commentator on the words *robustus acri of Ode* 3.2 in his edition\(^\text{13}\) of Horace’s *Odes* (Adams 1856, 2:404). The commentator’s note stated that *pueros ab ineunte aetate assuefaciendos esse*

\(^\text{11}\) Mixed government is the idea advocated particularly by Polybius (6.11-8) and later Cicero (*Rep.* 1.69) that the best government contained monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic elements mixed together.

\(^\text{12}\) Adams does not specifically state to which work he refers. However, it is likely Cicero’s *De republica*. The reference to two volumes can be explained by the fact that much of the currently extant text of the *De republica* was rediscovered on a palimpsest by Cardinal Mai in 1819 (Powell 2006: vi).

\(^\text{13}\) Based on the catalogue of Adams’s books (Swift 1917: 123-4), this edition appears to be Ludovicus Desprez’s *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera*, first published in London in 1699; Adams’s particular edition was published in 1740, in London.
rei militari et vitae laboriosae (“boys from their youth must be made accustomed to military matters and to a labor-filled life,” Adams 1856, 2:404). This detailed memory of the commentary demonstrates that Adams had not only read Horace’s Odes by this time, but had read them in some depth. Soon after, in 1776, Adams writes to his wife to discuss epistolary style, since “it is worth the while of a person, obliged to write as much as I do, to consider the varieties of style” (Adams 1876: 195). In this discussion, he calls Cicero and Pliny the “two illustrious examples of the epistolary style” and writes at length about the fine style of their letters (Adams 1876: 196). Finally, Adams demonstrates a deep knowledge of the Thebaid of Statius and assumes that Jefferson is similarly familiar with the Thebaid, when, in a 1785 letter to Jefferson, he writes: “I do not believe the British navigation act can last long; at least, I am persuaded, if America has spirit enough, umbone repellere ubonem, that all other nations will soon follow her example” (Adams 1856, 8:341). This is a reference to Statius’s line: *iam clipeus clipeis, umbone repelliturumbo* (“now the shield is driven back by the shield, the boss by the boss,” Theb. 8.398), although with the grammar slightly altered so that it reads: “if America has spirit enough to drive back the boss with the boss” rather than “the boss is driven back by the boss.”

Adams’s personal reports and records from the time of his presidency (1797-1801) seem to indicate, by the paucity of references to Latin literature, that he did not have much time to spend reading Latin, likely because of the demands of presidential office. Therefore, the next period for which we have evidence of what Latin he was reading runs from the end of his presidency in 1801 to his death in 1826. Although the earlier part of this period is of less interest to this thesis, the latter part is more relevant. In 1812, the correspondence between Jefferson and Adams, which had ceased after the vitriolic campaign of 1800, when they ran for the presidency against each other, resumed.
Later in his life, the number of texts of Latin literature that Adams was familiar with expanded greatly. Nevertheless, during this time of his life, his appreciation of Horace deepens and Robathan (1946: 94-5) even argues that Adams considered Horace his favorite Roman author in this period. Regardless of whether this is accurate or not, Adams does indeed reference Horace’s *Ars poetica* in a letter to Jefferson, on March 10, 1823. Criticizing Napoleon, Adams writes that Napoleon “*iura negat sibilat nihil non arrogat armis*” (“denies and hisses at the laws and there is nothing he does not claim by arms,” Adams 1959: 590), a reference to *iura negat sibi nata nihil non arrogat armis* (“he denies that the laws have arisen for him and there is nothing he does not claim by arms,” *Ars P.* 122).\(^{14}\) Similarly, he alludes to Horace’s *Epistles* in another letter to Jefferson, in which he says that his doctor’s pen “*labitur et labetur*” (Adams 1959: 525), when his doctor claims that Adams is in good health. This is a direct quote of Horace’s *labitur et labetur* (“it slips and it will slip,” *Epist.* 1.2.43). In addition, despite Robathan’s argument that Horace was Adams’s favorite Roman author, Adams continued to place great value on Cicero, re-reading Cicero’s *De senectute* every year of his retirement (Richard 1994: 63). Moreover, in a discussion of death with Jefferson in December of 1813 when Adams was 78 years old and Jefferson was 70, he quotes from Cicero’s *Tusculanae disputationes* to comfort Jefferson about their imminent deaths (Adams 1959: 410), writing: *emori nolo sed me mortuum esse nihil aestimo* (“I do not want to die but I care not at all that I am dead,” *Tusc.* 1.8).

At this point, some new authors begin to appear in his references, including Terence, Quintus Curtius, Juvenal, and Vergil. In an 1817 letter to Jefferson concerning the great number

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\(^{14}\) The difference between *sibilat* and *sibi nata* appears to be entirely Adams’s own invention because this line in his edition of Horace’s works, Ludovicus Desprez’s *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera*, reads *sibi nata*. Therefore, the difference between *sibilat* and *sibi nata* is likely not due to errors in the manuscripts or to editorial decisions.
of enemies he has made over the years, Adams writes: “Yet I never can be a misanthrope. *Homo sum* [I am a human]. I must hate myself before I can hate my fellowmen, and that I cannot and will not do” (Adams 1856, 10:255). Those two words clearly refer to the very famous line of Terence: *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto* (“I am a human: I consider nothing of humanity separated from me,” Haut. 77). Adams also writes to Benjamin Waterhouse about his reading: “I have very lately read over again and with attention Quintus Curtius” (Robathan 1946: 97). Although Quintus Curtius is rarely, if ever, mentioned in current Latin curricula, his *Historiae Alexandri magni* was well regarded in the Middle Ages and clearly was valued by Adams enough for him to read it twice and “with attention.” Adams, in a letter to Benjamin Waterhouse in July of 1811, also demonstrates his knowledge of Juvenal, by calling Samuel Dexter a “*rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno*” (“a rare bird in the lands and most similar to a black swan,” Robathan 1946: 92), a reference to Juvenal 6.165. In Juvenal, this line represents the speaker’s view of the likelihood of a good woman who is worthy of being married, meaning that a good woman is not only rare, but non-existent.16

It is at this point, late in his life and after his presidency, that Adams begins to make a few references to Vergil. For example, he cites *Aeneid* 4.441-9 in a letter to Jefferson shortly after his presidential term ends in 1801, about his feeling that he stands alone against the attacks of numerous enemies (Adams 1856, 9:310):

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\begin{align*}
Ac \ velut, \ annoso \ validam \ cum \ robore \ quercum \\
Alpini \ Boreæ \ nunc \ hinc \ nunc \ flatibus \ illinc \\
Eruere \ inter \ se \ certant; \ it \ stridor; \ et \ alte \\
Consternunt \ terram \ concusso \ stipite \ frondes; \\
Ipsa \ häret \ scopulis; \ et \ quantum \ vertice \ ad \ auras \\
\end{align*}
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15 Samuel Dexter had been Adams’s Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury, before abandoning the Federalist Party, Adams’s party, to join the Democratic-Republican Party, Jefferson’s party.
16 Black swans did not live in Europe, Asia, or Africa and were therefore fantastical, non-existent creatures to the Romans. Europeans did not encounter black swans until the 17th century when they were discovered in Australia (Watson 2014: 128).
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit;
Haud secus assiduis hinc atque hinc vocibus heros
Tunditur, et magno persentit pectore curas.
Mens immota manet

And just as when the Alpine north winds now on this side now on
that contend among themselves to tear up the oak tree tough with
old strength, a creaking goes forth, and, with the trunk having been
shaken deeply, the leaves cover the ground; the tree itself clings to
the crags; and it stretches as far into Tartarus with its roots as it
does into the upper airs with its crown; not at all otherwise is the
hero buffeted on this side and that by constant cries, and he feels
the pains in this great chest. His mind remains unmoved.

This particular passage describes Aeneas’s response to Anna’s pleadings that Aeneas remain in
Carthage and not seek Italy. The fact that the only other major reference to Vergil in John
Adams’s life is his statement in his diary that, after graduating Harvard University, he would
often read about forty lines of Vergil a day seems to imply that Vergil was not one of the authors
most commonly read by Adams; in his political writings, he preferred to cite Cicero and the
historians, while, in his letters, he generally seems to have preferred drawing quotes from
Horace, Sallust, and Cicero. It is not entirely clear why this is so, but it may be related to its
prominent use in introductory Latin education, which not only forever associated Vergil with
childhood, but also left behind the traumatic memories of the grammatical drills with which the
_Aeneid_ was usually connected. It may also be connected to Vergil’s close connections to
Augustus, which made many people avoid reading Vergil and will be discussed in greater detail
in chapter two (Weinbrot 1978).17

The next important source for Adams’s views on Latin literature comes from what he
wrote about the education of his son, the future President John Quincy Adams, including what
advice he gave him; this reveals which texts he believes would be most beneficial for his

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17 See discussion on pages 48-50.
education and future career. In a letter to Elbridge Gerry in 1778, John Adams writes that he recently spent time with his son, who was only 11 years old at that time, helping him to translate Cicero’s *In Catilinam* and Horace’s *Carmen saeculare*. This is intriguing considering the opposition to Horace, like Vergil, because of his connections to Augustus (Weinbrot 1978). (Adams 1856, 3:196-7). Later, in 1781, while still a young man, John Quincy Adams traveled to St. Petersburg to serve as an aide for three years to Francis Dana, the American diplomat to Russia. In 1782, John Adams wrote to Dana, asking him to remind his son to “translate Sallust and write to his papa” (Adams 1856, 7:544).

John Adams also advises his son that “In Company with Sallust, Cicero, Tacitus, and Livy, you will learn Wisdom and Virtue. You will see them represented with all the Charms which Language and Imagination can exhibit, and Vice and Folly painted in all their Deformity and Horror” (Adams 1973: 118). As should be evident, John Adams is advising his son to read the same texts that he himself read growing up, thus confirming the importance these texts held.

In a letter recommending John Quincy Adams for admission to Harvard University, his father summarizes his son’s classical education as it currently stands: “[he] knows the *Aeneid*, Suetonius, Sallust, Tacitus, Horace, some Ovid, Caesar, [and] Tully’s *Orations*” (Adams 1856, 9:530). Just as John Adams kept a commonplace book, John Quincy Adams kept a commonplace book, which contains 166 quotes from Juvenal’s *Satires* (Reinhold 1984: 153). Finally, when John Quincy Adams was starting on his political career, his father advises him to assume the office of State Attorney for Suffolk rather than United States District Attorney, to allow more time to read Cicero rather than deal with political matters (Adams 1856, 1:463).
The last source of evidence for what Latin texts John Adams was reading comes from his library, for which copious records, including a complete catalogue, exist. Robathan (1946: 91) summarizes John Adams’s library in this way:

The Greek and Latin classics are represented by almost a hundred volumes in the original … As we might expect, the classical historians and philosophers outnumber the poets and dramatists, though there is a sprinkling of the latter. One of the few works of fiction in this library is the *Satyricon* of Petronius

This is a useful summary of the contents of John Adams’s library, but I think that a list of the authors present can also be useful in showing the scope of the authors in his collection. His library included Latin volumes of: Ammianus Marcellinus, Caesar, the *Historia Augusta*, Cicero, Quintus Curtius, Dares Phrygius, Horace, Justin,¹⁸ Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Manilius, Cornelius Nepos, Ovid, Petronius, Plautus, Pliny the Younger, Quintilian, Sallust, Seneca, Silius Italicus, Suetonius, Tacitus, Terence, and Vergil (Swift 1917).

**The Latin Texts That Influenced Thomas Jefferson**

Like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson had a great appreciation of the Classics, but the two men evaluated certain Latin authors differently. Therefore, this section seeks to establish what texts Thomas Jefferson read and why. First, the contents of his library, based upon the extant catalogue, will be reviewed. Then, Jefferson’s letters to Peter Carr, his nephew, and to Francis Eppes, his grandson, in which he outlines the ideal classical curriculum for the boys, will be examined. Finally, the bulk of this section will present Jefferson’s views on various classical

Latin authors, as found in his letters, commonplace book, and his use of Latin quotations in other writings.

Interestingly, because of financial difficulties that plagued him his entire life, Thomas Jefferson sold the majority of his library, about 6,000 books, in 1814, to the Library of Congress, after its original meagre collection was burned in the War of 1812 (Library of Congress 2006). Nevertheless, Jefferson remained in debt until the end of his life, which necessitated that, upon his death, all his possessions be auctioned off. This particular catalogue (Poor 1829) lists all of the books in Jefferson’s library at the time of his death. However, because he had already sold so many volumes, this list also demonstrates the importance of these books to Jefferson, since he either had held them back from being sold or had purchased them a second time. Jefferson’s library included Latin volumes of: Ammianus Marcellinus, Apicius, Caesar, Cicero, Cornelius Nepos, Eutropius, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Minucius Felix, Ovid, Pliny the Younger, Quintus Curtius, Sallust, Seneca the Elder, Seneca the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, Terence, Valerius Maximus, Velleius Paterculus, and Vergil (Poor 1829).

Jefferson took an interest in the education of his relatives, particularly his nephew, Peter Carr, and grandson, Francis Eppes, and wrote letters advising them on the best texts to include in their Latin education. These letters provide valuable insight into his thinking and a snapshot of the educational situation with regard to Latin in 1785 and 1820. Thomas Jefferson writes to Peter Carr in 1785:

I have long ago digested a plan for you, suited to the circumstances in which you will be placed … take up ancient history in the detail, reading the following books, in the following order: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophonist Anabasis, Arrian, Quintus Curtius, Diodorus Siculus, Justin. This shall form the first stage of your historical reading, and is all I need mention to you now. The next will be of Roman history … In Greek and Latin poetry, you have read or will read at school, Vergil, Terence, Horace … In
morality, read Epictetus, Xenophontis Memorabilia, Plato's Socratic dialogues, Cicero's philosophies, Antoninus, and Seneca.
(Jefferson 1853, 5:84-5)

It is interesting that Jefferson states only that they will read “Roman history,” without specifying which authors he means. This is especially confusing in the period between 1700 and 1825 because the list of Latin texts that were considered historical writings was vast, including Florus, Suetonius, Caesar, Velleius Paterculus, Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and Ammianus Marcellinus. Nevertheless, it seems that then, as now, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus were so well established as the canon of premier Roman historians that such specificity was unnecessary. It is also odd that Catullus and Ovid are passed over, while Jefferson includes Cicero, about whom, as we will see later, he had mixed feelings, arguing that Cicero’s rhetorical style was unfit for the American republic. However, Boutin (2011: 407) points out that these recommendations fit exactly with the recommendations of Quintilian, who highly praises Cicero (Inst. 10.1.105), criticizes Ovid as too lascivious and only rarely good (Inst. 10.1.88), and says that Horace is the only lyric poet worth reading (Inst. 10.1.96). These recommendations likely point to Jefferson’s familiarity with Quintilian’s writing and his recommendations. Nevertheless, this curriculum coincides nicely with the criteria outlined in the discussion of how teachers selected texts; history and philosophers are read for moral instruction, whereas the poets are read because they are the central texts upon which college entrance examinations are frequently based.20

In a similar, albeit shorter, letter in 1820, Jefferson advises Francis Eppes, his grandson, on the ideal classical curriculum: “in Latin read Livy, Caesar, Sallust, Tacitus, Cicero’s Philosophies, and some of his Orationes, in prose; and Vergil, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Horace, Terence & Juvenal for poetry” (Jefferson 1820). This curriculum is generally similar to the one

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19 This discussion occurs on pages 26-7.
20 For an extended discussion of these criteria, see pages 8-11.
he recommends to Peter Carr, except that he also recommends Cicero’s *Orations* (whereas before he only recommended Cicero’s philosophical writings) and now adds Ovid and Juvenal to the list of poets. Since the letter to Francis Eppes was written 35 years after the letter to Peter Carr, a number of reasons could be put forward as an explanation for these changes. With regard to Cicero, Jefferson could simply have been bowing to the pressure of his times, which valued Cicero highly, and to the pressure of John Adams, who cherished Cicero throughout his life and with whom Jefferson became increasingly close in his later years. As for Ovid and Juvenal, reading his personal recollections and scholarly analyses of his writings gives the impression that Jefferson’s appreciation of poetry in general grew as he got older.

It is clear that Jefferson esteemed the writing of all the Roman historians highly. Richard (2008: 18-9) reports that throughout his life Jefferson argued that the speeches of Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus should be considered as the best models for American oratory. He felt that, although he contained great moral wisdom, Cicero’s flowery, ornate speaking style was not only ill-suited to a modern democracy, but possibly also dangerous to the health of that democracy, since such ornate speech could turn the general citizenry away from politics: “The models for that oratory which is to produce the greatest effect by securing the attention of hearers and readers, are to be found in Livy, Tacitus, Sallust, and most assuredly not in Cicero” (Jefferson 1853, 12:343). His appreciation of the Roman historians extended even to Justin, whom he helped his granddaughter, Ann Randolph, translate as part of her education in Latin (Kerrison 2013: 382).

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21 See Colbourn (1958), Gunmere (1934), Jefferson (1808), Jefferson (1853), Kerrison (2013), Richard (2008), and Wright (1943). The evidence from these sources will be discussed in greater detail throughout this section.  
22 Kerrison (2013: 356-7) points out that Jefferson did not allow his daughters to learn Latin, considering it unbecoming for women to study the classical languages. For example, Martha Jefferson did read Livy’s *Ab urbe condita*, but in a sixteenth century Italian translation rather than in Latin. However, these restrictions did not survive to the next generation: “Martha Randolph [née Jefferson] could also ‘lay siege’ to her father when she wanted something, and one way or another she secured Latin for her daughters” (382). Kerrison (351) also writes that “Martha’s daughters would read ancient history in the original Latin, speak French and read Spanish with ease, and follow a curriculum their grandfather recommended for boys.”
In fact, when a vault of lost manuscripts was discovered in Athens, he wrote in a letter to Joseph Coolidge, Jr.: “If true, we may recover what had been lost of Diodorus Siculus, Polybius, and Dio Cassius; I would rather, however, it should have been of Livy, Tacitus, and Cicero”

(Jefferson 1853, 18:336-7)

That Jefferson’s favorite author by far was Tacitus is well established. Jefferson was not speaking hyperbolically when he wrote in a letter to Anne Cary Randolph Bankhead, his granddaughter: “Tacitus I consider as the first writer in the world without a single exception. His book is a compound of history and morality of which we have no other example.” (Jefferson 1808). Similarly, in an 1823 letter to Edward Everett, a professor of Greek at Harvard University, Jefferson in a lengthy discussion of Greek and Latin writes:

I acknowledge myself at the same time not an adept in the metaphysical speculations of grammar. By analyzing too minutely we often reduce our subject to atoms of which the mind loses its hold. Nor am I a friend to a scrupulous purism of style. I readily sacrifice the niceties of syntax to euphony and strength. It is by boldly neglecting the rigorisms of grammar that Tacitus has made himself the strongest writer in the world. The Hypercritics call him barbarous; but I should be sorry to exchange his barbarisms for their wire-drawn purisms. Some of his sentences are as strong as language can make them. Had he scrupulously filled up the whole of their syntax, they would have been merely common. (Jefferson 1823)

In his retirement, Jefferson wrote in a number of letters to his friends that he had stopped reading the newspapers so that he could spend more time reading Tacitus (Wright 1943: 228). In addition, like Adams, Jefferson was a trained lawyer; unlike Adams, who considered the foundation of law to lie in the Roman Empire, civil law, and the writings of Justinian, Jefferson believed that the foundation of American law should be English common law, which he viewed as originating from the ancient Germans, about whom his favorite author Tacitus provided a great deal of information in his Germania (Colbourn 1958: 61). Colbourn (1958: 60) remarks
that “Jefferson learned that the Saxons who invaded and populated England much resembled the ‘ancient Germans, as described by Tacitus,’ and brought with them their habits of German democracy, thus establishing an elective monarchy and annual parliaments.” The final proof of Jefferson’s undying affection for Tacitus can be found in the fact that he specially commissioned the printing of one copy of a book he himself made by collating the Latin text of Tacitus with the translation of Thomas Gordon, who had inserted additional polemics of his own creation on the evils of tyranny (Colbourn 1958: 61).

Jefferson was conflicted in his evaluation of Cicero’s writing. As discussed above, Jefferson did not think that Cicero’s oratory ought to serve as a model for American orators because he felt that Cicero’s oratory was so ornate and overwrought that it would drive regular citizens away from participation in government.23 Jefferson further criticizes Cicero’s oratory in one of his letters, saying: “I doubt if there is a man in the world who can now read one of his orations through but as a piece of task-work” (Jefferson 1853, 12:343). However, this is by no means the whole picture. Jefferson, in his youth, copied long passages from Cicero into his commonplace book (Wright 1943: 227). During the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, Gunmere (1934: 206) argues that much of their discussion was based on Cicero’s *De republica*, relying on that work as a foundation and source for ideas about the correct working of government. Jefferson was also familiar with Cicero’s *Tusculanae disputationes* and appreciated its philosophical implications (Chinard 1932: 138). Finally, in his old age, in a letter to Adams, Jefferson writes: “I have been amusing myself latterly with reading the voluminous letters of Cicero. They certainly breathe the purest effusions of an exalted patriot, while the parricide

23 Similar concerns are reflected in the ancient conflict between the ‘Asiatic’ and ‘Attic’ rhetorical styles. Cicero himself discusses in the *Brutus* (51, 325) and the *Orator* (69) that certain people found his speaking style too florid and ornate (i.e. ‘Asiatic’) and instead preferred the simpler style of fifth century Attic oratory.
Caesar is left in odious contrast” (Jefferson 1853, 15:232). He even imitates Cicero’s epistolary style in the closing of his letter to Adams, saying: “cura ut valeas et tibi persuadeas carissimum te mihi esse” (“take care that you be well and may you persuade yourself that you are most dear to me,” Jefferson 1853, 15:235), which is similar to the end of many of Cicero’s letters, but is strikingly similar to the end of Epistulae ad familiares 14.3: cura ut valeas et ita tibi persuadeas mihi te carius nihil esse nec umquam fuisse (“take care that you be well and may you thus persuade yourself that to me nothing is nor ever has been more dear than you”). All of this makes clear that, contrary to the claims of some who argue that Jefferson found little of use in Cicero’s writings in general, Jefferson actually appreciated much of the Ciceronian corpus except for the oratory.

After Tacitus and Cicero, Horace was the Latin author Jefferson seemed to most esteem. Just as in the case of Cicero, selections from Horace made up a large portion of the quotations found in his commonplace book (Wright 1943: 227). Chinard (1932: 136) even records that Jefferson, in his school days, liked to stretch out under an oak tree on campus and read Horace. It is also interesting that, as he had done with the Bible, Jefferson edited Horace’s Epode 2, removing everything from the poem that he felt was not applicable to the environment of Virginia (Wright 1943: 227). In particular, Jefferson seems to have enjoyed the pastoral or rural aspects of Horace. Chinard (1932: 143) relates that Jefferson was especially fond of Horace’s statement: o rus, quando ego te adspiciam (“o countryside, when will I see you?” Sat. 2.6.60) Lastly, Jefferson records in his letters that, in his retirement, he gave up newspapers to have more time to read not just Tacitus, as already mentioned, but also Horace (Wright 1943: 228).

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24 Thomas Jefferson, believing that everything supernatural in the Gospels was spurious, literally cut up the text of the Gospels and pasted together an ‘edited’ version, which contained primarily the moral teachings of Jesus. This book survives and is on display at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History (National Museum of American History 2011)
There are also a number of other poets and prose writers that feature in Jefferson’s writings. In addition to Horace, there is evidence that Jefferson read Terence, Vergil, Catullus, and Martial. First, quotations from both Vergil and Terence appear in his commonplace book (Wright 1943: 227). Second, in a letter to John Adams, Jefferson demonstrates a knowledge of Vergil’s *Eclogues*, quoting *Eclogues* 3.104 (Jefferson 1853, 15:235), which, like the *Georgics*, are rarely mentioned by Americans of the period between 1700 and 1825; it seems that, in this period, the *Aeneid* was the only work of Vergil that was widely read. This appreciation of the *Eclogues* is very fitting for a man like Jefferson who lived on a large country estate. Third, Chinard (1932: 136) recounts that, in addition to Horace, Vergil and Catullus were Jefferson’s favorite poets in his school days. Finally, in yet another letter from Jefferson to Adams, dated to the year 1820, Jefferson adapts a quotation from Martial in discussing what they both fear to be their imminent deaths (Adams 1959: 563). In particular, he describes himself as one “qui *sumnum nec metuit diem nec optat*” (“who neither fears nor hopes for the final day,”) which references that last line of Martial 10.47, a poem giving advice on how to live a good life: *sumnum nec metuas diem nec optas* (“may you neither fear nor hope for the final day.”)

Jefferson, like many of his contemporaries, read Seneca the Younger for his moral teachings, as he tells us: “Seneca is indeed a fine moralist … giving us on the whole a great deal of sound and practical morality” (Jefferson 1853, 15:219-220). There are two other prose authors which seem to reflect more personal interests. Jefferson’s interest in architecture, particularly classical architecture, led him to spend a great deal of time reading and studying Vitruvius (Wright 1943: 231). Similarly, Jefferson’s desire to run his plantation successfully and his love of the countryside made Columella’s *De re rustica* one of his favorite books (Richard 1994:

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25 This is based on the fact that I infrequently encountered mentions of the works of Vergil in my reading of both primary sources and scholarly accounts.
This love of the countryside also likely contributed to his appreciation of Vergil’s *Eclogues*.

**Evidence from Other Sources**

The last piece of this complex puzzle, the Latin reading of a handful of other prominent Founding Fathers, including Hamilton, Madison, John Marshall, and Washington, will be reviewed, as well as some records from publishers and booksellers, which will provide some evidence as to which Latin texts were most popular among Americans of the period between 1700 and 1825.

Alexander Hamilton seems to be unique among the Founding Fathers in his appreciation of Julius Caesar. Americans usually considered him to be the nemesis and bogeyman of democratic government. Richard (1994: 91) states simply that “the founders’ greatest villain was Julius Caesar.” He based his argument on the fact that James Otis, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Abigail Adams, Christopher Gadsden, Josiah Quincy, and Thomas Jefferson all used the name “Caesar” as a grievous insult and as one of the worst names you could possibly call your opponents. Caesar was, rightly or wrongly, seen as the single greatest destroyer of liberty and republican government (Richard 1994: 91-3). Nevertheless, Alexander Hamilton’s son describes how his father’s appreciation for Caesar was evident from his manner when reading Caesar: “with what emphasis and fervor did he read of battles: when translating the commentaries of Caesar, it would seem as though Caesar were present; for as much as any man that ever lived he had the soldier’s temperament’” (Owens 1984: 279). However, Hamilton, like many of his fellow Americans, preferred Cicero. This is exemplified best by his use of the pseudonym “Tully” in his newspaper editorials condemning the Whiskey Rebellion, which was deliberately
meant to remind readers of Cicero’s *In Catilinam* (Adair 1955: 284). Adair (1995: 284) further argues that, although Hamilton makes no other direct references to Cicero, his selection of this pseudonym was clearly meant to signal to educated readers the necessity of a strong response to the Whiskey Rebellion, such as Cicero mounted in the conspiracy of Catiline.

James Madison, like his fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson, favored Tacitus. His commonplace book was filled with quotations from Tacitus, condemning the evils of tyranny and the vices of the Roman emperors (Richard 2008: 18). Furthermore, in 1793, when the French were attempting to draw the United States into the French Revolutionary Wars with Great Britain, Madison made use of the pseudonym “Helvidius” (Adair 1955: 283). He had taken this name from Helvidius Priscus, whom Tacitus, in his *Historiae*, had painted as something of a hero and patriot in his opposition to imperial power (Adair 1955: 283). The articles in which he used this pseudonym were in response to articles written by Hamilton, under the pseudonym “Pacificus,” which advocated peace, but argued that all power in foreign policy ought to reside in the president, not Congress. Therefore, Madison’s use of the pseudonym “Helvidius” served as a signal to educated readers that the concentration of such power in the hands of the president would lead to presidential tyranny that was tantamount to imperial tyranny.

This review of the Latin texts valued by the Founding Fathers ends with two more Virginians: George Washington and John Marshall. Richard (1994: 94) states that George Washington in his youth sought to model himself after Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. As revolutionary ideals grew in America and Caesar became ever more odious to many Americans (Richard 1994: 94), George Washington felt pressured to abandon Caesar and instead turn towards Cincinnatus as his role model. As interesting as this is, it says nothing about his classical learning, because Washington could read about these men from translations. In fact,
catalogues of Washington’s library reveal that only about 1% of his book were classical in nature (MacKendrick 1976: 102). Nevertheless, as a member of a very classically oriented society, he was well aware of Latin literature and we can gain some measure of what Latin texts he found important in a record of the Latin books he purchased for his stepson, Jack Custis. In 1761, when Jack Custis was 7 years old and just starting his classical education, George Washington gave him as a gift the following Latin books: Phaedrus, Eutropius, Sallust, Horace, Terence, and Cornelius Nepos (Richard 1994: 35). John Marshall, who wrote a popular biography of George Washington and was Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1801 to 1835, was, like many other Founding Fathers, classically educated. Marshall mentions reading Horace and Livy, but valued Cicero very highly, arguing that Cicero’s *De officiis* was “among the most valuable treatises in the Latin language, a salutary discourse on the duties and qualities proper to a republican gentleman” (MacKendrick 1976: 103).

In a 1741 catalogue of English translations of Latin works on sale, Cicero dominated the list with *De finibus*, *De natura deorum*, *De senectute*, *De amicitia*, *De officiis*, and *Tusculanae disputationes* (Wolf 1976: 52-3). In addition, Dryden’s Vergil and Juvenal, Creech’s Horace and Lucretius, Rowe’s Lucan and Sallust, Bladen’s Caesar, and Thomas Gordon’s Tacitus, which Thomas Jefferson had so prized, were for sale (Wolf 1976: 52-3). In a record of some shipments of books in the original Latin from London to Philadelphia in 1767 and 1768, there are listed six copies each of Cicero’s *Orations*, Vergil, Horace, and Terence (Wolf 1976: 72). Moreover, in 1774, William Hall published a two-page advertisement of books his bookstore was offering for sale. This list includes: Vergil, Horace, Justin, Terence, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Caesar, Cicero’s *Orations*, Cornelius Nepos, Sallust, Florus, Eutropius, Suetonius, Tacitus, Livy, Horace and Ovid with Minelley’s notes, Phaedrus’s *Fables*, Quintus Curtius, Juvenal, and Cato’s *Disticha*
(Wolf 1976: 72-3). By 1806, American editions of the Latin texts of Caesar, Horace, Sallust, Vergil, and Ovid had been published, likely because the demand for Latin texts in the United States meant that it was more profitable to have editions printed rather than import them from Great Britain (Richard 1984: 186).

**Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has shown that Cicero’s orations and Vergil’s *Aeneid* were highly regarded in the education system for the elegance of their grammar and style; they were almost always included in school curricula. The writings of Sallust and Tacitus, primarily for the perceived moral content of their works, were frequently included in school curricula. John Adams considered Cicero important for his moral teaching and philosophical insight. He used his writings as a source of quotes and inspiration upon which he could base his political views and arguments. Similarly, Sallust was mined by John Adams for his moral and political views. Horace rounds out the list of the Roman authors Adams most commonly cites or mentions reading. As for Thomas Jefferson, it is clear from many sources that he considered Tacitus “the strongest writer in the world” (Jefferson 1823). Jefferson did not consider Cicero’s rhetorical style fit for a republican form of government, but, nevertheless, adopted some of his philosophical and political views. Lastly, Horace’s poems particularly appealed to Jefferson, since as a country gentleman he found great commonality with the descriptions of country life. Having established what Latin texts the Founding Fathers were reading and having conjectured some reasons as to why these texts were read, this paper will now turn to the Latin texts the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 were reading in order to establish,
through a contrast, the way that societal and governmental differences affected these choices.
CHAPTER TWO:

British Political Figures of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

and Latin Literature

For a number of reasons, determining what Latin texts the British of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were reading is much more difficult than is the case for the Americans. First, while the period of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is one of the most important and most well studied in American history, in British history, it has been viewed as something of a dull era\(^{26}\) between the tumults of the seventeenth century, such as the English Civil War (1642-1651) and the Glorious Revolution (1688), and the “glorious” empire building of the latter nineteenth century, especially under Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Therefore, whereas there are numerous scholarly works about various aspects of the lives of the Founding Fathers, including their classical education and classical reading, comparatively little is written about the political leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Great Britain.

Among the primary sources, there is a dearth of evidence; although almost all the private papers and letters of the Founding Fathers are widely published and easily accessible, the same cannot be said about the papers of the British kings and prime ministers, such as King George III, Lord North, and William Pitt the Younger.

Second, unlike the American Founding Fathers, who, on the whole, looked to the classical civilizations, especially Rome, as their primary referent, the British of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries somewhat surprisingly, preferred to cite French references and to

\(^{26}\) For this view, see Sambrook, J. 1993. The Eighteenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1700-1789. New York: Longman. On page 86, he advances the view that, although this period has traditionally been viewed as “devoid of exciting or pregnant political events,” this view is not entirely justified in his opinion.
quote French rather than Latin. Furthermore, the few references they do make to Latin literature gradually disappear as the love of all things Greek begins to take hold of British society, starting in the late eighteenth century (Stray 1996: 78). In summary, among the British kings and prime ministers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there are not figures, like Adams and Jefferson, that stand out as leaders and whose writings include quotes and allusions to Latin literature. King George III, Lord North, and William Pitt the Younger stand out as the three most important men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We know they all studied Latin and Greek because of the schools they attended, yet classical literature was not the source of wisdom, inspiration, and delight to them that it was to many of the Founding Fathers. Therefore, evidence for what Latin literature the British were reading must be drawn from much more disparate sources. Whereas for the Americans evidence comes primarily from educational records and two important historical figures, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, evidence for the British of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries will be drawn from the writings of many different important historical figures, as well as records from schools of all levels, newspapers, and the reception of the Roman authors by later English authors. These scattered pieces of evidence will be arranged by Latin author.

**Tacitus**

Although, as we will see, my research points to the fact that Horace, Juvenal, and Cicero were more commonly read than any single one of the historians, historical texts were the most commonly read genre of Latin literature. As has already been shown in chapter one, a greater range of historical texts was included in references, commonplace books, and curricula in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than might commonly be encountered by most students
of Latin today. The list of Latin historians that were read by the British of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries includes Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, Florus, Quintus Curtius, Suetonius, Caesar, Velleius Paterculus, Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, Cornelius Nepos, and Ammianus Marcellinus. Nevertheless, not all of these authors were read with the same frequency. In fact, Tacitus stands out as the most read author by far with Sallust and Caesar a distant second and third.

Tacitus was widely regarded in Great Britain between 1700 and 1825 as the greatest historical writer, which is intriguingly similar to Jefferson’s opinion of Tacitus. Weinbrot (1978: 34-5) argues that, although Livy had been the preeminent historian in the seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century Livy had mostly been displaced in favor of Tacitus. Tacitus held a prominent place in the curricula at both the secondary and university levels. Philip Yorke, the third Earl of Hardwicke, recalled that his education, which was directed primarily towards preparing him for a life in government, read large portions of Tacitus with his tutor (Searby 1997: 557). Similarly, Samuel Butler, who, in 1798, became headmaster of Shrewsbury, one of the most prestigious boarding schools in all of Great Britain, refocused the curriculum on Tacitus and Cicero and through this curriculum revivified the school, which had been slowly falling into disrepair and disrepute (Clarke 1959: 76). Clarke (1959: 76) argues that his focus on the teaching of Tacitus and Cicero made the Shrewsbury School the leading classical school in the country, which, in turn, drew in many new students and their tuition money. Tacitus was also important

27 Admittedly, some of the authors here listed are not historians per se, but are grouped with the historians because they wrote texts that have historical aspects. For example, Cornelius Nepos’s De viris illustribus is technically biography, not history, but since the biographies describe historical characters and events, it has been classed with the historians.

28 This is a remarkable transformation and Clarke (1959: 76-8) lists a number of changes that contributed to the turnaround: first, he began to teach ancient history and geography, subjects which had been neglected before his time; second, he introduced rigorous, sight translation examinations modelled on those the students would encounter at Cambridge, better preparing students for success in college; third, he apparently had the ability to inspire students with a deep love for the Classics.
enough to be included as one of five Latin authors tested on the entrance exam to Haileybury, the East India Company’s college for training administrators for the British Empire in India (Vasunia 2004: 39). Furthermore, Tacitus was one of the authors that Oxford required those aiming for high honors to study (Clarke 1959: 99), and Magdalen College, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford, capped the fourth year curriculum with the reading of *Annales* books 1-6 (Clarke 1959: 71-2). William Wordsworth (1770-1850) recalled that one of his first examinations upon entrance to Cambridge concerned what he refers to as “Tacitus’s *De moribus Germanorum*” (Searby 1997: 566). Finally, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, famously praised Tacitus as “the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts” (Weinbrot 1978: 28). Gibbon also records that he viewed Tacitus, along with Terence, Vergil, and Horace, as worthy of being read through three times (Gibbon 1966: 76). Nevertheless, Gibbon quotes Tacitus only once in his autobiography, which pales in comparison to the eleven quotations from Horace as well as numerous references to other authors.

Tacitus was also respected in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for the ways that his work could be utilized for political purposes. Thomas Gordon (1691-1750), the author of the most highly regarded translation of Tacitus of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Browning 1982: 180), esteemed both Tacitus’s writings and their use as a weapon against tyranny. He even used Tacitus to defend the idea that a balanced parliamentary system would be the best system of government. He based this interpretation on Tacitus’s repeated criticisms of the weakness of the Senate in the face of the tyranny of the emperors (Browning 1982: 180). Specifically, Gordon states in one of his introductory discourses: “we are blessed with that form of government which Tacitus mentions as the most perfect, and thinks the hardest to be framed;
that happy balance and mixture of interests which comprehends every interest” (Tacitus 1737: 176). Nevertheless, although “in England Tacitus was more the republican than monarchic historian and was, in fact, often considered dangerous to the establishment” (Weinbrot 1978: 36-7), the uses of his text were not entirely revolutionary.29 For example, the Craftsman, a Whig newspaper, drew quotations from Tacitus to attack the tyranny of the king’s censorship of the press. The Craftsman cited Tacitus’s description of how Augustus little by little came to dominate the entire state, quoting *insurgere paulatim, munia senatus magistratuum legum in se trahere* (“he rose little by little, and drew onto himself the functions of the Senate, the magistrates, and the laws,” *Ann*. 1.2), which the Craftsman translates as “he grew insolent by degrees, and at length engrossed the whole power of the Empire in his own hands” (Weinbrot 1978: 110). On the other hand, the London Journal, a Tory newspaper, likewise drew support from Tacitus to support the necessity of the censorship. The London Journal pointed to Tacitus’s description of Augustus’s motive in first applying *maiestas* laws to published works:

*primus Augustus cognitionem de famosis libellis specie legis eius tractavit, commotus Cassii Severi libidine, qua viros feminasque inlustris procacibus scriptis diffamaverat*

Augustus first conducted an inquiry concerning libelous pamphlets under the appearance of this law, moved by Cassius Severus’s wantonness, by which he had defamed distinguished men and women with impudent writings. *Ann*. 1.72

The London Journal used this quote from Tacitus as evidence that Augustus implemented libel and censorship laws not to protect themselves, but to protect the public from libelous writings. This supported their view that King George III’s censorship of the press was entirely justified (Weinbrot 1978: 113).

29 For further discussion of “red” and “black” readings of Tacitus, see pages 62-3.
Sallust and Caesar

Following Tacitus in importance to British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 were Sallust and Caesar. Philip Yorke, the third Earl of Hardwicke read Sallust with his tutor in the mid-1770s (Searby 1997: 557). Sallust and Caesar, like Tacitus, were included as part of the curriculum at Magdalen College throughout the 1700s, though less importance was placed on them, as evidenced by the fact that Tacitus was almost universally reserved as the culmination of a student’s college Latin education, whereas Sallust and Caesar were often, but not always, included among the intermediate college Latin texts (Morgan 2004: 548). Winchester College, another elite private school, like Shrewsbury, established Sallust as the centerpiece of their curriculum along with Vergil and Horace, as recorded by Henry Fynes Clinton in 1796 (Clarke 1959: 53). Furthermore, as was the case with Tacitus, Sallust was valued as a means of attacking luxury and moral degeneracy in schools, newspapers, and political speeches (Ayres 1997: 26). One famous example is The Idea of a Patriot King, a work of political philosophy published by Henry St. John, the first Viscount Bolingbroke, in 1738. Bolingbroke repeatedly cites Sallust as proof of the danger of moral degeneracy among political leaders (Ayres 1997: 26).

Caesar, similarly, was a very well regarded author in elite British schools in the period between 1700 and 1825. Clarke (1959: 51) points out that the vast majority of those who studied Latin read Caesar because he was almost universally employed in the schools as an intermediate-level prose text, following the basic, introductory texts of Eutropius and Cornelius Nepos. This use of Caesar held true across a wide variety of schools and seems primarily based on his clear style and the intermediate difficulty level of his text. In fact, at Eton, the most prestigious school in all of Great Britain, the only prose authors that were deemed worthy of inclusion in the
curriculum were Cornelius Nepos, as an introductory text, and Caesar, as an intermediate text (Clarke 1959: 51). However, the decision to read Caesar outside of the schools rested on entirely different grounds from those that drove the eagerness to read Tacitus and Sallust. Caesar was primarily cited as proof of the historicity of the British aristocracy and their land claims. For example, the aptly named Society of Roman Knights, a social club of aristocrats that formed in the 1720s and included well-known men such as Thomas Herbert, the eighth Earl of Pembroke, Heneage Finch, the fifth Earl of Winchilsea, and Algernon Seymour, the seventh Earl of Hertford, adopted as their pseudonyms the names of ancient British kings found in Caesar and supported archaeological endeavors as a way to demonstrate a direct connection to these British kings (Ayres 1997: 92). They believed that such a connection would undeniably strengthen their claims to a regal dignity and to the lands and properties they owned:

By way of return, the archaeologists might do something for them: prove their antique character, insofar as archaeological research could, by showing that their country seats came down to them from Roman Britons or (even more impressively) a British king whose name was recorded by Julius Caesar in section V of his *Gallic War*. (Ayres 1997: 98)

Similarly, Caesar’s descriptions of the ancient British could be used as proof that rule by kings and aristocrats was the traditional, natural form of government for the British people (Browning 1982: 122).

**Livy and Other Historians**

Livy never achieved the same popularity among British readers as Tacitus, Sallust, and Caesar, although he does, nevertheless, stand out slightly from the rest of the less frequently read

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30 Clarke (1959: 51) does not provide a clear date for this piece of information, but based on context it seems to be dated to the mid to late eighteenth century.
historians. Magdalen College did include Livy, with Tacitus, Sallust, and Caesar, in the official Latin curriculum (Morgan 2004: 548) and William Wordsworth recalled that his second-year exam at Cambridge covered physics and “the twenty-first book of Livy’s History of Rome, which concerned Hannibal’s invasion of Italy” (Searby 1997: 566). In addition, Gibbon, who was widely read in Latin and generally preferred Tacitus, appreciated Livy’s history, citing specifically books 21-30 on the Second Punic War (Gibbon 1966: 81). In fact, he was so thoroughly versed in those books of Livy that he was able to propose, in 1753 or 1754, a number of emendations to the text that were accepted and incorporated by the professors at Oxford (Gibbon 1966: 81). Nevertheless, Livy in the period between 1700 and 1825 was viewed by many educated elites as complicit in tyranny. Although the British and Americans (and within those two nations the different points on the political spectrum such as monarchists, republicans, conservatives, liberals, libertarians, and radicals) had different ideas about what constituted tyranny in practice, everyone was opposed to tyranny. This matters because both Erskine-Hill (1983) and Weinbrot (1978) present convincing, detailed cases that Augustus was almost universally despised, especially by the British of the eighteenth century, as the great tyrant of human history who destroyed freedom and enslaved an entire nation. Therefore, as has already been seen in chapter one, Livy was viewed as morally questionable because of his support of, and relationship to, Augustus.

Lastly, there are a number of historians who were read less frequently and were less highly regarded. Eutropius and Cornelius Nepos were very commonly used as introductory texts

31 One such emendation in Ab urbe condita book 30 was his substitution of otio for odio in Hannibal’s speech in the midst of the Carthaginian Senate after the Romans had won the war, which to this day reads: nec est cur uos otio uestro consultum ab Romanis credatis (“Nor is there a reason why you should believe that there has been a consideration of your rest by the Romans,” 30.44). Gibbon argues that odio does not make sense in context and he points out that the commentators, in his opinion, had never provided a suitable explanation.
in schools, but because they were viewed as simplistic children’s books they do not seem to have been read outside of the schools (Clarke 1959: 51). Weinbrot (1978: 18) reports that Velleius Paterculus was sometimes read, but he suffered even more than Livy from his perceived subservience to the emperors. As a final piece of evidence, Gillespie’s (2009) accounting of the number of translations and imitations of classical authors that appeared in the eighteenth century provides indirect evidence of which authors were in demand and influential. His list includes two translations or English imitations of Quintus Curtius, two of Florus, and four of Suetonius. Suetonius, like Sallust and Tacitus, was considered an opponent of tyranny and immorality.

Weinbrot (1978: 27) cites, as an example of this interpretation and use of Suetonius, the fact the John Clarke, who published a translation of Suetonius in 1732, argued that every student should read Suetonius in order to see “the dismal effects of arbitrary power lodged in the hands of single person.”

Cicero

Although Tacitus was well regarded and the historians, taken together, were the most widely read authors, Cicero was the most respected and widely read single author (Ayres 1997: 136). There is an almost unending stream of praises by the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 for Cicero and much evidence for his importance. Cicero was on the list of authors that all Oxford students seeking high honors were required to read and his De officiis was used in conjunction with Aristotle for the teaching of ethics at Oxford (Clarke 1959: 99). In addition to his place in the curricula for Latin and ethics, Wyland (2003: 184) points out that Cicero held a prominent place in the rhetoric curriculum, although Cicero was never as important
or as respected in the field of rhetoric as Aristotle. Moreover, unlike the other authors who only appear once in the curriculum of Magdalen College, six works of Cicero are listed, including *De oratore*, *De officiis*, *De natura deorum*, *In Catilinam*, *Pro Ligario*, and *Pro Archia* (Clarke 1959: 71-2). Cicero’s *De officiis* was an extremely highly regarded text and Browning (1982: 215) even argues that it was by far the most important philosophical and ethical text of the entire eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

As further evidence, Samuel Butler, who, as we saw above, revitalized the Shrewsbury School, made Cicero’s speeches, along with Tacitus’s historical writings, the centerpiece of the school curriculum (Clarke 1959: 76). Gibbon’s autobiography provides repeated evidence of Cicero’s importance. He recorded that he frequently used Cicero’s letters as a means of improving his Latin by translating them into French and then back into Latin (Gibbon 1966: 75). This encounter with Cicero’s letters stimulated Gibbon to read through the entire Ciceronian corpus and he spent a large section of his autobiography rhapsodizing on the pleasures of reading Cicero:

> I read with application and pleasure *all* the Epistles, *all* the Orations, and the most important treatises of Rhetoric and Philosophy, and as I read, I applauded the observation of Quintilian that every student may judge his own proficiency by the satisfaction which he receives from the Roman orator. Cicero in Latin and Xenophon in Greek are indeed the two ancients whom I would first propose to a liberal scholar, not only for the merit of their style and sentiments but for the admirable lessons which may be applied almost to every situation of public and private life. (Gibbon 1966: 75-6)

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32 Wyland (2003: 184) found that nearly every student studying rhetoric at Oxford University in this time period was required to read Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, whereas Cicero’s *De oratore* or *De inventione* was much less frequently assigned and was generally seen as a supplement to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. 
Similarly, Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859), the author of the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, as an undergraduate wrote a letter in September 1819 to his father crediting Cicero and Tacitus with shaping all of his opinions:

> My opinions, good or bad, were learnt not from Hunt or Waithman [contemporary reform politicians], but from Cicero, from Tacitus, and from Milton. They are the opinions which have produced the greatest men that ever ornamented the world and redeemed human nature from the degradation of ages of superstition and slavery. (Edwards 1999: 82)

This view apparently survived throughout his life because Edwards (1999: 73) remarks that Macaulay, when he was serving in India in the 1830s, commonly spent four or five hours a day reading Latin or Greek, and Cicero most frequently. In fact, Eton stands out as one of the only schools that did not include many works of Cicero in its curriculum, though even they could not entirely avoid the fashion; Cicero’s *De officiis* was on the list of texts that students were asked to read independently (Clarke 1959: 51). Furthermore, Gillespie (2009) calculates that Cicero ranks third in the number of extant translations and English imitations in the eighteenth century, far behind Horace in first, but only one text behind Vergil in second. Finally, William Pitt the Elder in educating his son William Pitt the Younger, who would later serve as prime minister from 1783-1801, relied heavily on Cicero to train his son in both Latin and rhetoric (Ayres 1997: 42). This shows that at least two important prime ministers of this period, William Pitt the Elder and William Pitt the Younger, studied Cicero’s oratory and rhetorical style.

Besides the stylistic and philosophical or ethical appeals of Cicero, he too, like Tacitus and Sallust, was in vogue because of the way his writings could be used for political purposes. For example, in the 1786 trial of Warren Hastings for embezzlement during his time as Governor-General of Bengal, the famous Whig politician Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the prosecutor, aptly used a multitude of references to Cicero’s *In Verrem* in order to increase his
authority among the jurors by association with the widely respected Cicero and to paint Warren Hastings as the guilty Verres (Ayres 1997: 43). Additionally, the Whigs by 1750 had adopted Cicero as something of a mascot and model in their struggles against what they perceived to be the tyranny of King George II and King George III (Browning 1982: 33-34). However, interestingly, as the Whigs increasingly came to dominate the government, they now sought to use Cicero as a supporter of the aristocratic status quo, lauding Cicero because “he had aligned himself with the optimates, seeking to preserve the old balanced constitution from what he believed to be the demagoguery of the populares. He fought for the rights of property and for what he termed concordia ordinum” (Browning 1982: 213). Cicero promoted the idea of the concordia ordinum as the political union between the senators and the equites (Temelini 2002: 1-2). This was a particularly appealing concept for many Whigs because, when applied to the current situation in British society, it meant that all the elites, both the landed aristocrats in the House of Lords and the rich, well connected members of the House of Commons, should join together to pursue their common interests. Their hope seems to be that their combined powers would be able to outweigh the power of the monarch.

Poets

The use of the Latin poets among the British political figures of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is slightly more complicated and less clear, but it seems that, in order of regard or respect, Horace, Juvenal, and Vergil dominated, with Ovid, Terence, and Phaedrus forming a secondary tier of poets. Horace was an important part of the Latin curriculum at Eton (Clarke 1959: 51) and was part of the entrance exam to Haileybury, the East India Company’s training school (Vasunia 2004: 39). Furthermore, evidence from Winchester College and
Westminster School, two prestigious private schools like Eton, demonstrates the central importance placed on Horace in the more general educational system, at least among the elite schools that taught Latin and Greek (Clarke 1959: 53). At the university level, Magdalen College, part of the University of Oxford, included both the *Epistles* and the *Ars poetica* in the third year of the Latin curriculum (Clarke 1959: 71-2). Outside of the educational system, Horace’s celebrations of rural life appealed powerfully to many aristocrats intent on establishing their own country estates (Sambrook 1993: 200). Gibbon lists Horace as one of the authors, along with Tacitus, Terence, and Vergil, that he considered worthy of being read through a third time (Gibbon 1966: 76). In addition, Gibbon includes eleven quotations from Horace in his autobiography, more than any other author (Gibbon 1966).

Gillespie (2009) reckons that 127 translations or English imitations of Horace were published in Great Britain between 1700 and 1800, far outstripping Vergil, in second place with just 46. In fact, both Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and the famous satirist Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) wrote a number of direct imitations of Horace, such as Alexander Pope’s *Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated* (Ayres 1997: 30). Similarly, Erskine-Hill (1983: 354) argues that Byron’s *Don Juan* “may be thought to have taken more than a hint from Horace.” However, this idea of Horatian imitations raises a whole new set of questions that have recently been the source of much scholarly conflict. Weinbrot (1978: 150-1) points out that scholars long viewed Horace as the most well regarded poet of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This view held that the English poets that imitated Horace did so out of respect and admiration for Horace. However, Weinbrot (1978) and Erksine-Hill (1983) have demonstrated that Augustus was widely reviled and this hatred was easily transferred onto Horace and Vergil, who were often viewed as propagandists and the “court-poets.” As a consequence, there has been a revolution in thought
concerning the relationship between Horace and his English imitators. More and more, the view is that English poets imitated Horace as a way of markedly drawing distinction between the perceived slavishness of Horace and their own freedom of expression; Sambrook (1993: 197) argues that this is exactly what Pope is doing in his imitations of Horace.

This view further posits that many English texts that have been identified by scholars as imitations of Horace are, in actuality, imitations of Juvenal, whom they argue was considerably more important than Horace in the eighteenth century (Weinbrot 1978: 151). For example, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) praised Juvenal and attacked Horace as “a turn-coat and debauchee” (Weinbrot 1978: 133). John Dennis (1658-1734), a dramatist and critic of the early eighteenth century, observed that “the generality of readers prefer Juvenal to Horace” (Weinbrot 1978: 152). Indeed, as the appreciation of Cicero grew, Horace’s friendship with Cicero’s murderer became even more awful in the view of many people (Weinbrot 1978: 75). Whitford (1928: 9) claims that “the Juvenalian spirit was one of the important factors in social progress in that revolutionary era. One might go on to urge that in Byron’s masterpieces the hands are the hands of Horace but the voice is the voice of Juvenal” (Whitford 1928: 9). Finally, Gibbon, despite his appreciation of some of the poetry of Horace, is savage in his attack on Horace and instead praises Juvenal, remarking that Horace sings of “the triumph of [his country’s] oppressors … Juvenal alone never prostitutes his muse” (Weinbrot 1978: 165). The importance placed on Juvenal over Horace seems to stem from the view that, although both lived under an emperor, Horace praised and flattered the emperor, while Juvenal criticized the emperor and the empire.

Nevertheless, the evidence for the importance of Juvenal’s writings to these readers does not rely solely on whether scholars believe that certain pieces of English literature derive more
from Horace or from Juvenal. Juvenal was included in the curriculum at Magdalen College (Clarke 1959: 71-2) and was recorded as an important part of the Latin curriculum at Harrow School, another prestigious private school (Clarke 1959: 55). Gibbon is recorded to have said, upon reading Juvenal later in his life, that Juvenal will “in [the] future … be one of my favorite authors’” (Weinbrot 1978: 164). Whitford (1928: 16) argues that “even a superficial investigation shows that the influence of Juvenal was widespread in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century.” He contends that many writers of the eighteenth century believed that their literary position and that the contemporary situation of society was more similar to Juvenal and the “tyranny of Domitian,” respectively, than to Horace and the Augustan period:

Satirists in Great Britain in the middle of the eighteenth century knew conditions similar to those that Juvenal hated in Rome of the first century. In literature, there was a struggle to keep the classic forms though the classic spirit was moribund. In politics there was, if not the efficient tyranny of a Domitian, the attempted tyranny of George the Third. In religion, there could be found both rampant fanaticism and crawling, sneering skepticism. In society, there were all the old vices. (Whitford 1928: 16)

Therefore, some of the importance of Juvenal’s writings rests on the way that many authors identified with Juvenal and his situation.

Vergil, on the other hand, seems consistently to rank behind Horace and Juvenal throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This lesser position was partly due to the connections to Augustus, which, as we saw above, had so thoroughly tainted Horace (Weinbrot 1978: 67). For example, Alexander Pope condemns the Aeneid as a clear “party piece” (Weinbrot 1978: 126). Nevertheless, the evidence of Vergil’s importance in eighteenth century Great Britain is quite widespread. The Aeneid was read in the first year and the Georgics in the fourth year at Magdalen College in the late eighteenth century (Clarke 1959: 71-2). At Winchester College and Westminster School, Vergil is recorded as an important part of the Latin
curriculum, though in a secondary position to Horace and Sallust (Clarke 1959: 53). Similarly, at Eton, the capstone of the students’ Latin education was the reading of Horace and Vergil (Clarke 1959: 51). However, Gibbon, who read through the entire Vergilian corpus three times (Gibbon 1966:76), remarks in his autobiography that he never cared much for the *Aeneid* (Gibbon 1966: 37). William Wordsworth echoes this sentiment, saying that he always became angry whenever he found the *Aeneid* ranked above the *Metamorphoses*, which he considered to be the better work (Searby 1997: 563). Gibbon, nevertheless, quotes from Vergil eight times in his autobiography, which is less frequently than he quotes Horace, but more than Ovid, who only appears five times (Gibbon 1966). Macaulay seems to have been similarly unimpressed by Vergil and the *Aeneid*. His contention was that the only Latin poets who “exhibit much vigor of imagination” and are worthy of reading are Lucretius and Catullus (Edwards 1999: 74). As it was for Horace, this rejection of Vergil is likely connected to political concerns, namely that Vergil was a collaborator in the tyranny of Augustus.

In fact, all of the evidence seems to point towards the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues* as more popular than the *Aeneid*, primarily for the same reasons that led people to read Horace despite his connections to Augustus, namely the appeal of his descriptions of rural life. Namier (1961: 17) points out that in the eighteenth century “the *furor hortensis*, the passion for landscape gardening, reigned supreme.” This passion for ornate and intricate gardens sought to model itself after what was found in classical literature and among the physical remains of the classical societies. For example, Henry Hoare II (1705-1785), a gardener and banker who was popularly known as “Henry the Magnificent” because of his great wealth and his patronage of the arts, designed his garden to be full of Vergilian allusions “in the inscriptions, statuary, buildings, and

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33 Once again, Clarke (1959) is not clear concerning the dates for his information about Winchester College, Westminster School, and Eton. Based on context, these facts appear to refer to the mid to late eighteenth century.
even in the layout of the garden” (Sambrook 1993: 189). Turner (1979) discusses in detail the layout of the garden and its various allusions, but there are only two Vergilian references that are established beyond a doubt. These are two inscriptions, the first above his grotto and the second over the door of his Temple of Ceres/Flora (Turner 1979: 74). The first reads *intus aquae dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo, nympharum domus* (“within are sweet waters and seats from living rock, the house of the nymphs,”) which is a direct quote from *Aeneid* 1.167-8. The second reads *procul, o procul este, profani* (“far off, be far off, unholy ones,”) which quotes the exclamation of the sibyl from *Aeneid* 6.258. Based on just two pieces of evidence, it is ultimately unclear whether Henry Hoare II read these texts in the original language himself.

As for the second tier of poets (Terence, Phaedrus and Ovid), Terence and Phaedrus were nearly universally used as school texts for the beginning and intermediate levels of Latin. Ovid, on the other hand, was much less frequently read in schools, mostly because of moral objections. Nevertheless, he was still read by some British political figures. At Eton in the mid to late-eighteenth century, all three authors were included in the curriculum, with Phaedrus and Ovid serving as the primary Latin texts for the beginning Latin classes and Terence for the intermediate classes (Clarke 1959: 51). Terence was very familiar to Gibbon, who recalls that, when he arrived at the University of Oxford, his tutor found his Latin ability so lacking that the tutor decided to start his Latin education again from the beginning and drill him on Terence; Gibbon, during his college years, apparently had a good deal of difficulty with Latin because he relates that in his entire time at Oxford he and his tutor only managed to read “three or four Latin plays” of Terence (Gibbon 1966: 54). Nevertheless, when his ability to read Latin had greatly improved later in life, Gibbon says that he re-read through Terence three times (Gibbon 1966:
76), as has been noted above. Hall (1997: 60) even reports that Terence was well regarded enough among students that his plays, particularly the *Adelphoe*, were occasionally staged by university students.

Like Terence, Phaedrus, a first-century C.E. versifier of Aesop’s fables, was used as a school text. Phaedrus’s *Fabulae* was viewed as a suitable introductory text for Latin because its language was simple, it conveyed stories of interest to many students, and it could be used to teach students morals (Clarke 1959: 51). Because of the detail provided in his autobiography, Gibbon once more provides us evidence. He credits Phaedrus with teaching him, as a child, the basics of Latin syntax, although this statement does somewhat contradict what he writes later in his autobiography about re-learning Latin from Terence (Gibbon 1966: 34). However, unlike some of the authors he read in his childhood that he criticizes, Gibbon has only positive things to say about Phaedrus, declaring that “the use of fables or apoloues had been approved in every age from ancient India to modern Europe” and that Phaedrus is widely beloved because “his manner is concise, terse, and sententious” (Gibbon 1966: 33-4).

Ovid was never as well regarded as Terence or Phaedrus because, as already seen in chapter one, there were moral objections to his works. Nevertheless, David Hume (1711-1776), the famous philosopher and economist, states that “when I had a mind to be a fine gentleman, I [quoted] Ovid” (Ayres 1997: 60), meaning that the quoting of Ovid was viewed among some students as a mark of suavity and of an urbane disposition. Gibbon, too, found Ovid to be an interesting and important author, quoting from him five times, behind only Horace and Vergil (Gibbon 1966).

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34 See page 37.
Gillespie’s (2009) account of the translations and English imitations of classical literature published between 1700 and 1800 in Great Britain shows that a great number of the Latin poets inspired enough interest to merit a translation or imitation. This list includes: Apuleius, Catullus, Claudian, Lucan, Lucretius, Martial, Persius, Plautus, Propertius, Statius, and Tibullus. Nevertheless, Lucretius and Catullus stand out from this list. Macaulay, during his time in India, regularly spent four or five hours a day reading Lucretius (Edwards 1999: 73). Similarly, Clarke (1959: 99) records that Lucretius was one of only four authors included on the list of authors that those pursuing honors at Oxford were required to read in the early 1800s. As for Catullus, Clarke (1959: 59) points out that Catullus was included as part of the curriculum at the Harrow School and was among the authors “regarded as necessities” for admission to college in the early nineteenth century.

Other Prose Authors

Besides Cicero and the historians, only three Latin prose authors were commonly cited and read by British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 and therefore merit attention in this paper. These are Pliny the Younger, Quintilian, and Vitruvius. Pliny the Younger inspired eight translations or imitations between 1700 and 1800, second only to Sallust (Gillespie 2009). Gibbon also quotes him twice in his autobiography, making Pliny the Younger and Cicero the two most quoted prose authors (Gibbon 1966). Although Gibbon seems to have enjoyed Pliny the Younger on an intellectual level because he calls him “my old and familiar companion” (Gibbon 1966: 146), most readers sought Pliny’s text in connection to the passion for gardening that inflamed eighteenth-century Great Britain. Ayres (1997: 75) points out that Pliny the Younger, like Vergil, was often mined for information about ancient Roman gardens. In fact,
many aristocrats sought, through a close reading of Pliny, to be able to recreate exactly Pliny’s
garden or the gardens of other Romans that he describes. Pliny apparently seized the imagination
of many British aristocrats with his descriptions of aspects of ancient Roman life that are
scattered throughout his letters. His descriptions of ancient Roman life inspired a classical
element in the massive, extravagant collections of books and art, both ancient and modern, that
were exhibited for sightseers, both their peers and members of the public (Ayres 1997: 137).

Quintilian did not inspire a new fashion like the *furor hortensis* that was connected with
Pliny. Still, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* was frequently read at the university level as a
textbook for teaching rhetoric. Thus, Philip Yorke, the third Earl of Hardwicke, read Quintilian,
namely while studying rhetoric to prepare himself for a life in politics (Searby 1997: 557). In
addition, although Cambridge generally had a rather lax organizational and curricular system in
the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which allowed tutors and professors to teach
whatever they wanted, Quintilian, Cicero, and Tacitus were the three authors that the
administrators of Cambridge University required all students to read (Raworth 1915: 12). Even
within the list of prescribed authors, there is great freedom for variation. The list does not state
any specific texts or editions that must be read, justifying this approach as providing “ample
room for the tutor to display his taste on the best writings of antiquity” (Raworth 1915: 12).

Finally, Vitruvius, like Pliny the Younger, was popular among the aristocracy. In
particular, Vitruvius provided a model for neo-classical architecture. In fact, Ayres (1997: 111)
argues that much of British architecture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was
based on Vitruvius, who described Roman architecture in its golden age. Ayres (1997: 114)
points, in particular, to the Third Earl of Burlington’s garden temple, the York Assembly Rooms,
Kedleston Hall, and the Temple of Concord and Victory in Stowe. Ayres (1997: 120) further
argues that Vitruvius was not only mined by aristocrats that sought to build great neo-classical buildings and to design neo-classical gardens, but also by many other people. He argues that Alexander Pope’s *Epistle to Burlington* makes clear that Pope was intimately familiar with Vitruvius’s *De architectura*. In particular, Ayres (1990: 434) contends that the closing section of the *Epistle to Burlington* contains numerous echoes of the Vitruvius’s preface to book one of *De architectura*.

**Conclusion**

In summary, Tacitus was considered the greatest historian by many British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825, was often included in college curricula, and was frequently used for political purposes. Like for the Founding Fathers, Sallust was cited for the perceived moral content of his historical writings. Caesar’s commentaries were commonly used as an intermediate text in Latin curricula and was coopted as a method of establishing historical foundations for aristocratic claims to property and titles. Cicero was widely read for many reasons, including his moral and rhetorical teachings, and his philosophical and political insights. Horace appeared on many school curricula and appealed to many British political figures for his descriptions of country life. Juvenal served as a model for many British writers of the time because many felt that the situation of Great Britain in the eighteenth century was similar to the Rome of Juvenal’s time. Vergil was recognized for the artistry of his works and for his inspiration in the creation of luxurious gardens, but his perceived complicity with the “tyranny” of Augustus limited his appeal. Lastly, Pliny the Younger and Vitruvius, like Vergil, were

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35 The *Epistle to Burlington* is a poem written by Alexander Pope in 1731 that is addressed to the Earl of Burlington, one of the leading proponents of classically influenced architecture (Ayres 1990: 429-30).

36 For a much more detailed discussion of those echoes and allusions, see Ayres, P. 1990. “Pope’s *Epistle to Burlington*: The Vitruvian Analogies.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30.3: 429-444.
sources for the design of gardens and for the design of classical architecture. Having now established a catalog of which Latin texts appeared in school curricula and were read by British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 and having conjectured some reasons as to why, this paper will seek to draw comparisons between the British and American situations and to demonstrate how societal and governmental differences caused these differences.
CHAPTER THREE:

Conclusions

Reflections of Societal Differences

By comparing the Latin texts read by the Founding Fathers and those read by British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825, it becomes clear that one key societal distinction that motivates these differences is the presence of an aristocracy or lack thereof. As we have seen, many, if not most, of the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 were members of the aristocracy, possessing landed titles and noble status. This is clearly signified by the various titles by which they are addressed in scholarship and in this paper. The situation of the Founding Fathers, on the other hand, is more complicated. Not many of the Founding Fathers can be accurately described as poor or men of the people, except perhaps Alexander Hamilton, who, as a poor immigrant from the Caribbean, studied at King’s College on scholarship. Many of the Founding Fathers lived lives of relative leisure compared to their compatriots. However, Thomas Jefferson was wracked by money problems throughout his life, even being forced to sell his entire prized library to pay off debt collectors.\footnote{See discussion on page 22.} John Adams was the son of small farmer and grew up in a four-room farmhouse in the small town of Braintree, MA (Ferling 1992: 11). Benjamin Franklin was one of seventeen children and only attended school for two years because his father could not afford the tuition (Franklin 1901: 5-7). Therefore, the view of the Founding Fathers as wealthy elites of an almost aristocratic nature is inaccurate. In addition, the Founding Fathers mostly rejected the idea of aristocracy. This idea is made clear in Article 1, Section 9 of the United States Constitution, which states that:

\begin{quote}
No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States: and no person holding any office of profit or trust under them, shall,
\end{quote}

\footnote{See discussion on page 22.}
Thus, the Constitution from the very birth of the country declares that the United States will never be a country based on aristocracy. This key societal difference between men who rose to leadership positions in society through a combination of wealth, education, opportunity, and innate ability (the Founding Fathers), and men who were born and groomed to lead (the British political figures),\(^9\) affects which Latin texts were part of the required curriculum, were read, and were used in letters, commonplace books, and other writings by these two groups.

One clear instance of this is the fact that the writings of Julius Caesar were popular among the British leaders, while they were largely ignored by the Founding Fathers. This greater valuation of Caesar is connected to the aristocratic status of the British leaders because, as chapter two points out, Julius Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum* was used by the British aristocracy as a means of supporting their landed titles. In addition, through tortured genealogies, British aristocrats sought to connect themselves to any ancient king mentioned by Caesar. This drove them to mine Caesar’s text as a way to enhance their own status. Among the Founding Fathers, on the other hand, the writings of Julius Caesar are almost entirely absent from the records of what was read. Only Alexander Hamilton and George Washington mention Caesar; and George Washington soon abandoned Caesar as his model in favor of Cincinnatus because Caesar’s works were viewed as a sign of tyrannical tendencies. In a “New World” lacking an aristocracy and the physical connection to Caesar that his invasion and description of Britain provides, the writings of Julius Caesar were simply not as well connected to the lives, interests, and situation

\(^9\) Thomas Jefferson, in fact, argues this very point when he claims that the United States should have an “aristocracy of virtue and talent” (Ferling 2000: 159), rather than an aristocracy based on inherited status and wealth.
of the Founding Fathers. They appealed directly to the desire for aristocratic status of many of the British leaders, but held no such appeal for the Founding Fathers.

Vergil, Pliny the Younger, and Vitruvius were more important to the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 than to the Founding Fathers once again because of the aristocratic nature of British society. The *furor hortensis*, the fashion for designing vast, lavish gardens among the British aristocracy that was discussed in chapter two, had taken hold of society in this period. This fad, especially because of the emphasis it placed on classical references, meant that Pliny the Younger was valued for his descriptions of ancient Roman life, which would be used to recreate such a life in eighteenth-century Britain. This fad also enhanced Vergil’s texts because many aristocrats, like Henry Hoare, sought to fill their gardens with allusions to Vergil. In addition, not only the fashion for ornate gardens, which often contained buildings based on classical models, but also a general passion for classical architecture, which Ayres (1997: 115) argues was widespread in its effects on the British aristocracy, promoted the reading of Vitruvius; his architectural instruction was seen as providing insight into the norms of Roman architecture in its golden age, which many aristocrats sought to copy. As was seen in chapter one, these three authors were not among the texts commonly read by the Founding Fathers. John Adams praises the epistolary style of Pliny the Younger, but not many other references are made to him or his writings. As for Vergil, he was commonly read in schools and colleges, but does not seem to have been widely read outside of the educational system. In fact, only Thomas Jefferson, who more than most of his fellow Founding Fathers resembles a British aristocrat with his classical mansion, Monticello, and his plantation, is recorded as reading Vergil throughout his life and reading Vitruvius for architectural inspiration.39

39 For the discussion of Jefferson’s appreciation of Vergil and Vitruvius, see pages 28-9.
In a similar vein, Horace was esteemed on both sides of the Atlantic, but for slightly different reasons. Both the Founding Fathers and the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 valued Horace’s artistry and, in particular, his descriptions of life in the countryside on his estate. However, whereas it seems that the British aristocracy saw reflections of their own life on vast, landed estates in Horace’s descriptions of country life, many Americans were inclined to view the entire “New World” as a vast countryside of new land. While it seems that the British aristocracy saw Horace as a guide to life away from the vast, increasingly industrial cities, the Founding Fathers, particularly men like Thomas Jefferson who believed that the United States should be a country of yeoman farmers (Ferling 2000: 157), likely felt that Horace’s descriptions of the wonders of rural life applied to all Americans. Therefore, the particular situation of the Founding Fathers in the “New World” and the British leaders in their country seats, although markedly different, jointly help to explain why Horace was valued by both groups.

Reflections of Governmental Differences

The difference between the parliamentary monarchy of Great Britain and the republican government of the United States is also reflected in the Latin texts that were read on either side of the Atlantic. It must be admitted that these two forms of government are not the diametric

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40 For the discussion of the appreciation of British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825 for Horace’s descriptions of country life, see page 44; for the Founding Fathers, see page 27-8.
41 “The great bulk of the English and Europeans who migrated to America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries either had been farmers in the Old World or wanted to be farmers in the New World where land was so abundant and so relatively easy to acquire” (Jensen 1969: 107).
42 “Jefferson had hoped the new constitution of Virginia would allocated land to the landless, creating a society in which every freeman owned his own farm” (Ferling 2000: 157).
43 “American society at the outbreak of the American Revolution was an overwhelmingly agricultural society with perhaps ninety percent of a population of two and a half million people living on farms and plantations” (Jensen 1969: 107)
opposites that many Americans both then and now are inclined to think they are; there is a tendency to cast King George III as a tyrannical monarch with absolute authority and his British subjects as no better than slaves, but this does not align with the actual facts. The existence of Parliament, the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the English Bill of Rights all ensured that certain limitations were placed on the monarch’s exercise of power (Lang 2005: 6).

Nevertheless, there are key differences between the two systems of government. Parliament had increased its power to the detriment of the monarch through the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution in the seventeenth century, but in the eighteenth century the Hanoverians progressively reclaimed power by using their control of the peerage system, their authority over the Anglican Church, and their vast wealth to cajole and bribe members of Parliament to support them and their policies without question (Lang 2005: 7-8).

Even though it may seem that the transfer of power from the monarch to Parliament makes the British government more democratic, this is not necessarily an accurate representation of the situation. The existence of the House of Lords, which was entirely aristocratic and would not lose the power to veto legislation until 1911, meant that the aristocrats always maintained power over the government and its policy. In addition, the rotten borough system undermined much of the hope for democratic reforms in the House of Commons (Lang 2005: 8). The rotten borough system, which would not be reformed until 1832, meant that some parliamentary constituencies contained thousands of voters and some contained very few, such as Old Sarum.

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44 See Reitan, E. A., ed. 1964. George III, Tyrant or Constitutional Monarch? Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, which discusses in detail the ways that King George III has been represented and misrepresented throughout history, both positively and negatively.

45 By the eighteenth century, the boundaries for the parliamentary constituencies had been drawn up in the distant past. As British society changed and industrialization meant that increasing numbers of people moved from the country to the city, constituencies, which had once been equal in population, were no longer so. There was no means of re-apportioning the constituencies other than by an act of Parliament and the members of Parliament were unwilling to change the system that had resulted in their own election. Therefore, thousands of people in the city might have equal representation in Parliament as just a handful out in the country (Lang 2005: 8-10).
with just seven voters (Lang 2005: 8). Because many constituencies contained only a few people and the majority of the population of common people lived in a just a few constituencies, not only could aristocrats bribe every voter in a particular constituency in order to get themselves elected, but also the interests of the common people, who had very few representatives, could be almost entirely ignored. In fact, it is reported that some British aristocrats argued that American arguments about “no taxation without representation” were groundless because most people living in Great Britain were taxed without legitimate, equal representation:

To eighteenth-century thinking, it was very important that all major interests should be represented in Parliament, but it was by no means necessary for them to be represented directly. As long as there were people in Parliament – in either house – to speak up for each particular interest, it did not matter which constituencies any of them happened to represent. When Radicals complained that huge sections of the population were not represented in Parliament, either because they did not have the vote or because they had no MP, the answer was that they did not need to be directly represented because they were virtually represented. (Lang 2005: 10-11)

Therefore, what may at first seem to be an increase in democracy, as power is transferred from the king to Parliament, is more accurately described as a move towards aristocracy to the detriment of the monarch.

This fact helps to explain why Sallust and Cicero were popular among both the Founding Fathers and the British political figures of the period between 1700 and 1825. Sallust, who was famed for his vitriol against immorality and its degrading effects on the state, was used by both the Founding Fathers and British aristocrats for similar purposes. The Founding Fathers saw Sallust as evidence of the characteristic degeneracy of aristocrats and kings, whereas many British parliamentarians aimed Sallust against the extravagance of the king and aristocrats who were viewed as too friendly with the king. Finally, Cicero has a somewhat chameleonic nature in
political discussions, likely because so many of his writings are preserved. This means that
evidence for almost any point of view can be found somewhere in his extant writings. Pointing to
his death at the hands of Marcus Antonius’s soldiers as evidence, both the Founding Fathers and
the British leaders viewed Cicero as an enemy of tyranny. However, while Americans claimed
Cicero as an advocate for their republican form of government, many British aristocrats, basing
their argument upon his support of the governing authority of the Senate, argued that Cicero
actually advocated an aristocratic government. If transplanted to the modern world, Cicero’s
praises of the murderers of leaders of the *populares* in *In Catilinam* 1, such as Publius Scipio,
Servilius Ahala, and Lucius Opimius, suggest he might have sided with aristocratic government
against the aspects of mob-rule that, in the view of many Romans, were inherent in democracy.
On the whole, although at first glance there seems to be a remarkable similarity in the
importance placed on Sallust and Cicero on both sides of the Atlantic, this is driven by different
motivations and entirely different situations.

The situation of Tacitus is similarly complicated. This complication arises from two
diametrically opposed readings of Tacitus, which Mellor (1993: 145) called the “red” and
“black” interpretations. “Red Tacitus” was viewed as an enemy of tyrants and something of a
subversive, who through his writings undermined the power and authority of all established
governments:

[The Jesuits’] view of history – a common establishment view through the ages – was that the historian should merely narrate, not try to analyze or criticize. The Tacitean spirit of inquiry was a threat to the status quo … Here we find the ‘Red’ or revolutionary Tacitus, a menace to established authority, but a source of inspiration to the Puritans and to republicans of Paris and colonial Boston. (Mellor 1993: 145)
Tacitus, when read this way, was evidence to both the British and American political figures that have been discussed in this paper for the corruption innate to monarchical government and a means of attacking monarchs themselves. Since both American republicans and British aristocrats, who sought to move power from the king to themselves, disliked kings, Tacitus was a useful weapon for both groups. However, it seems likely that this “red” view of Tacitus was more common among the Founding Fathers than the British political figures, as Mellor (1993: 145) alludes to in the above quote. However, the “black” reading of Tacitus likely served to solidify aristocratic claims to Tacitus. “Black” Tacitus was seen as teaching kings and tyrants how to rule and maintain their power:

There was also a “Black” Tacitus who provided advice to tyrants, and models for sycophantic courtiers. The learned legal and political theorist, Jean Bodin, saw in Tacitus the justification for monarchy … In absolutist Italy and France, dissidents gradually grew increasingly suspicious of Tacitus who, like Machiavelli, seemed to help cynical princes maintain themselves in power. (Mellor 1993: 145)

It is easy to see how such an interpretation of Tacitus would appeal to many British aristocrats, who not only ruled their own baronies, duchies, and counties, but also increasingly sought to assert their authority over the country itself.

Another place the difference in forms of government seems to influence what classical texts are read is in the British appropriation of Juvenal. As chapter one points out, Juvenal was read by some of the Founding Fathers, but he seems commonly to have been regarded among the second or third tier of poets. In Great Britain, on the other hand, Juvenal was very popular. Depending on whether you accept the argument that many of the texts that have been commonly identified as imitations of Horace are actually imitations of Juvenal (Weinbrot 1978: 151), Juvenal is either the first or second most popular poet in Great Britain between 1700 and 1825.
As chapter two argues, much of this appreciation for Juvenal stems from the fact that many British aristocrats felt that their situation, particularly under King George III, was similar to the situation of Juvenal under Domitian. They saw in Juvenal an opposition to the tyranny of Domitian and a commonality between his situation and their own. This allowed writers to criticize the government implicitly by imitating Juvenal, rather than explicitly attacking the king. The Founding Fathers, on the other hand, might have turned to Juvenal if the British had been able to suppress the American Revolution. However, since the Founding Fathers had the ability to express their thoughts freely, Juvenal’s fight for independence did not resonate for them as it did for the contemporary British.

**Applications to Modern Pedagogy**

Although this idea that each society re-interprets and re-encounters Classics anew is not an original idea, it is interesting to see it actually develop in this comparison. The first conclusion is that the particular situation of a society – socially, politically, and economically – has a great effect on the Latin texts that are included in school curricula and are read by members of that society outside of the schools. In effect, this means that the canon of Latin literature is constantly changing. Therefore, teachers that hope to instill in students a passion for Classics must take this into account. Americans are a diverse group of people with a variety of personal backgrounds, but there are certain beliefs, such as the inherent equality of all people, democracy, and freedom of speech and religion, that the great majority of Americans share, even if the practical application of those principles is not always free of disagreement. Teachers should consider how the texts they select and how the assignments they create might connect to those principles. It is
imperative that we realize that the canon is not eternally fixed, but must fluidly fit the needs and interests of each new generation.

Considering the differences between the texts that influenced the Founding Fathers and those that influenced British leaders between 1700 and 1825, it seems clear that the canon is in flux. It is shaped by the particular interests and situation of each generation within each society. This is not a top-down process, in which academics, societal leaders, or even the College Board mandate which texts are worthy of being read. Instead, it is an organic, bottom-up process in which every reader of Latin, every teacher, and every translator through their choices of what to read, what to teach, and what to translate shape anew the canon of Latin literature. Therefore, it is the duty of the College Board and others that determine Latin curricula to seek the signs and signals of changes in the canon and to respond to those changes in their formation of curricula. This may entail some difficult choices. For example, Vergil is frequently cited by many readers of Latin as the preeminent Latin author or at least among the best Latin authors. However, as we have seen, Vergil, although by no means ignored, was not central in school curricula and in quotations and citations on either side of the Atlantic in the period between 1700 and 1825. It is within the realm of possibility that some of the authors we currently hold so dear will also have to be set aside in favor of authors that form the new American canon of Latin literature.

The purpose of this paper is not to argue that the recommendations of the Founding Fathers or the list of texts read by them should be adopted wholesale and without thought. However, an understanding of why certain texts appealed to the Founding Fathers can help us understand what Latin texts might resonate with modern Americans. Although there have been numerous changes over the years, some very basic things have remained essentially the same; we still have a republican government and, despite concerns over greater concentrations of wealth
among fewer Americans, the United States still rejects a political aristocracy. One important change is that the rural nature of the country around the time of the American Revolution has clearly given way to an increasingly urban society. The expected result of this would be that Horace’s paeans for the countryside and his country estate would not connect with the experiences of students as well as in the past. Interestingly, this could help to explain the disappearance of Horace from the latest AP curriculum and the rise of Vergil as the preeminent poet in the AP curriculum. In fact, the AP Latin Course and Exam Description even advises against reading Horace. In the section entitled “Reading Latin at Sight in the Course,” the College Board states: “recommended verse authors include Ovid, Martial, Tibullus, and Catullus rather than, for example, Horace, Juvenal, or Lucan” (2012: 27). Instead of simply leaving Horace out of the list of recommended authors, he is included in the list of authors the College Board suggests are not to be read. However, culture and society are not static. Therefore, the rise of the green movement and deep concerns over the state of the environment may contribute in the future towards making Horace more relevant to the lives of more students.

Since one of the commonly cited reasons for the creation and funding of public school systems in democracies is to ensure the creation of responsible future citizens, it seems important that Tacitus be included in modern curricula, especially considering that Jefferson thought him to be the “first writer in the world without a single exception” (p. 26). Jefferson may, in the view of some, be extreme in his praise of Tacitus, but it is hard to discount entirely the views of such an intelligent, visionary man. Furthermore, although Tacitus’s style may be viewed by some as too difficult for many students, ignoring him when he was viewed on both sides of the Atlantic as an important, staunch enemy of tyranny, seems unfortunate. In fact, the AP Latin Course and Exam Description specifically advises teachers not to read Tacitus with their students. As in the case of
Horace, in the section entitled “Reading Latin at Sight in the Course” of the official course description, the College Board writes: “prose authors recommended for sight-reading work include Nepos, Cicero (but not Cicero’s letters), Livy, Pliny the Younger, and Seneca the Younger rather than, say, Tacitus or Sallust” (2012: 27).

Finally, it seems a grievous error against previous generations that Cicero, so highly valued by both the Founding Fathers and the British leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, now plays such a small role in many curricula. Cicero’s philosophical and rhetorical texts are almost never read in schools and, once the Pro Caelio was removed from the AP curriculum, his speeches have declined in importance as well. The AP Latin Course and Exam Description does recommend the reading of Cicero, but not his letters, as a preparation for the sight-reading portion of the test (College Board 2012: 27). However, he is placed after Cornelius Nepos, who seems to have been valued both in the period between 1700 and 1825 and in contemporary times as a prose author of a low difficulty level. Using the level of difficulty as the sole criteria in evaluating a text seems ill-advised, if that is what the College Board is doing. Certainly, it would be foolish to ignore entirely the difficulty level of a text, but the difficulty level must be considered in close conjunction with attention to the appeal of the text to readers within the context of their particular culture and society.

Understandably, some of these suggestions may be somewhat over-optimistic, since, unlike in the eighteenth century, most students in the schools today do not start Latin until high school or college and therefore the time spent on the study of Latin is considerably shortened. Nevertheless, a great deal of time is spent reading the writings of Julius Caesar, whom the Founding Fathers reviled as a tyrant and British aristocrats seem primarily to have used as a means of solidifying their claims to aristocratic privilege. Some teachers have voiced the opinion
that the rationale for the focus on Caesar was that reading Caesar would appeal to male students because of the battles and violence of his writings. Although attempts to increase enrollments in Latin classes are laudable, this rationale seems insubstantial and not necessarily realizable. There are some bloody scenes, such as the sacrifice of human beings in wicker-man structures (*B Gall.* 6.16), but for the most part the battles focus on the broad level of tactics and strategy rather than on the actions of individual soldiers. Other teachers point to the moderate difficulty level or accessibility of Caesar’s text. The AP Latin Course and Exam Description states that Caesar has long been “a standard school text” because of its “pure and straightforward Latinity” (College Board 2012: 5). Although Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum* is not an easy text, the description “straightforward Latinity” hints at the fact that it is viewed as one of the easier works in the canon of Latin literature. Once again, it seems hard to justify reading a text based solely on its difficulty level; its appeal to the students who encounter the text must be a primary consideration. If less focus were placed on Caesar, then there would be a greater opportunity to include other authors.

Ultimately, this paper has sought to strengthen the foundation for the study of Latin in the United States by developing an understanding of both what Latin texts the Founding Fathers read and why those texts interested and appealed to the Founding Fathers. As men who are important in our foundational political principles, drawing a clear connection between the Latin education of the Founding Fathers and our Latin curriculum is relevant and interesting. In addition, such a connection can help students to see that Latin is not some ancient relic of little use or value, but instead has played an integral role not only in the lives of the men who founded the United States, and also as a guide and source of inspiration for those men as they established the government, laws, and institutions of our country. In this way, the Latin language is intimately
connected at the deepest levels to the American experience. Furthermore, this paper, by demonstrating that the canon is not fixed, but changes with each new generation in each particular societal environment, should help all educators better understand and respond to the changes that have occurred and will occur in the American canon of Latin literature.
WORKS CITED


