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The Epistulae of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto: A Study and Commentary

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Honors Project

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Introduction: The Hidden Value of a Forgotten Classical Text

The Latin language has been taught formally for over two thousand years; since the birth of the Roman Republic all the way up to the modern day, Latin paradigms have been drilled and practiced by countless students, and presented by innumerable teachers. Over the last few centuries Latin pedagogy has come to rely heavily on this traditional method of teaching the language. For all of Latin pedagogy's history in the United States (and further back, in Europe) Latin has been learned through drills and rote memorization of declensions, conjugations, and vocabulary. This traditional approach becomes institutionalized in that those who desire to teach Latin are, logically, those for whom these approaches were effective and enjoyable ways of learning Latin. Needless to say, this results in affection for the traditional approach to Latin pedagogy. We teach as we learned, after all. Today, this has started to change as Latin teachers are beginning to branch out and use modern, spoken language teaching techniques to present Latin. However, Latin is not a spoken language, and the goals of Latin pedagogy are fundamentally different from those of spoken language pedagogy. Latin classes aim to teach students how to read and comprehend ancient texts, not to discuss the weather or going to the supermarket. To some extent, then, integrating spoken language pedagogic techniques into a Latin classroom is running a car without letting the tires hit the road. The engine's certainly running, but no one is going anywhere. This means that the goals of traditional Latin pedagogy are not misguided, and must be acknowledged as valuable, even if the techniques are not. Latin pedagogy has produced generations of capable readers of Latin who are able to comprehend and access the vast library of ancient Latin texts.

These texts represent a resource we cannot afford to squander by ignoring it in favor of teaching students to speak, rather than read Latin. A method of teaching Latin must be introduced that acknowledges the goals of Latin pedagogy, namely creating Latin-literate students, but which also embraces new developments in language learning research.

Great benefit can be gained from applying methods founded on modern language acquisition research to Latin pedagogy. It is undeniable that scientific experiments and research have created a thorough (and still growing) documentation of how human brains acquire language most easily and efficiently. Students of any language acquire vocabulary and grammar best through instruction that, as John Gruber-Miller says: "focuses on communication of information, feelings, and ideas, using the language to comprehend and produce discourse in meaningful, creative, and spontaneous ways."[1] In other words, students acquire language through a discursive, conversational setting that fosters their natural psychological approaches to learning. In addition to this is the almost self-evident, but easy to forget, fact that students learn best when they are engaged with the material. W. B. Elley has found that students acquire new vocabulary at a significantly faster rate when they are interested in the material they are studying.[2] Intuitively, we all know that we are quick to learn our favorite material, but it can be easy to forget that others are often not nearly as interested as we are in the minutiae of our favorite topic (whatever that may be). As this brief overview indicates, modern second language acquisition research does have

[1] John Gruber-Miller, *When Dead Tongues Speak: Teaching Beginning Greek and Latin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 12

[2] W. B. Elley, "Vocabulary Acquisition from Listening to Stories", *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24, 174-187 in I. S. P. Nation, *Learning vocabulary in another language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 63.

value to Latin pedagogy, and must be explored in detail in order to understand how best to integrate it with the goals of teaching Latin: namely, the creation of fluent readers.

While conversation, seemingly a purely oral aspect of language, is the most efficient way of transmitting language, reading is also equally valuable, and, according to I. S. P. Nation, may actually have a greater impact on vocabulary growth than spoken discourse.[3] The format of the commentary, a traditional method of portraying texts in Classics, has been shown to greatly facilitate the comprehension and retention of vocabulary, grammar, and concepts in language students.[4] The ideal method of teaching Latin could combine aspects of discourse with reading assisted by commentary, in order to take advantage of the dual resources of modern language acquisition research and the Latin textual corpus. I propose that the medium of the letter suits all of these needs. The Romans were obsessed with writing letters, and we thus possess a vast library of letters from many different ranks of Roman society. Additionally, letters are "conversations halved."[5] The dialogical nature of the letter, especially in cases where both halves of the aforementioned conversation are present in the corpus, allows for the seamless combination of the goals of Latin learning with the power of modern language acquisition research. In illustration of this theory, I present an example of ancient Roman epistolarity that not only exemplifies this synthesis, but is also uniquely suited, due to its compelling and accessible content

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[3] I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 144.
[4] Nation, 174-177.
[5] Carol Poster, "A Conversation Halved" in Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, *Letter-writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, Studies in rhetoric/communication, Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2007, 21.

(which I will treat more fully in Part II), to the Intermediate Latin classroom. This example is the *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*.

Discovered on a palimpsest in the 19th century by Angelo Mai, the *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae* (hereafter simply the *Epistulae*) represent the collected letters of Marcus Cornelius Fronto, a preeminent Latin orator in the 2nd century C.E. In the 1800s, it was known that Fronto was considered a master of Latin rhetoric, and that he was even considered the Cicero of his day. Fronto was also recorded as the teacher of Marcus Aurelius, and as a family friend of the Antonines. However, in this period, very little else was known about the mysterious Fronto and his relationships with Marcus Aurelius and the rest of the imperial family. As a result, when the *Epistulae* were uncovered, their discovery created a sensation – not least because contained in the palimpsest were not only Fronto's letters, but the responses of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Antoninus Pius, and other eminent figures of the Antonine Age. At last, the second Cicero would be revealed through his correspondence, undoubtedly as edifying and eloquent as Cicero's own letters.

Alas, it was not to be. The scholars who edited and commentated the recovered texts were disheartened not to find the second Cicero, or even the scholar-prince Marcus Aurelius hiding within the *Epistulae*. Instead, what was revealed was a gossipy, mundane correspondence between a hypochondriac (Fronto) and his equally gossipy friends (including Marcus Aurelius). "Niebuhr… found the orator stupid, frivolous, and the very opposite of eloquent; Naber expressed both dislike and contempt for an author whose works would have been better left buried in the

palimpsest whence they had emerged."[6] The content of the letters was (and still is, to some extent) seen as frivolous and inelegant, revealing a Fronto who was the opposite of everything he was said to be. No great orator or skilled lawyer was found in the letters, no revelatory sign of the philosopher-prince Marcus Aurelius leapt off the page. Yet, despite the disappointments felt by early scholars, there is a great deal of value, especially didactic value, inherent in the letters. The *Epistulae* have been criticized for their everyday, mundane content, and their writers' focus on gossip and pedestrian affairs. Disregarding for a moment whether or not these complaints are valid, these mundane, gossipy, and even racy traits are themselves part of what makes the letters so valuable.

The content of the *Epistulae* focuses on the everyday affairs of Marcus and Fronto. In fact, in one letter Marcus gropes for some topic about which to write to his teacher, and describes in detail a day in his life at his adopted father's country estate (and even the weather). This content should feel familiar to modern readers; it is the sort of thing we ourselves might write to our close friends. In disregarding the *Epistulae* on account of their style and lack of historically valuable content, scholars have ignored a gold mine of information on interpersonal relationships in the classical age, especially considering the complexity of Marcus and Fronto's relationship. The two, after all, experienced a power dynamic unlike any other due to the constant, perhaps unconscious, vying to establish roles of dominance. Indeed, through the course of their lives they transitioned from Fronto as *magister,* with a great deal of influence over Marcus, to Marcus as the supreme authority not only over Fronto, but

[6] Edward Champlin, *Fronto and Antonine Rome*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980, 1-2. Barthold G. Niebuhr and Samuel Naber were the first editors of the *Epistulae* after Angelo Mai discovered the text.

the entire Roman world. Add in the possibility of erotic involvement between the pair, and the result is a racy, utterly fascinating portrayal of relationships in the Mediterranean world – just the thing to engage a modern audience with genuine Latin text.

In this paper, I propose to create a tool to allow Latin teachers to combine the insights of modern language research with the discursive content of the neglected *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*. Not only are the *Epistulae* genuinely valuable in terms of the insight they grant about Roman interpersonal relationships and exchanges during the 2nd century, but they are also of great utility in teaching Latin at the intermediate level. In Part I of this paper, I will address the nature of epistolary theory and the criteria by which epistolarity is defined, factors that are essential for interpreting Marcus Aurelius and Fronto's relationship. Then, in Part II, I will outline the biographies of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto. Finally, in Part III, I will present the relevant findings of modern second language acquisition research. By providing the context of both the nature of epistolary theory and the lives and relationship of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, I will create a foundation upon which to build, using tools provided by modern language acquisition research, the powerful and effective method of teaching students Latin that the *Epistulae* represent. Through the format of the commentary, the conversational content of the *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae* can be unlocked, allowing students and teachers to take advantage of modern language acquisition research while simultaneously upholding the goal of Latin pedagogy, which is to create fluent readers of Latin.

Part I: The Epistolary Genre and the Nature of the *Epistulae*

To state simply that Marcus and Fronto were writing letters to one another ignores the intricate formal strictures of letter-writing, as well as the epistolary culture that underpinned Roman society. It is easy to forget, with instantaneous communication so commonplace, and world travel an achievable possibility to many privileged individuals, the importance of letters to prior generations of just a few hundred years ago. Marcus Aurelius and Fronto lived in a world where journeys of months separated correspondents, and where writing letters was simply the *only* means of communicating with faraway friends and family. Just as in the modern age, Marcus Aurelius and Fronto wrote letters according to rules and traditions of style established by centuries of letter-writers. As a result, the *Epistulae* represent excellent examples of epistolary norms (in the vein of Cicero and Pliny), and serve as a perfect introduction to the culture of Roman correspondence. The complexity of the Roman (and Greek) letter-writing culture was such that entire manuals were written on the proper form and style of letters (both formal and informal). These traditional formats and structures were established hundreds of years before Marcus or even Fronto were born, and were firmly entrenched in the minds of all letter-writers by the time the *Epistulae* were written. A firm grounding in both these stylistic codes, as well as the epistolary culture in which these strictures blossomed, is necessary in order to properly approach the *Epistulae* and frame these letters in their proper context.

Ancient Epistolary Theory

What is a letter? This is a deceptively complex question, and one that is essential to presenting the *Epistulae* at not only the intermediate level, but to any

reader of Latin. The letter has existed for millennia, serving as a means of communication, formal and informal, between distant correspondents. While actual paper letters are rarer today, we still participate in this ancient tradition of communication, albeit with much more rapidity, using e-mail. While this newer system of letter-writing is still being codified, and there are a great many styles and standards, there are still some accepted rules that regulate how to write an e-mail. How closely these codes cleave to those of physical letters varies widely, but both paper and electronic formats demand a certain degree of attention to style, content, and length. The ways these strictures define and codify what constitutes a letter is a matter of great interest to both ancient and modern epistolary theorists. Letter-writing manuals, detailed guides to writing proper letters, were frequently published and disseminated in the ancient world. Indeed, these manuals were regarded so highly that, even though they can be traced to no author, they were still attributed to renowned writers such as Demetrius or Libanius (both prolific letter-writers). In addition to letter-writing manuals, Greco-Roman correspondents would read and attempt to mimic the works of great authors who published their letters, such as Cicero and Pliny, who were both greatly admired by Marcus Aurelius and Fronto. As a result of these models, proper letters were expected to follow certain criteria of length, content, and style. Examination of these strictures will provide insight into the nature of the *Epistulae* themselves, allowing us to explore them in the proper epistolary context.

Of all the aforementioned proscriptions, length is often the most contentious, especially amongst Greco-Roman epistolary theorists, who were frustrated by authors

who dressed up immense texts as letters. Indeed, length was one of the foremost ways of defining a letter. As Ps. Demetrius[7] says, "the length of a letter… must be carefully regulated. Those that are too long, and further are rather stilted in expression, are not in sober truth letters but treatises with the heading 'My dear So-and-So.'"[8] Such letters were referred to by epistolary theorists as 'treatises in disguise,' perhaps indicating the source of the authors' frustrations. After all, when one sits down to read a letter from a friend, one does not expect to be diving in to a long-winded, rambling letter. Another issue indirectly addressed by Ps. Demetrius and Ps. Libanius is that it was also possible for a letter to be too *short*. Cicero, for example, displayed enough anxiety about a terse letter to his friend Atticus to at least mention it: "eo factum est ut epistulae tuae rescriberem aliquid, brevitate temporis tam pauca cogerer scribere."[9] "That's how it came about that I should be writing a reply of some sort to you, but should be forced by lack of time to write so briefly."[10] A good letter, then, should not be too long-winded, else the reader grow bored of reading, but it should also not be too short, or the reader will feel slighted and unsatisfied. This aspect of letters makes them well suited to the intermediate Latin classroom, as they are long enough to have some useful content, but short enough to avoid overwhelming students.

While some letters of the *Epistulae* do indeed fit the term 'treatises in disguise,' the majority of them adhere to the norms of length outlined above. Fronto

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[7] It is customary, even though we know Demetrius and Libanius were not the authors of the manuals quoted, to refer to them as if they were the authors. Ps., an abbreviation of pseudo-, represents a nod to the fact that the listed author is not the real composer.
[8] W. Rhys, Roberts, ed. & translator, *Demetrius On style: the Greek Text of Demetrius De elocutione*, Cambridge: University Press, 1902, 175.
[9] Michael B. Trapp, *Greek and Latin letters: an Anthology, with Translation*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 56.
[10] Trapp, 57.

shows an awareness of his violation of the length criterion in Letter 3.8, when he says, after expounding for most of the letter about the proper way of constructing similes, "τὴν δὲ ὅλην τῶν εἰκόνων τέχνην alias diligentias et subtilius persequemur."[11] "On another occasion we will follow out, with more care and exactness, the whole art of simile making."[12] Having already written an extremely long letter, Fronto half-heartedly wraps up his treatise by promising a further, in-person accounting of simile making. Fronto has clearly violated the precept of length by holding forth on the art of simile construction; he is also aware of his transgression, aware enough that he needs to note the improper nature of his letter through the promise of a more appropriate discussion (i.e. face-to-face lecture) on simile making. Likewise, Marcus apologizes for going on at length in Letter 2.11 when he says: "Sed quid ego, me qui paucula scripturum promisi, deliramenta Masuriana congero? igitur vale, magister benignissime, consul amplissime."[13] "But why have I, who promised myself to write little, gathered Masurian[14] nonsense? Therefore goodbye, my most blessed teacher…"[15] While they do not display quite the same concern as Cicero over short letters, Marcus Aurelius does seem to feel the need to excuse his brevity in letter 4.7. "Tandem tabellarius proficiscitur et ego tridui acta mea ad te tandem possum dimittere. nec quicquam dico: ita epistulis prope ad XXX

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[11] Édmund Hauler and Michael P. J. Hout, *M Cornelii Fronto: M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae: Schedis Tam Editis Quam Ineditis Edmundi Hauleri*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Leipzig: Teubner, 1988, 42, lines 2-3.
[12] C. R. Haines, *The Correspondence of Marcus Cornelius Fronto with Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Lucius Verus, Antoninus Pius, and Various Friends*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957, vol. I, 39.
[13] Hauler & van den Hout, 31, lines 17-18.
[14] Masurius Sabinus was a jurist during Tiberius' reign (14-37 C.E.), Marcus may thus be referring to the minutiae of legal language here.
[15] This and all subsequent translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

dictandis spiritum insumpsi."[16] "At last the messenger is starting, and at last I can send you my three days' budget of news. But I cannot *say* anything, to such an extent have I exhausted my breath by dictating nearly thirty letters."[17] The *Epistulae*, then, obey the rules of length, or at the very least, their authors are aware when they have broken the rules, and are appropriately apologetic.

As one might guess, length and content are related to some extent. Even a shorter letter whose content makes it seem a "treatise in disguise" is subject to immediate suspicion. As Ps. Demetrius points out:

> If anybody should write of logical subtleties or questions of natural history in a letter, he writes indeed, but not a letter. A letter is designed to be the heart's good wishes in brief; it is the exposition of a simple subject in simple terms.[18]

The content of the letter, then, must be analogous to the spoken conversation. In this respect, especially, length and content are intertwined. It is hardly polite to expound endlessly on a long, winding topic in conversation with someone; doing so would not be participating in a dialogue, but rather a lecture. This very fact is also true of letters, which were seen as a conversation transmitted via writing rather than speaking. "A letter, then, is a kind of written conversation with someone from whom one is separated… One will speak in it as though one were in the company of the absent person."[19] The ideal letter (at least in terms of content) is one that explores conversational topics of interest to both parties. However, for the purposes of this

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[16] Hauler & van den Hout, 63, lines 13-15.
[17] Haines, vol. I, 185.
[18] Roberts,175-177.
[19] Abraham J. Malherbe ed. & translator, "Pseudo Libanius: Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες" in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, Sources for Biblical Study, no. 19, Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1988, 67.

commentary, letters with everyday, conversational content are of the greatest interest for purposes of their value in teaching Latin.

Whereas the *Epistulae* adhere more loosely to codes of length, they much more strictly follow rules concerning content. Indeed, they follow these rules almost too strictly for many Classical scholars. The *Epistulae* have been derided for their gossipy, conversational content, filled as they are with concerns of Fronto's (and occasionally Marcus') health, discussions of the weather, and accounts of daily activities. Marcus himself admits in Letter 2.11 that "nihil opera pretium, quod ad te scriberetur," or, "nothing worth mentioning could be written to you," before he launches into a discussion of his daily routine, the theater, and the weather.[20] In Letter 3.10 he writes of his birthday wishes to Fronto.[21] And Fronto writes back of his mundane pining for Marcus in Letter 2.13.[22] Perhaps most importantly, the content of the *Epistulae* reveals, as Ps. Demetrius says, each author's "own soul in… letters. In every other form of composition it is possible to discern the writer's character, but none so clearly as in the epistolary."[23] This feature of letters as a whole as well as of the *Epistulae* is especially fascinating, as it allows us to peer not only into the past, but into the thoughts and feelings of the letter-writers. With respect to content, then, the *Epistulae* certainly conform to the strictures of ancient letter-writing, and even address topics familiar and accessible to the modern audience, while allowing the reader to vicariously relive Marcus and Fronto's shared life and relationship.

[20] Hauler & van den Hout, 30, lines 16-17.
[21] Hauler & van den Hout, 43.
[22] Hauler & van den Hout, 32.
[23] Roberts, 175.

Content and length were not the only strictures placed upon letters in the classical world. In addition to the significance of length and content, there were a great many stylistic concerns for the writing of letters. These concerns were so paramount that, as already mentioned, letter-writing manuals were created to teach the proper styles of letter writing. In these manuals are lists of varying numbers of letter types, as well as advice on letter-writing and examples of the manifold types of letters. As Ps. Libanius says, in the letter-writing manual attributed to him:

> It is therefore fitting that someone who wishes to write letters not do so artlessly or indifferently, but with the greatest precision and skill. One could write in the best possible style if he knew what an epistle was, what, generally speaking, custom allowed one to say in it, and into what types it was divided.[24]

One of the primary goals of these letter-writing manuals was to impart knowledge of the proper tone of a letter, as well as the formulae governing the opening and closing of the letter. Especially in informal letters (as most of the *Epistulae are*), the opening of the letter was typically occupied by descriptions of one's own health, and inquiries after the health of the correspondent. The end of the letter was usually reserved for wishes for the good health of one's correspondent. Even informal letters were characterized by an obsession with the quality of the writing, and frequently these anxieties about the style were expressed in the letter itself. Indeed, while letters were seen to be dialogues, they were also expected to carry a greater deal of stylistic weight and eloquence than a conversation. "In general it may be remarked that, from the point of view of expression, the letter should be a compound of two styles, viz.

[24] Malherbe, 67.

[sic] the graceful and the plain."[25] The importance of this aspect of letters can be seen in the great number of authors (Cicero, Seneca, Pliny, and many more) for whom the possibility of publishing their letters encouraged attention to stylistic detail.

Just as the *Epistulae* conform to strictures of content and length, so too do they adhere to strictures of style. The *Epistulae* certainly display opening and closing formulae typical of Latin letters (such as the the dative form of address "domino meo" "to my lord," or Marcus' informal *have*, hail, and *vale*, farewell, favored by both authors) as well as greetings and inquiries after the correspondent's health and wishes for continued (or renewed) good health. The *Epistulae* are especially notorious for taking this last feature to an extreme. Fronto has, in fact, been theorized by some scholars to have been a hypochondriac, given his obsession with describing his illnesses and pains in excruciating detail. In addition to these epistolary markers of opening and closing formula, and health concerns, the *Epistulae* display the typical anxiety over the quality of the writing, such as when Marcus chides himself for gathering "Masurian nonsense," and rambling ineloquently, in Letter 2.11.[26] This stylistic anxiety of the letters is interesting to note as evidence that aristocratic Romans in general were concerned about letter quality. Given that Marcus and Fronto's correspondence were not published by either correspondent, it is unlikely they were originally written for publication.[27] Despite this, though, Marcus and Fronto worry over the style of their letters, and express this anxiety throughout the *Epistulae*. In these respects then, the *Epistulae* conform to the strictures of style

[25] Roberts, 177.
[26] Hauler & van den Hout, 30.
[27] Haines, vol. I, xix.

expected of even informal letter-writing in the Roman world, just as they do to commonplaces of length and content.

A Culture of Letter-Writing

The aforementioned strictures of style, length, and content, and the degree to which they were examined, illustrate just how important letters were to the Greeks and Romans. Indeed, letters were so vital and important that a vibrant culture was born around them. This culture of Latin letter-writing flourished for centuries, from the heyday of the Republic to the last dying throes of the Empire (wherever you place them). From the plebeian of the lowest means to the emperor himself, there is evidence of letter-writing at every level of the Roman social hierarchy. While there was some degree of variation in the form of the Roman letter, the culture of letter-writing was also highly regularized, and composed of distinct features. The culture of letter-writing included diverse factors such as materials used (often a function of class), distances crossed and couriers used, as well as the social customs involved in corresponding in the ancient Mediterranean. All of these aspects of the letter-writing culture had an enormous impact on the *Epistulae*, and must be examined in detail in order to understand the context for the practice of writing letters engaged in by Marcus Aurelius and Fronto.

Materials

In the modern world, where everyone is a phone call or text away, and paper is cheap and accessible, it is hard to imagine a time when communicating with one's friends and relatives was a massive chore. Of course, communication was as essential then as it is now, and such problems had to be overcome if it were to occur at all. The

vast and imaginative variety of materials upon which letters were written is a testament to this spirit of determination. Not only were letters written on more standard materials such as papyrus or parchment[28], but also materials such as lead, wood, or even wax.[29] Material choice was largely a function of available monetary resources, with the use of papyrus and parchment especially favored by aristocratic Romans.[30] Waxen tablets were fairly common, especially when a short note needed to be penned quickly.[31] Availability of local materials was also a factor, as the Vindolanda Tablets were almost entirely wooden. In Roman England, it would certainly have been difficult to import papyrus all the way from Egypt, and the Roman army appears to have favored efficiency over aesthetics in this case.

The materials used in letter-writing are of great import and interest to classical scholars if only for their impact on the preservation of letters. Papyrus or parchment letters don't last long in any part of the Roman world save desert climates such as Egypt. As a result, most letters that have been excavated by archaeologists were written on far more resilient materials (such as lead or wood, in the case of the Vindolanda Tablets). It is difficult to say how prevalent papyrus or parchment use was amongst the Roman letter-writers, but it is probable that if anyone had access to such materials, it would be the future Emperor and his teacher. While the original letters of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto have long since been lost (and even the palimpsest destroyed), it is likely that both correspondents made use of papyrus or parchment, and perhaps occasionally waxen tablets.

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[28] Finley Hooper and Matthew Schwartz, *Roman Letters: History from a Personal Point of View*, Classical studies pedagogy series. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991, 11.
[29] Trapp, 1-2.
[30] Hooper & Schwartz, 11.
[31] Ibid.

Letter Delivery

Of course, putting one's letter down on papyrus (or lead, or wood, etc.) is merely the first half of long-distance communication in the Roman world. Unlike today, the Romans lacked a state postal system. In fact, until the rise of the Empire, nothing resembling a postal system existed at all. It took the institution of imperial bureaucracy to set up a network of couriers across Roman territory in order to deliver imperial missives and directives quickly and safely.[32] Ordinary citizens (no matter how rich) were largely denied access to this system, and had to rely on far more uncertain means to deliver their letters. The very richest Romans could send their slaves on long journeys with letters in hand, but this seems to have been an uncommon practice, perhaps due to the value of a slave and the risk of flight.[33] More common was the practice of sending one's letters along with friends, freedmen, or, perhaps the riskiest option, with strangers who happened to be going the right way.[34] This system had a great number of drawbacks, least of all the uncertainty of one's letters arriving safely.

> Cicero, one of the busiest of correspondents, complained that he knew of letters sent to him that he never received. In fact, the difficulty of getting a letter delivered made it necessary at times to have two persons carry identical copies of the same messages.[35]

The paucity of reliable couriers meant that on the occasions when one was available, there was often a great deal of pressure to jot something down. Many correspondents mention that their courier is near at hand, ready to depart and waiting for the writer to

[32] Hooper & Schwartz,12-13.
[33] Hooper & Schwartz, 12.
[34] Hooper & Schwartz, 12-13.
[35] Hooper & Schwartz, 13.

produce his missive. It is understandable, then, that so many authors worried about the quality of their letter. Uncertain if they would even be able to send it, it was better to wait until a courier presented himself, but this led to less time to compose or perhaps even proofread the letter. Given the strictures of style, content, and length placed on letters by Roman culture, anxiety over meeting such benchmarks on such short notice is understandable.

Marcus Aurelius and Fronto certainly followed the customs outlined above as regards letter delivery. As aristocratic Romans (one of them even being a member of the imperial family), they would have had access to slaves and freedmen, as well as traveling friends who could deliver their letters. Marcus Aurelius mentions couriers twice in Letter 1.3.[36] In one instance, the courier is muttering and ready to be off (prompting Marcus to finish his letter), and another courier is mentioned, whom Marcus plans on holding back until he can write another letter. It is possible, because Marcus Aurelius was the future emperor, that he at least could have taken advantage of the imperial postal service. However, this seems somewhat out of character for him, given his temperance with regards to his authority (addressed more thoroughly in Part II of this paper). Of note is the fact that neither correspondent mentions missing a letter, which might indicate that their means of delivery was fairly reliable. Of course, considering how incomplete the corpus is, this could also mean we simply do not have the letters in which such concerns were voiced.

[36] Hauler & van den Hout, 2-5.

Cultural Customs of Composition

In addition to materials and means of transportation, there were a great many socio-cultural customs that influenced letter composition. Just one such phenomenon is the painful awareness of the gulf in distance in time between correspondents. This "gap," as Michael Trapp puts it, is of great concern to all Roman letter-writers. Though the level of acknowledgement varies, correspondents make use of structural forms such as epistolary tenses, and also reminiscences and wishes for the removal of the gap, in order to narrow it, and increase the two writers' closeness. The use of the epistolary tense is one especially common way of narrowing the temporal and spatial gap. "What is present to the writer at the time of writing will be past to the reader at time of reading. This fact is sometimes… acknowledged in the tenses chosen by letter-writers."[37] In other words, epistolary correspondents will use a past tense in place of a present tense when describing what has been happening at the time of their writing; writing, as it were, from the perspective of the future reader, rather than themselves. In addition to the use of epistolary tenses, correspondents will often express their pain at being separated from each other. Describing how much one misses one's correspondent, and hearing such feelings echoed, metaphorically decreases the size of the gap by creating a feeling of closeness between the writers. Both of these customs are frequently seen in the *Epistulae*, such as in Letter 2.12, when Fronto, wishing he were with Marcus Aurelius, says: "quid est autem quod iuraturus sum me consulatu abire? ego vero etiam illud iuravero, me olim consulatu

[37] Trapp, 36.

abire cupere, ut M. Aurelium conplectar."[38] "What is it, however, the fact that I will swear to abdicate my consulship? But I will swear even that long have I desired to resign the consulship, in order that I may embrace M. Aurelius." Marcus, too, pines for Fronto, and expresses the belief that the time they spend apart is longer than it actually is. "Ego biennio iam non vidi. nam quod aiunt quidam duos menses interfuisse, tantum dies numerant."[39] "I have not seen [you] in a space of two years now. For when certain people say that two months have passed, they count only the days."

The social roles enacted by correspondents in their letters are one of the most fascinating customs of epistolography. The act of writing letters, especially in elite circles such as that of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, was an exercise in establishing and maintaining social ties. Just as in everyday socialization, there were rules for interacting with others via letters. "If an epistolary relationship was to proceed smoothly, it was imperative that each correspondent play by the rules and, especially, perform his prescribed part (e.g. student, teacher, doctor, patient, father, son)."[40] This custom of playing epistolary roles echoes the hierarchical structures of Roman life: that of patron and client, father and son, student and teacher, etc. "In the case of Augustine and Jerome… the discernible hostilities in the correspondence arise because Augustine deliberately refuses to play *iuvenis* [the youth] to Jerome's *senex* [elder] and instead represents himself as Jeromes exegetical equal."[41] The

[38] Hauler & van den Hout, 32, lines 12-14.
[39] Hauler & van den Hout, 28
[40] Jennifer Ebbeler, "Mixed Messages: The Play of Epistolary Codes in Two Late Antique Latin Correspondances" in Ruth Morello and A D. Morrison, *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 302.
[41] Ebbeler, 302.

consequences for stepping outside such roles in the social sphere could be dire indeed, especially in times of upheaval. This reality is no less true in letters, though the consequences are certainly less immediately hazardous to one's health, and more hazardous to the epistolary relationship. "So long as both correspondents performed according to expectations, the correspondence proceeded apace. If they did not… the epistolary relationship grew contentious."[42] As noted from Ps. Libanius previously, a letter is a "kind of written conversation," in which one ought to write "as though one were in the company of the absent person," and as such the letter follows the norms of the social world in which it was composed, as well as the norms of epistolography.

Both the adherence to and flouting of these norms can be seen in the *Epistulae*. In letters 3.2 and 3.3, for instance, Marcus Aurelius and Fronto can be seen attempting to establish their own hierarchy without damaging their epistolary relationship. In these letters, which will be addressed more fully in Part II, Marcus and Fronto argue over Fronto's acceptance of a high-profile legal case. Marcus writes to Fronto, and remonstrates against attacking his opponent *ad hominem*. "adeo sive tu me temerarium consultorem sive audacem puerulum sive adversario tuo benivolentiorem esse existimabis, non propterea, quod rectius esse arbitrabor, pedetemptius tibi consulam."[43] Or, "Just whether you judge me to be a brash counselor, or an audacious boy, or more benevolent to your opponent, not on that account will I judge what is more correct, or counsel you more cautiously." In doing this, Marcus rejects his role as student and asserts his role as Caesar, although he does not go so far as to openly command Fronto to do anything. This indicates that Marcus

[42] Ebbeler, 323.
[43] Hauler & van den Hout, 36, lines 11-14.

is well aware of the customs he is bending, and is unwilling to fully break them lest he should harm their (epistolary) relationship. Fronto, too, is clearly concerned about stepping lightly, and not straining their correspondence any further. He takes pains to reassure Marcus that the assertion of his new role is not without merit. "Periculum est plane ne tu quicquam pueriliter aut inconsulte suadeas!"[44] "The danger is plainly not that you advise something in the manner of a little boy or without counsel!" Yet, Fronto also wishes to assert his own epistolary role as a teacher and lawyer. Even though he questions Marcus' advice, he carefully enumerates his points in the way only a rhetorician can. "sed ea quae in causa sunt (sunt autem atrocissima) quemadmodum tractem, id ipsum est quod addubito et consilium posco."[45] "But how I might manage those things which are in the case (they are indeed most atrocious), that is itself what I doubt and about which I ask your advice." Even in this case, however, Fronto is careful to equivocate, and to simultaneously assert his own role by questioning Marcus' counsel while also acknowledging his pupil's role by couching his questioning in terms of seeking advice. Both of the correspondents, then, are acutely aware of the importance of these epistolary customs, and take great pains to avoid stepping too far out of the bounds of their expected roles in order to maintain their epistolary relationship.

As can clearly be seen, the *Epistulae* conform to both the formal and cultural strictures of epistolography. The importance of these formal precepts is exemplified in the prevalence of ancient epistolary theory, and the anxieties about and obsessions over adherence to stylistic standards in letters. These essential structures can be found

[44] Hauler & van den Hout, 37, lines 1-2.
[45] Hauler & van den Hout, 37, lines 14-15.

throughout the *Epistulae* in the form of their adherence to norms of length, content, and style. Likewise, the *Epistulae* confirm to the cultural norms of ancient epistolography, including the use of epistolary tenses, awareness of the temporal and spatial gap between correspondents, and the upholding of hierarchical roles in letters. While knowledge of these features is certainly fascinating today, in the ancient world an awareness of the norms of letter-writing was absolutely vital to the proper functioning of an individual in a letter-writing society. The epistolary conventions that have been covered in this section would have been intuitively and unconsciously familiar to Marcus Aurelius and Fronto. As has been demonstrated, they instantly know when they have broken the rules, and, while they don't mention the specific rule that has been broken, they apologize for deviating from the norms they instinctively follow. This level of intuitive understanding of epistolary conventions means that any approach to an examination of the *Epistulae* must strive to be as familiar with these codes as Marcus and Fronto were.

Part II: A Prince of Rome and a Tutor of Caesars

Marcus Aurelius, one of the 'Five Good Emperors' of the 2nd century C.E., was a philosopher-king and prolific writer of many works, including his well-known *Meditations*. Marcus Cornelius Fronto, considered the greatest Latin writer and orator of his generation, taught princes and tried some of the most important cases of his age. Yet, despite their great achievements, the Marcus and Fronto we see in the *Epistulae* are much more approachable and accessible to us as we peer voyeuristically into their private lives. Perhaps it is simply because the *Epistulae* represent private correspondence between close friends. Perhaps, instead, as several scholars in the last hundred years or so have concluded, it is simply because Marcus and Fronto (especially Fronto) don't live up to their reputations. Regardless of why the *Epistulae* are accessible, gossipy, and quotidian, the most relevant fact is that these qualities are invaluable to Latin pedagogy. For the intermediate Latin student, these larger-than-life figures are most useful to learning when they are viewed in the accessible, human way they are presented in the *Epistulae*, disappointing as they are to scholars. Of course, proper historical grounding is essential to understanding Marcus and Fronto's relationship. Contextual, biographical information is important for providing a foundation upon which students can make judgments about the thoughts and motivations of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto; this ability to make such judgements is vital for facilitating the creation of a dialogic environment in which to teach Latin. As a result, we shall briefly unveil the biographies and relationship of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, with especial focus on their lives around the time of the writing of the *Epistulae*.

The Stoic Prince Marcus Aurelius

Marcus was born in 121 C.E. to Annius Verus and Domitia Lucilla. He was raised on the Caelian Hill in Rome, which was the home of the rich and fashionable. Marcus apparently looked back on his birthplace with some fondness, referring to it as "my Caelian Hill."[46] After Marcus' father died he was adopted by his grandfather, also called Annius Verus, though his mother Lucilla played an important role in his early life.[47] This influence persisted throughout his life, and Marcus frequently refers to her in the *Epistulae* (she is the "My Lady" frequently mentioned by Marcus and Fronto). Marcus is said to have been a serious child even at a very young age, and at the age of six he had begun to capture the attention of the Emperor Hadrian himself. In 127 Marcus was inducted, by Hadrian, into a priestly order called the Salii. The Salii performed ritual dances in the name of Mars, and Marcus apparently took his duties as a member very seriously.[48] It was Marcus' seriousness and devotion to his studies which apparently led him to make a great impression on the Emperor Hadrian, who nicknamed him 'Verissimus,' or "truest."[49]

Even as early as 136 C.E., two years before Hadrian's death and the accession of Antoninus Pius, there is speculation among scholars that Hadrian was attempting to pave the way for Marcus' rise to power. As Hadrian's strength faded, he appointed a series of heirs who, through mishap and occasionally outright paranoia on Hadrian's part, were soon removed as potential successors. One of these, Ceionus Commodus, whose only remarkable quality was said to be his beauty, was adopted by Hadrian in

[46] Anthony R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius, a Biography*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, 23-27.
[47] Birley, 30-33.
[48] Birley, 32-36.
[49] Birley, 38.

136 C.E. Commodus had a family connection with Marcus, which may have motivated Hadrian to adopt him as a sort of placeholder for Marcus.[50] Ultimately, however, Commodus died of illness and Antoninus Pius, Marcus' uncle, was appointed heir in 138 C.E. Interestingly, Hadrian placed two conditions on his adoption of Antoninus, namely that he adopt Marcus and another young boy, who would become Marcus' brother and co-emperor, Lucius Verus.[51] It was at the time of his adoption by Antoninus that Marcus formally became Marcus Aurelius Verus, and thus, Caesar of the Roman Empire.

Marcus was said to be 'appalled' by the adoption, and only moved from his mother's house on the Caelian Hill with great reluctance. When questioned about his reticence at residing with his new grandfather Hadrian on the Palatine Hill, Marcus began to "[list] to them the evils that the imperial power contained in itself."[52] Marcus is also described as avoiding the privileges of his new position, including enjoining his agents not "to do anything in a high-handed fashion" in the course of managing his new estates and financial affairs.[53] Marcus also refused legacies that had been left him, transferring them to their next of kin rather than reaping the rewards himself. Marcus' attitude toward the Imperial Purple, and his negative associations with it, would persist throughout his life. In the *Epistulae*, Marcus describes his distaste for the sycophants that surround him because of his position, and laments that he feels he can't trust anyone to speak his mind to him.[54] Additionally, Marcus frequently

[50] Birley, 46.
[51] Birley, 53.
[52] Birley, 56.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Hauler & van den Hout, 28.

behaved as if he was not the master of the Roman world even when he became emperor, attending philosophical talks as just another citizen, rather than the ruler of the known world. However, no matter how much Marcus may have wanted to avoid the privileges and problems of Imperial office, he was to be educated in preparation for his duties.

The Rhetorician Fronto

One of the chief forms of a young Caesar's education was Marcus' training in Latin rhetoric under Marcus Cornelius Fronto. Little specific detail is known about Fronto, though we can deduce from letters and other references[55] that he was born in Cirta, a Roman province in Numidia (modern Algeria), and that he then emigrated to Rome at an early age.[56] The exact date of Fronto's birth, however, is completely unknown, although Edward Champlin infers, based on the date of his consulship in 143 C.E., that he might have been born in the last decade of the first century C.E.[57] Fronto was educated in Rome, and, by all accounts, he rarely left the city or its environs. With the exception of a quaestorship in Sicily, all of Fronto's public offices were in Rome.[58] Fronto held court, as it were, in Rome as an authority on rhetoric and literature. This period of Roman literary history was characterized by an interest in archaic Latin styles and Republican writers, both of which were of particular

[55] Namely that his tribe in the senate, the Quirina, was that of Cirta and that Fronto was referred to by one M. Caecilius Natalis, a decurion in the early third century, as "Cirtensis noster."
[56] Champlin 5.
[57] Champlin, 137-138.
[58] Champlin, 21.

fondness to Fronto.[59] Fronto was also a staunch supporter of Latin literature and rhetoric, despite the fact that Greek literature was extremely popular at the time.[60]

In addition to his literary and oratorical pursuits, Fronto was also an accomplished lawyer and maintained a successful political career. It is, unfortunately, difficult to say whether Fronto's law career was based on his legal acumen or his oratorical skill. Certainly there are indications in the *Epistulae* that Fronto was familiar with legal jargon, and that he peppered his writings with such terminology.[61] Whether this indicates a facility and intimate skill with the law is impossible to say. Whether or not his accomplishments as a lawyer were based on legal or rhetorical skill, records certainly indicate that Fronto tried a great many cases, on behalf of communities and individuals alike.[62] It was individuals that Fronto especially favored with his legal skills later in his life. Fronto placed great value on the bonds of friendships and patronage that linked him to a great many personages in Rome (including the emperor and his family). As a result of this value, Fronto was always ready to provide his legal and rhetorical skills on behalf of his friends. On at least one occasion, Fronto even provided legal advice to Marcus Aurelius and his wife Faustina, regarding a dispute over certain inheritance.[63] On another notable occasion, Fronto defended a friend by the name of Demostratus against the Athenian orator and lawyer Herodes Atticus. This particular episode in Fronto's legal career was of great

[59] Champlin, 45.
[60] Champlin, 58.
[61] Champlin, 74-75.
[62] Champlin, 60-74.
[63] Champlin, 71-72.

significance, particularly because of its effect on his relationship with Marcus, but we will return to this momentarily.

In terms of his political career, Fronto built a great deal of influence and political power based on his legal reputation. Fronto's political career spanned the reigns of two emperors, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, a testament to his political flexibility and finesse in dealing with the ultimate power in the Roman world (and all the uncertainty that entails).[64] Fronto was especially known, during his tenure in the senate, for his delivery of speeches of gratitude to the emperor. "He had considerable practice in the genre. Hadrian he had often praised in the senate, he told Marcus, and those speeches remained in circulation, and Pius himself he had eulogized when designated to the consulship."[65] Indeed, thirteen years after receiving the rank of praetor in approximately 130 C.E., Fronto was finally granted the illustrious position of consul around 143 C.E.

Marcus Aurelius and Fronto

It is uncertain when exactly Fronto began teaching Marcus in the art of Latin rhetoric. It seems likely that despite Marcus' mother Lucilla's impressive wealth, Fronto would not have begun educating Marcus until after he was adopted by Antoninus Pius and Hadrian. Additionally, considering that Fronto taught both Marcus and his adoptive brother Lucius Verus, it seems that his position as tutor was an imperial appointment. Although he seems to have been close with both brothers, Fronto was especially fond of Marcus Aurelius. Fronto was always deeply proud of

[64] Champlin, 79.
[65] Champlin, 83.

Marcus' natural talent for rhetoric and eloquence, even going so far as to engage in mild arguments with Marcus' philosophical mentor, Junius Rusticus.

> The occasion for his reference to Rusticus was to mention a disagreement he had with him over Marcus' natural abilities as an orator. Rusticus gave way, unwillingly and with a frown, when Fronto insisted on the reality of his former pupil's talent.[66]

Eloquence lay at the heart of Marcus' education under Fronto, the chief tenet of which was the importance of selecting one's words carefully. Fronto believed very strongly in the value of diverse diction, and especially in the use of obscure and archaic vocabulary.[67] Fronto's strident love for careful wordplay and obscure references was passed down to Marcus, who also took care to select his vocabulary, perhaps in an effort to impress his *magister*.

> aqua mulsa sorbenda usque ad gulam et reiectanda 'fauces fovi' potius quam dicerem 'gargarissavi', nam est ad Novium, credo, et alibi.[68]
>
> By means of swallowing honey water all the way to my throat and then ejecting it out, 'I caressed my throat,' for it is too strong to say 'I had gargled,' as it is in Novius, I believe, and others.

In addition to a love of obscure wordplay, Fronto also attempted, with decreasing success over the years, to convince Marcus of the benefits of devoting oneself to a life of eloquence and rhetoric over philosophy.

Indeed, Marcus began a love affair with philosophy at a very early age, and Fronto fought an uphill battle throughout their relationship in order to try to elevate oratory over philosophy in Marcus' mind.

> In what may have been the first letter, or the first letter of any length, that Fronto wrote to Marcus, he had given him a warning about dabbling in

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[66] Birley, 123.
[67] Birley, 87-89.
[68] Hauler & van den Hout, 62, lines 12-14.

> philosophy… In a later letter Fronto carried the warning further: Marcus had evidently criticized the insincerity of conventional language. Fronto defended the language of oratory… [and] gave the example of Socrates as a philosopher whose command of language was a vital part of his equipment. But at twenty-five Marcus had had enough of taking both sides in imaginary debates.[69]

Despite arguments over his pursuit of philosophy, Marcus and Fronto maintained a long and friendly relationship over the course of Marcus' education. After his marriage to Faustina, and the end of his formal education, it seems Marcus and Fronto's relationship began to cool over time, though it never completely died out.[70] Amy Richlin points out that, in later letters such as 4.13, Marcus balks at homework assignments from Fronto, where he once pursued them so eagerly. More telling than this, however, is the fact that, by 146 C.E., Marcus had dropped his flowery and affectionate addresses of Fronto, referring to him simply as "meo magistro" (my teacher).[71] Even after these events, Marcus may have turned once again to Fronto's rhetorical expertise when he ascended to emperor. After neglecting his rhetorical studies for some time, Marcus was concerned about the effect this would have on his ability to govern, and Fronto obliged his pupil with several new treatises on eloquence and oratory, sent to Marcus in the course of their rich and lengthy correspondence with one another.[72]

Marcus and Fronto's Epistolary Relationship

The vast majority, if not the entirety, of our understanding of Marcus and Fronto's relationship comes from their long correspondence in the *Epistulae*, although their relationship was certainly more than just an epistolary one. However,

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[69] Birley, 121. Birley here refers to letter 3.16.
[70] Birley, 121.
[71] Amy Richlin, ed. translator, *Marcus Aurelius in Love*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 140, notes 1 & 4.
[72] Champlin, 141.

Marcus' duties, especially later in life, often necessitated that he be absent from Rome. Fronto, as has been established, rarely traveled far from the heart of the Empire, and, as a result, an important portion of their relationship was based on exchanges via letters. One of the clearest indicators of the importance of this epistolary relationship is its relevance to maintaining the pair's friendship in times of absence. Indeed, a significant part of the *Epistulae*, and the letters I've selected for this commentary, is spent longing for the absent epistolary partner. As Fronto says of Marcus:

> Meum fratrem beatum, qui vos in isto biduo viderit! at ego Romae haereo conpedibus aureis vinctus, nec aliter kal. Sept. expecto quam superstitiosi stellam, qua visa ieiunium polluant.[73]
>
> My brother is blessed, who saw you these two days! And I am trapped in Rome, having been chained by golden fetters, I await the Kalends of September in no other way than the superstitious do a star, which, having been seen, they violate their fast.

So Marcus says of Fronto:

> Quid ego ista mea fortuna satis dixerim vel quomodo istam necessitatem meam durissimam condigne incusavero, quae me istic ita animo anxio tantaque sollicitudine praepedito alligatum attinet neque me sinit ad meum Frontonem, ad meam pulcherrimam animam confestim percurrere…[74]
>
> What should I say sufficiently about this foul fortune or how will I blame appropriately that hardest necessity of mine, which holds me bound with shackles in this place, with an anxious mind and with much worry, and does not allow me to go to my Fronto, to run to my most beautiful soul immediately…

This expression of their desire to be with one another was a necessary part in maintaining their distant relationship, serving to bring themselves closer together via their shared suffering.

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[73] Hauler & van den Hout, 31, lines 21-23.
[74] Hauler & van den Hout, 1, lines 10-13.

Likewise, Marcus and Fronto write frequently and exhaustively about their ailments and illnesses. Both Marcus and Fronto were sickly, and often ill with various maladies. The two describe their ailments in excruciating detail to one another, and Fronto even describes precisely where the pain of one of his ailments starts, spreads, and stops.[75] Marcus too, describes even a small cold he suffered, going so far as to detail exactly how it affected his diet.

> ego aliquantum prodormivi propter perfrictiunculam, quae videtur sedata esse… sed faucibus curatis abii ad patrem meum et immolanti adstiti. deinde ad merendam itum. quid me censes prandisse? panis tantulum…[76]
>
> I slept a good deal on account of a little chill, which seems to have passed… with my throat having been cared for, I went out to my father and stood at the sacrifice. Then, I departed for lunch. What do you think that I took for lunch? A small amount of bread…

Even this seemingly innocuous exchange of maladies and illnesses was a highly important component of Marcus and Fronto's epistolary relationship. As Annelise Freisenbruch points out,

> Fronto and Marcus Aurelius depend on each other to validate the other's state of health. Moreover, the *rescriptum* has the power to act as a panacea (or perhaps, a placebo?)… these letters demonstrate that one cannot be ill on one's own.[77]

While it is unlikely that Marcus and Fronto actually depended on their correspondence to literally heal their ills, it cannot be denied that they certainly derived comfort and, perhaps, a degree of healing power from their endless discussions of their suffering. Much as with their time spent pining away for one

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[75] Hauler & van den Hout, 104, lines 5-6.
[76] Hauler & van den Hout, 62, lines 9-16.
[77] Annelise Freisenbruch, "Back to Fronto: Doctor and Patient in his Correspondence with an Emperor" in Ruth Morello, and A D. Morrison, *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 241.

another, keeping up with each other's illnesses was another form of sharing their suffering and, thus, bringing themselves closer to one another.

There is one further aspect to Marcus and Fronto's epistolary relationship that is of interest: the possibility that their friendship was sexual in nature. While there is no evidence for a relationship of this nature outside of the *Epistulae*, Amy Richlin makes an interesting case for the sexuality of Marcus and Fronto's relationship. Much of Richlin's most compelling evidence comes from her analysis of the various vocabulary choices made in the *Epistulae*. Richlin argues that Marcus and Fronto favor use of verbs associated with erotic poetry, though even she admits that they are ambiguous. For instance, rather than use a verb that would refer to the everyday kissing Romans performed as greeting and farewell, Fronto uses words like *exosculantium* ("kiss thoroughly") in Letter 3.13.[78] Fronto also, in his discourse on love and elsewhere, seems almost to accuse Marcus of enchanting him with a "Thessalian love charm" (i.e. love potion).

> Thessaly was famous for witches in classical Greece and later; they are often said to make love charms… Making such charms was not a nice thing to do, and it is an unusual imputation to make of a young man.[79]

Marcus, too, makes use of suggestive imagery, such as his reference to Fronto's love for him in Letter 2.11. "immo id cottidie novatur et gliscit et, quod ait Laberius de amore, suo modo καὶ ἐπὶ ἰδίᾳ μούσῃ, 'amor tuus tam cito crescit quam porrus, tam firme quam palma.'" [80] "Indeed, it is renewed daily and it swells up and, what was it Laberius said about love, in his way and in his own style? 'Your love grows faster

[78] Richlin, 150, note 8.
[79] Richlin, 42, note 19.
[80] Hauler & van den Hout, 30, lines 19-21.

than a leek, and as firm as a palm tree.'" Ultimately, however, much of Richlin's evidence is derived from semantic nuance found in the *Epistulae*, rather than hard fact. Her translations certainly read in a highly romantic and erotic manner, but, then, they obviously would. That is not to say that Richlin's theory is without merit, or that it is not an interesting possibility. Indeed, the theory provides a great deal of fodder for speculation, and as a way to challenge students to seek out evidence for Richlin's interpretation. At the very least, it cannot be disputed that Marcus and Fronto do indeed use language characteristic of erotic poetry in reference to one another. It is valuable to be vigilant of such language, if only to analyze it, and consider the possibilities.

The Herodes Atticus Incident

Marcus Aurelius and Fronto had, without a doubt, an impressively long and rich correspondence that served to facilitate their friendship. By and large, their exchanges were smooth and harmonious, but there was one incident of particular note that disturbed this equilibrium: the Herodes Atticus incident. Over a series of two letters (Letters 3.2 and 3.5), Marcus Aurelius writes to Fronto on behalf of his friend and teacher of Greek, Herodes Atticus, whom Fronto is opposing in a case that must have been the sensation of the Antonine age. In this case, Herodes Atticus seems to have been prosecuting a man named Demostratus, who was a friend of Fronto's.[81] Both Herodes and Fronto were considered to be the greatest orators of their time, in Greek and Latin respectively.[82] As a result of this fame, the case was extremely high

[81] Bowersock, G. W. *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 95-99.
[82] Birley, 63.

profile, not least because Herodes was something of an infamous figure at the time.[83] What made this case most significant to Marcus and Fronto, however, was that Herodes Atticus was a family friend of Marcus'.[84] Perhaps unaware of this fact, Fronto had taken the case against Herodes, a deed which greatly displeased Marcus. Marcus' chief concern, however, was not that Fronto was prosecuting Herodes, but simply the legal tactics Fronto might have used in the course of the case. While it is somewhat unclear from Marcus' language, he seems to be concerned either with tactics Fronto has already begun using in the opening arguments of the case, or worried about tactics Fronto *might* employ.

Specifically, Marcus was highly concerned that Fronto would attack his opponent's case *ad hominem*, which was a perfectly acceptable strategy for Roman litigation.[85] Such an attack would mean impugning Herodes Atticus' character, among a great many other things, which Marcus found worrisome. "adpropinquat cognitio, in qua homines non modo orationem tuam benigne audituri, sed indignationem maligne spectaturi videntur."[86] "the investigation approaches, in which not only, it seems, will men be hearing your orations kindly, but will also be looking poorly upon indignities." Marcus couches his letter in terms of the 'advice' he wishes

[83] Herodes was apparently very wealthy, though, according to Philostratus, he was relatively generous with his bounty. However, Herodes was also infamous for an incident involving his father's will, which promised an annual sum to every Athenian citizen. Herodes not only refused to pay the sum, but, through some legal trickery, demonstrated that a great many of the Athenians, in fact, owed Herodes' family money (thus allowing him to pay little to some, none to others, and to actually *charge* others). For more on Herodes Atticus, see Philostratus, Eunapius, and Wilmer Cave Wright. *Philostratus and Eunapius: the lives of the Sophists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1961.
[84] Birley, 33.
[85] Champlin, 63. It was acceptable to attack the character of the plaintiff or the lawyer representing the plaintiff himself.
[86] Hauler & van den Hout, 36, lines 4-6.

to give to Fronto, but several hints clearly indicate Marcus' displeasure with Fronto. For instance, Marcus' insistence that he is requesting a favor of Fronto echoes the style of the "Παρακλητική" ("requesting") template described by Ps. Libanios, as translated by Abraham Malherbe:

> The requesting letter. As in the past I held your sacred friendship in high esteem, so now I expect to receive what I am requesting, and I know full well that I shall receive it! For it is right that genuine friends receive what they request, especially when they are not malicious.[87]

Compare with Marcus' words:

> Saepe te mihi dixisse scio quaerere te, quid maxime faceres gratum mihi. id tempus nunc adest: nunc amorem erga te meum augere potes, si augere potest… qui id a te postulo et magno opere postulo et me, si inpetro, obligari tibi repromitto.[88]
>
> I know that you often said to me to ask you for any favor you could best do for me. Now that time is at hand: now you are able to increase my love toward you, if it can be increased… I who request this from you, who requests this exceedingly, and if I obtain this, promise in return that I am obligated to you.

The actual words may be different, but the language itself is very similar. Note the reference to their past friendship and the hints at mutual obligation. This indicates that Marcus has reverted from taking pains to compose his letter originally to simply reciting formulae from rote, a telling lack of a personal touch. In doing this, Marcus is forcibly reminding Fronto of the distance between them as a way of expressing his displeasure. Further evidence for Marcus' impersonal writing can be found in Fronto's reply. "ego vero etiam litterulas tuas δίς amo, quare cupiam, ubi quid ad me scribes, tua manu scribas,"[89] "But I doubly love your little letters, on which account I desire that, when you write something to me, you write it in your own hand." Marcus

[87] Malherbe, 75.
[88] Hauler & van den Hout, 36, lines 2-15.
[89] Hauler & van den Hout, 38, lines 3-4.

has not only chosen not to compose portions of his letter originally, but he has even dictated it to a scribe. This extreme lack of personal involvement is very telling, as form letters such as this would have been very characteristic of official imperial correspondence. In writing the letter in this way, then, Marcus clearly indicates, by distancing himself from Fronto, that he was upset with him for undertaking the case, and possibly for things that were already said.

Fronto, however, responds less than receptively to Marcus' 'advice.' As mentioned earlier, he does take care not to reject Marcus' assertion of his authority as Caesar. However, Marcus' impudence at attempting to enact his new role, which would invariably force Fronto out of *his* position of authority, does not go unremarked. In letter 3.3, his reply to 3.2, Fronto agrees that anything that does not pertain directly to the case need not be mentioned; but he also points out that Herodes' unsavory reputation is, in fact, relevant to the case.

> sed ea quae in causa sunt (sunt autem atrocissima) quemadmodum tractem, id ipsum est quod addubito et consilium posco: dicendum est de hominibus liberis crudeliter verberatis et spoliatis, uno vero etiam occiso; dicendum de filio impio et precum paternarum inmemore; saevitia et avaritia exprobranda; carnifex quidam Herodes in hac causa constituendus.[90]
>
> But how I might manage those things which are in the case (they are indeed most atrocious), that is itself what I doubt and about which I ask your advice: it must be spoken about the free men having been cruelly flogged and despoiled, truly, one even having been killed; and it must be spoken about an impious son unmindful of fatherly prayers; savagery and greed must be reproached; a certain Herodes must be appointed scoundrel in this case.

Despite Marcus' care to couch his letter in terms of 'advice,' it would seem that Fronto has seen through his pupil's attempt, and is well aware of the tactics he has used against his mentor (Fronto was the greatest rhetorician of the age, after all).

[90] Hauler & van den Hout, 37, lines 14-19.

These pointed slights against Herodes, a family friend of Marcus, are designed as a rebuke of Marcus' defense of Fronto's opponent. Indeed, Fronto mentions earlier in the letter that surely any man whom Marcus chooses to offer his protection should obviously be an honest, just man, something Fronto clearly believes Herodes is not. By enumerating Herodes' misdeeds, Fronto indirectly questions Marcus' judgement about the man, which constitutes an assault on the legitimacy of Marcus' new, authorative role. This dispute caused a great deal of friction between Marcus and Fronto, not only because of Fronto's attack (or potential attack) on a family friend of Marcus', but also due to Marcus' attempt to voice his displeasure and "pull rank" on Fronto. Undoubtedly, Fronto's incensed response to this attempt didn't make the problem any better. Clearly, neither of them were very happy about the circumstances, and the tension resulting from this that upset their normally harmonious correspondence was a great strain on their relationship.

Sadly, no record remains that tells us how the case turned out. However, it certainly seems, judging by letters 3.5 and 3.6, that Fronto capitulated to Marcus' wishes in the end and avoided using *ad hominem* tactics in his defense of Demostratus.

> Ita faciam, domine, quom hoc tum omnia quod ad . u. . m aut te velle intellexero. alia item omnia faciam teque oro et quaeso, ne umquam quod a me fieri volue<ris> reticeas. sed ut nuunc <ap>tissima suadeas. ita enim… neque umquam fac… adversus voluntatem tuam quicquam incipiam.[91]
>
> I will act, my Lord, as to these counts and as to my whole life in the way I see you wish me to act; and I pray and beseech you never to forbear mentioning what you wish done by me, but dissuade me, as you are now rightly doing, if I ever undertake any such thing against your wishes.[92]

[91] Hauler & van den Hout, 39, lines 2-6.
[92] Haines, vol. I, 69.

Even if we can't determine who won the case, it seems that the two did manage to avoid damaging their relationship any further. Certainly, in letters 3.5 and 3.6, the two are almost falling overthemselves to take back their harsh words of a few letters ago. Additionally, it is known that Marcus at the very least managed to reconcile his two mentors, and they appear to have engaged in some friendly communications, even if only to please him. "Years later Fronto can calmly claim Herodes as his close friend… In a postscript Marcus requests that Fronto write a few appropriate words of condolence to Herodes Atticus, just bereaved of his newborn son. The *consolatio*[93] duly appeared…"[94] It seems then, that things worked out for the best, at least for Fronto, Marcus, and Herodes Atticus. Unfortunately, nothing can be said as concerns Demostratus, and how things worked out for him. Regardless, other than this incident, and Fronto's frustrations over Marcus' philosophical leanings, the pair corresponded harmoniously for years with no other recorded conflict.

Even despite the incomplete nature of the *Epistulae*, and the spotty records as concerns Fronto's biography, there is a great deal of important information on Marcus Aurelius and Fronto's relationship. The historical and biographical context of the pair's relationship cannot be overlooked. After all, their relationship and the conflicts they weathered are fascinating for the window they allow us into their lives and minds. More so, the racy, gossipy nature of their relationship makes for an exciting read, even for non-Classicists. It is this very excitement that will draw in intermediate Latin students and grip their attention. This striking nature of the *Epistulae* is vital for

[93] The *consolatio*, or "letter of consolation," was a standard epistolary format mentioned by Ps. Libanius and commonly used when writing to a bereaved friend.
[94] Champlin, 105.

students to more efficiently acquire the language, and is one of the most attractive aspects of using the *Epistulae* in the classroom. Of course, the *Epistulae* are even more exciting and striking to the audience if they can understand the content and the writers of the letters. As a result, the historical context must be understood by both the presenter of the *Epistulae* and by the reader of the letters. With the proper context the lives and minds of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto will be brought to life, along with all their fascinating foibles and conflicts.

Part III: Latin Pedagogy and the *Epistulae*

In the past decades, a great deal of research has been done on the processes of second language acquisition. This burgeoning science has yielded a vast amount of information on how human beings acquire language in a formal setting, and has gradually revolutionized the field of foreign language teaching. Unfortunately for Latin pedagogy (and the pedagogy of any classical language, really) this research has largely focused on the teaching and processes of learning modern, spoken languages, with emphasis on what learning is necessary to achieve fluency in a living language. Obviously, Latin is no longer a living language, and, for the most part, is no longer spoken. Indeed, in most Latin courses, the focus of teaching is on acquiring reading and translation skills as quickly as possible, rather than the achievement of fluency (which is expected to come with time). As a result, it may seem that the rigorous research being done in the field of second language acquisition would not be useful to a teacher or learner of Latin. However, while the methods of Latin pedagogy may differ from those of modern language teaching, this is not to say that Latin teachers and learners cannot take advantage of such research. Not only has a great deal of this research been focused on the acquisition of literacy, but many of the techniques developed from modern research can be adapted for use in the Latin classroom.

The Psychological Processes of Language Learning

The full breadth of research being performed on second language acquisition is too great for it to be covered succinctly. Thus, I will focus here on the research that is most relevant to the *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*, namely the research that has focused on vocabulary acquisition, and on language acquisition through

communication. Much of the research on vocabulary acquisition, while it is couched in terms of a modern language, is directly useful to the teacher of Latin and the writer of a commentary such as this one. Research into the psychological processes of learning vocabulary via textual input is of great use in writing a Latin commentary designed to take advantage of the way the human brain functions as it acquires language. I.S. P. Nation outlines three general psychological processes that may lead to mastering new vocabulary, which are also highly useful in the context of a Latin commentary. He labels the three processes noticing, retrieval, and generation. Each of these processes overlaps one another to some extent; that is, the process of retrieval requires some elements of noticing, and generation requires some elements of noticing as well as retrieval.

The first process of vocabulary acquisition is that of noticing. Noticing, put simply, is a process by which the learner acknowledges the word and is "aware of it as a useful language item."[95] This process of noticing also occurs when learners look up a word, guess it from context, or have it explained to them. As one might expect, learner interest and motivation is a key factor in determining whether noticing will successfully impart the vocabulary item. Unless the learner's attention is engaged by the subject matter, conditions necessary to foster learning are unlikely to simply spring into being. Indeed, W. B. Elley has demonstrated that the same group of learners will acquire less vocabulary from a story they are less engaged by (particularly if the story lacks humor and conflict).[96]

[95] Nation, 63
[96] W. B. Elley, 63.

Ultimately, the key component of noticing is decontextualization. When a learner comes across an unknown word, it is contained in the message of the material. It is very possible for the learner to miss the word completely (or at the very least, to make no gains toward learning it), as he or she is engrossed in parsing the message of what is being read or heard. Enter decontextualization. For noticing to take place at all, the vocabulary token must be removed from the message so that the learner can acknowledge it as a part of the language system, rather than a part of the message itself.[97] There are two ways of encouraging decontextualization of a vocabulary token. The first is negotiation, a technique that requires students to essentially produce a definition for the token, a process that is facilitated by the teacher providing examples that encourage the learners to guess at a possible answer. Negotiation has generally been found to be extremely effective for vocabulary learning, albeit also very time-intensive.

As an alternative to negotiation, the token can be decontextualized via definition, the straightforward providing of a definition of the vocabulary item. Nation found that some studies have shown that learning is facilitated via looking up vocabulary in a dictionary, while others have shown the opposite. Nation attributes this inconsistency to the complexity of the definitions being uncovered by the learners. R. Ellis has indicated, for instance, that the simpler the definition, the more readily the vocabulary token will be learned. Such a definition should carry only a few characteristics of the word, as the more elaborate and complex the definition, the less likely it is to be helpful (and may actually hinder the vocabulary learning

[97] Nation, 64.

process).[98] Nation also asserts that definition is most helpful in decontextualizing vocabulary tokens when a translation of the term is provided in the learner's first language. Such definitions are just about as short and simple as one can make them, and they also have the advantage of drawing on the learner's extant knowledge and experience.

This process is of direct and convenient relevance to the writer of a commentary. A commentary, after all, is designed to cater to the phenomenon of noticing. If important words are selected to gloss, then the reader of the commentary will be able to decontextualize the word and have ready access to a definition, allowing him or her to continue reading and enjoying the Latin with minimal interruption. This concept is especially key to the creation of a successful commentary. As previously mentioned, vocabulary is not learned through noticing unless the reader is engaged with the material. As a result, the material of the commentary will most effectively be communicated if the content is easily accessible and identifiable. The correspondence between Marcus and Fronto fit this criterion perfectly. The *Epistulae* have been derided for their melodramatic prose, and indeed, they often read something like a daytime soap opera, the appeal of which lies in their portrayals of characters and their relationships. Likewise, the *Epistulae* provide a glimpse into the minds and lives of Marcus and Fronto, and allow the reader to understand their relationship and the complexities therein. For Marcus and Fronto's was indeed a complex relationship, characterized by an intimate friendship colored by the occasionally strained power dynamic between the future emperor and his

[98] R. Ellis, "Modified Oral Input and the Acquisition of Word Meanings," *Applied Linguistics*, 16, 409-441 in I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 65.

magister. This sensational and sometimes even racy content taps into our natural curiosity about our fellow man. In the same way that reality TV or soap operas have mass appeal because of their ability to pander to this curiosity, the *Epistulae* appeal to students, as well as scholars, because of the fascinating window they provide into the lives and minds of Marcus and Fronto.

The second process of vocabulary acquisition is that of retrieval. Once a word has been noticed, it is substantially more likely to be internalized if it is used again shortly after the process of noticing has taken place. Retrieval may be broken down into productive and receptive functions. Productive retrieval takes place when the learner must communicate the meaning of the word via speaking it or writing it. Receptive retrieval occurs when the word is encountered via listening or reading it, and the meaning must be recalled. In either case, retrieval will not occur if the token *and* its meaning are provided simultaneously. Additionally, repetition is a key factor in predicting how successful retrieval will be in fostering vocabulary acquisition. It can be said that "each retrieval of a word strengthens the path linking form and meaning and makes subsequent retrieval easier."[99] However, if too much time passes between the first encounter of a token and its later retrieval, then the subsequent instance of the token is essentially a repeat of the first meeting. If the memory of the token remains, then the association of the word with its meaning will be strengthened. Fortunately, according to Nation's synthesis of several studies on the length of time such memories can last, a conservative estimate of how long a learner will remember the meaning of a given token after a first encounter would be one month (and

[99] Nation, 67.

possibly as long as three months).[100] It is also important that the vocabulary token be retrieved after increasingly longer intervals over time. That is to say, the first retrievals should follow swiftly after the earliest encounter, with an increasingly large gap between subsequent retrievals. This technique will augment the duration for which the vocabulary token will remain in the memory of the learner.

Once again, the format of the commentary allows us to take advantage of these insights into human cognition. In the case of a commentary on letters, especially, one can see similar formulae (the letter-writing standards of the ancient world) appear again and again, enveloping even new vocabulary in familiar patterns. As a result of these formulae, students will have a great deal of opportunity to practice vocabulary that has been previously glossed or which has been looked up in a dictionary. The *Epistulae* also focus on several favorite topics of Fronto and Marcus, which allow the commentator to facilitate the engagement of retrieval by careful selecting appropriate letters. By selecting letters on similar topics, the incidence of vocabulary repetition can be increased, allowing retrieval to occur repeatedly, thus enhancing the likelihood that the student will acquire the new vocabulary tokens.

The last process of vocabulary acquisition is that of generation. The generative process presents the learner with previously learned forms of vocabulary (i.e. they have been noticed and retrieved at least once) in a new manner of use. This requires that the learner reconceptualize their knowledge of the token in order to incorporate the new use.

> If a learner has met the word *cement* used as a verb as in 'We cemented the path' and then meets 'We cemented our relationship with a drink,' the learner

[100] Nation, 68.

> will need to rethink the meaning and uses of *cement* and this will help firmly establish the memory of this word.[101]

Similarly to retrieval, generation has receptive and productive forms. The receptive form is seen above; wherein the learner must adapt or alter previously held conceptions of a vocabulary token to suit its expanded metaphorical and grammatical context. In the productive form, the learner must use the token (either in speech or in writing) in a way that is distinct from the context of the first encounter with the word. Finally, generation is also subject to a certain variation based on degree. For instance, generation occurs at a lower degree when the contextual variation for a given token is relatively simple (i.e. the difference between *chronic pain* and *very chronic pain*). However, generation occurs at a much higher degree if the variation is more substantial (such as *chronic pain* becoming *chronic backache*).

In the history of Latin pedagogy, generation has probably been one of the lesser-utilized psychological processes of vocabulary learning. Other than repetition of declensions or vocabulary, productive generation has largely been absent from the field of Classical education.[102] Fortunately, however, the epistolary format provides opportunities to use both productive and receptive generation. Receptive generation can be engaged by the colloquial and idiomatic phrasing inherent in the epistolary genre of Latin. Whereas literary Latin will more often follow the textbook Latin that students have already learned by the time they read a commentary, the epistolary form utilizes new, unfamiliar methods of presenting familiar vocabulary, fully engaging the student's process of receptive generation. The *Epistulae* themselves also

[101] Nation, 69.
[102] Gruber Miller, 9-10.

facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary through generation. Fronto and his student Marcus were well-known for their love of using Latin in unusual ways, or even coining entirely new words from existing Latin.[103] Additionally, through the use of appropriate glosses, the commentator can also take advantage of productive generation. For those new uses of more familiar vocabulary, the student can be allowed to infer their contextual meaning, thus engaging their process of productive generation.

Research in second language vocabulary acquisition clearly bears a great deal of fruit for the writer of a Latin commentary. So long as the vocabulary of the commentary is not too advanced, the student will be able to read the text and engage with the material without being bogged down in unfamiliar words. Through the *Epistulae* especially, the student can engage with the familiar format of the epistolary genre, and identify with the everyday gossip of the letters. Then, when a student does come across an unfamiliar token, the process of noticing can be utilized when he or she searches for the word in the gloss or in the dictionary. Words that are especially important can also be glossed more frequently, to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. These same words are likely to appear again and again, allowing the commentator to take advantage of the process of retrieval. Finally, both productive and receptive generation can be engaged through the presentation of familiar vocabulary in an unfamiliar, colloquial and idiomatic style, with allowances for the student to infer the meaning of new uses for old words as needed. The format of the commentary, especially a commentary for the epistolary genre, is ideal for taking advantage of

[103] Champlin, 47.

what second language vocabulary acquisition tells us about the psychological processes of language learning.

Communicative Competence and Conversation

Another finding of research in second language acquisition, and one which has been the most difficult for classicists to grapple with, is that students learn language best through interaction, communication, and negotiation of the language. As Joan Kelly Hall says:

> Much of what we do when we communicate with others is conventionalized. In other words, in going about our everyday business, we participate in recurring intellectual and practical activities in which the goals of the activities, our roles, and the language we use as we play these roles and attempt to accomplish the goals, are familiar to us.[104]

Languages, then, are inextricably linked in the human mind to their use in our daily interactions and activities. It is logical then, if we use language most habitually in these mundane, everyday interactions, that the human brain would be wired to acquire language *via* these very activities. "It has been shown that the communicative skills and knowledge [i.e. language] that children learn are dependent on their experiences in regularly occurring, goal-directed communicative activities, with assisted guidance from more competent participants."[105] This preference for language acquisition through interaction and communication holds just as true in the language classroom as well.

> Oral communication is both the medium of learning and an object of pedagogical attention in foreign language classrooms, the discourse of these classrooms plays an especially significant role in the development of learner's

[104] Joan Kelly Hall, "The Communication Standards" in Phillips, June K., and Robert M. Terry, *Foreign Language Standards: Linking Research, Theories, and Practices*, Lincolnwood, Ill: National Textbook Co. in conjunction with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1999, 16.
[105] Hall, 21.

> communicative competence, shaping both their understanding of, and ability to interact in, the target language.[106]

That is to say, students learn a language best by using the language to communicate in an everyday context, as they would with their native, living languages.

This approach to second language education was spurred by Dell Hymes' pragmatic view of linguistic competence outlined in his article "On Communicative Competence," published in the 1970s. In contrast to Noam Chomsky's theory of linguistic competence, which focuses on the internal mental processes that make up language production, Hymes' theory of communicative competence focuses on the processes that make up a speaker's ability to use the language in a social context.[107] The goal then, of most foreign language teachers is to achieve this criterion, to allow their students to acquire these mental processes that will allow them to navigate the community of their target language. Unfortunately, this approach is less suitable for Latin, being that it is not nor will it likely ever be a living language. After all, there is no speech community for Latin, except those artificially created in the classroom. Even this is very rare, especially considering few (if any) Latin textbooks are geared toward the facilitation of a miniature Latin speech community. However, this is not to say that this information can simply be ignored by Latin educators. In a field that is struggling to find its place in the modern academic curriculum, Classics educators cannot afford to pretend decades of second language research simply haven't happened. Yet, one must also acknowledge that the medium of Latin is different from

[106] Hall, 24.
[107] Hall, 25.

that of a modern language, and that the goals of Latin pedagogy are different than those of modern language pedagogy.

As previously established, the modern language teacher is most interested in establishing productive fluency and the ability to navigate in a speech community. In other words, modern language pedagogical goals focus on giving students the tools necessary to navigate using the target language in a social context. However, Latin pedagogy is more interested in establishing receptive fluency and the ability to navigate a textual corpus.[108] In either case, the methods of teaching should be similar. After all, it is human beings who are being educated, and human beings learn languages in a rather specific way: through interaction and communication.[109] Yet Latin is not taught in the same way as a modern language. Modern language pedagogy focuses on conversational tools and social interaction, whereas Latin pedagogy focuses on memorization of declensions and conjugations, grammatical structures and vocabulary.[110]

Part of the reason for this is that the resources to allow Latin students to acquire conversational tools and to experience social interaction simply do not exist. A dead language has no speech community. Yet, as John Gruber-Miller points out, people aren't the only language sources that students can interact with. When a student reads a text in any language, he or she is interacting with and engaging with it in a way that is very similar to speaking with a living, breathing individual. To place such a sharp divide between oral and written communication "is an exaggeration

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[108] Gruber-Miller, 10.
[109] Teresa Pica, "Language Learners' Interaction: How Does It Address the Input, Output, and Feedback Needs of L2 Learners?" *TESOL Quarterly*, 30 (1): 59-84, 1996, 60.
[110] Gruber Miller, 9-10.

based on the assumption that communication is primarily speaking… and that reading a text in Greek and Latin is primarily translation, not communication."[111] Indeed, communication is not only spoken, even in a modern language. In learning a language in the classroom setting, students inevitably also learn to *read* the target language and to interact with the information contained therein. If, then, we broaden our idea of what defines interaction to include texts, then immediately Latin gains a thriving speech community; after all, the plays, histories, speeches, and letters of the Latin language have been gathered, studied, and appreciated for hundreds of years. All it takes to unlock their potential as a tool for facilitating learning through communication and interaction is the right perspective.

Of the examples of Latin text enumerated earlier, letters provide the greatest opportunity for allowing students to interact with the Latin directly. Letters are written, after all, for the express purpose of communicating, via written text, with a distant correspondent. In a way, then, the reader of a letter is interacting, albeit in a receptive way, with the writer. Letters, as is so often said, are "conversations halved,"[112] or, fortunately, in the case of the *Epistulae*, conversations whole. The dialogical nature of the letters makes them perfectly suited to the objectives of the Intermediate Latin student, whose familiarity and facility with Latin can be increased by being exposed to a dialogue about accessible topics. These identifiable and accessible qualities assist in retention of grammatical forms and vocabulary, and increase the student's facility with Latin in general terms. By assisting the student with harder vocabulary and grammar, and thus increasing the at-sight readability of

[111] Gruber Miller, 10.
[112] Poster, 21.

the letters, one increases the accessibility of the Latin, and enables the student to think on the cultural and interpersonal levels necessary to take advantage of the aforementioned features.

In order to take advantage of research in second language acquisition, the teacher of Latin need not necessarily reshape one's lesson plan or throw out one's collection of textbooks and other resources. Instead, a reimagining of existing texts and materials (especially, perhaps, previously neglected ones) can allow the Latin educator to tap into what occurs in the minds of his or her students when they acquire vocabulary and learn the Latin language. The *Epistulae* are an excellent example of this versatility inherent in the Latin textual corpus. Through the *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae* one can take advantage of psychological processes of vocabulary acquisition (including noticing, retrieval, and the coveted generation) as well as the power of interaction and communication, which is so central to the language acquisition of the learner. The *Epistulae*, and the epistolary genre in general, can be used as a springboard into more complex and difficult Latin texts, or they can be used simply to provide a new approach to learning Latin. If there is one thing that research has shown for cetain, it is that a plurality of approaches to teaching is necessary in order to reach the maximum number of students successfully.

Conclusion: Bridging the Gap of Ancient and Modern Through Letters

The *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae* have been denigrated by scholars for the past hundred years or more for their gossipy content and ineloquent prose. However, the racy, sensationalist content can not only give a great deal of insight into the nature of Marcus and Fronto's dynamic, complex relationship, but can also allow teachers of Latin to engage their students in ways that facilitate language learning and their understanding of Roman history and culture, especially epistolary culture. Once students become familiar with the features of the epistolary format, they can more fully engage with the dialogical aspects of the *Epistulae*. After all, the complicated codes and mores of the letter-format echo those of spoken conversation. The *Epistulae* exemplify these codes in their consistent use of formulaic greetings and farewells. Just as there are socially appropriate ways to begin and end conversations smoothly, there are rules governing the opening and closing of a letter. Similarly, the content of a letter, like that of a conversation, is highly codified. After all, a conversation that consists solely of someone going on and on about a topic is hardly anyone's idea of a pleasant chat. The same can be said of a letter; long discourses on similes or philosophy are inappropriate for the letter-format, a rule which is largely obeyed in the *Epistulae*. Instead, letters in both the Roman world and the modern age are expected to consist of inquiries after the health of one's correspondent, as well as descriptions of one's own life and health. While it is less present in the modern age, a focus on mundane, everyday topics creates the illusion that one is there with one's faraway correspondent, narrowing the temporal and physical gap between the two. We see this, too, in the *Epistulae*, as Marcus and Fronto fixate on one another's health

and how much they pine for each other, creating sympathy between the two and narrowing the aforementioned gap. All of these facets of epistolarity, present throughout the *Epistulae*, contribute to the role of the epistle as a conversational stand-in. While teachers of Latin may be leery of encouraging students to speak a dead language, they should certainly be willing to utilize the resources presented by our corpus of Latin literature, especially epistolary literature, in order to take advantage of the utility of conversation for language learning.

It is especially important to remember the resource that is Latin literature for the cultural and interpersonal insights that the corpus can offer. The insights that can be gained from the *Epistulae* about Marcus and Fronto allow us to speculate on the nature of the pair's relationship. Through exploring their use of ambiguous vocabulary and references, both students and scholars can engage in lively debate over whether or not Marcus and Fronto could be characterized as lovers. Likewise, the complicated power dynamic present in their relationship provides fascinating fodder for speculation as to the nature of an Emperor's relationship to his friends and family. Through the *Epistulae*, we can peer almost voyeuristically into the lives and minds of Marcus and Fronto, a fascinating prospect for Classicists. Just as this possibility intrigues scholars for its historical and social insights, it will captivate intermediate readers at the same, if not greater level. The popularity of reality TV and daytime soap operas speaks volumes about the human fascination with how our fellows live their lives and conduct their relationships. When students can access this same fascination in their academic lives, their facility with and enjoyment of Latin will be greatly increased. Students who engage with the material will not only learn

more, but participate more in class discussions, and thus facilitate the learning of other students as well.

Modern language acquisition research shows that students learn best when language material is presented in the form of an engaging and accessible discourse or conversation. A discourse or conversation certainly implies, to some extent, an oral format, and it cannot be denied that learning language through speaking and hearing it is perhaps the most fundamental way of doing so. While these insights can be taken to mean that students learn best through speaking the language, this approach can be counterintuitive to Latin pedagogical goals. After all, the goal of most Latin programs is not the creation of fluent speakers of Latin – who would they speak to but their fellow classmates, after all. Instead, the goal of Latin pedagogy is to create fluent readers of Latin who can navigate, comprehend, and hopefully enjoy ancient texts. In order to pursue this goal, the pieces of modern research that focus on language acquisition through reading are the most valuable, particularly the psychological processes of language learning, namely noticing, retrieval, and generation. The *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*, thanks to their repetitive focus on everyday, accessible topics, are ideally suited to all three of these processes. Through the medium of commentary, unfamiliar words and grammatical constructions will be noticed by students who are engaged with the racy, sensationalist subject matter of the *Epistulae*. The often formulaic epistolary constructions and the accessible style of the writing also allow for the repetition of vocabulary and grammar, bringing students' processes of retrieval into use. Finally, the process of generation is engaged through Marcus and

Fronto's love of coining new words and their use of deliberately ambiguous constructions.

The *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*, long maligned and disregarded by scholars, find new life and light in their utility as pedagogical documents for use by the intermediate Latin student. The letters I have selected from the *Epistulae* especially exemplify this useful trait of the letters, as they discuss, in dialogical fashion, the everyday interpersonal struggles and power dynamics of Marcus and Fronto's complex relationship. These struggles and dynamics are fascinating not just to Classicists, but to the intermediate Latin student, who will benefit from having new vocabulary and unfamiliar grammar presented in the form of this gossipy, sensationalist exchange. Through this commentary, the student may approach the accessible content with the aid of grammatical and lexical aids, and will gain a greater historical and cultural understanding of Roman interpersonal relationships and epistolary codes through the contextual information provided. This sampling of the *Epistulae* demonstrates that the corpus as a whole can be useful, properly contextualized, as a pedagogical tool. Through the *Epistulae*, modern second language acquisition research can be incorporated into the Latin classroom in a way that does not demand that the teacher reconceptualize Latin pedagogy, and which can be adapted to more typical methods of Latin teaching. Additionally, because the *Epistulae* allow the fusion of both traditional techniques and modern research, they can fit into any intermediate class, broadening the scope of the teacher's approach to teaching Latin, and thus the success of the students' Latin learning.

Latin Text and Commentary

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All Latin text is copied from the 1988 Teubner Edition, *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae*, edited by M. P. J. van den Hout. The text presented in the Teubner is replicated as closely as possible, favoring van den Hout's editorial decisions regarding the restored text in almost all instances. However, the original line numbers of the Teubner have not been preserved, due to the necessity of formatting the letters onto their own pages. Thus, all line-number references in the commentary refer to the line numbers of the text presented, rather than van den Hout's designations.

In the commentary, all text written before the = is as written in the Latin text itself, and any Latin text following the = is the standardized dictionary entry (including macrons) either from *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* or the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. The grammatical reference is Allen and Greenough's *New Latin Grammar*. In general, the order of the letters was selected favoring the needs of the intermediate student rather than chronology. In general, shorter letters are placed first so that the students may tackle larger letters only once they have adjusted to translating the style of these particular authors.

The first four letters are Marcus' side of the exchange, having uncertain responses or no responses, and focus on his daily affairs. The first four letters should familiarize students with the epistolary genre and introduce them to Marcus' own style. The last four letters are two pairs of correspondence between Marcus and Fronto on two different topics. Letters 7 and 8 are the most complex and nuanced of all the letters, and, as a result, they have been placed last, but very far from least, in this collection.

Letter 1

This letter from Marcus to Fronto (as each of the subsequent three letters are) represents a sort of birthday card from student to *magister*. In it, Marcus describes himself going on an imaginary journey to all the greatest temples of the gods, in order that he might pray on behalf of Fronto. This letter may also reveal a Marcus who is very concerned with impressing his teacher with his style and eloquence, as it is highly metaphorical and even overwrought at times.

As the first letter in the series, Letter 1 also demonstrates common stylistic features of both the epistolary genre, and of Marcus and Fronto's correspondence. Of note are the opening and closing formula, and Marcus' characteristic fondness for flowery ends to his letters. Also of interest are several archaizations of Latin words, favored by Marcus and Fronto due to their admiration of Late Republic and Early Imperial writers.

2 quoius = archaic form of *cuius*; Marcus and Fronto use these form frequently, evidence of their emulation of the archaic Latin writers.
3 memet = me + met (an intensifier)
4 gentium = *gens, gentis*: "race," but also (when in partitive genitive) "the world"
7 unumquemque = acc. m. from *unusquisque*
8 ei rei praeditus = *praeditus* + dative: "in charge of X"
8-18 igitur iam primum… te laetoque concelebrem = an epic journey contained solely within Marcus' mind, in which he imagines himself traveling to the greatest temples of various deities in order to make his prayer 'in person,' as it were, to the god with the ability to grant his particular request.
8 Pergamum: There was, an immensely impressive Asklepion (a temple to Aesclepius and hospital in one) in Pergamum, it still stands today.
9 Aesculapio = Aesclepius, the god of healing.
10 Athenas = Athens, the home of the Parthenon, Minerva's (or Athena's) largest temple.
12 viales = vialis, -e: "of the roads"
13 promarinos = "sea routes." Any journey around the Mediterranean, such as those Marcus is discussing, is just as likely (if not more so) to be by sea as it is by land. Thus, Marcus plays it safe and makes his request of both the gods of the roads and the sea routes.
13 iter = subject of 'comitatum sit'
13 comitatum sit = *comitor* : "go with"
15 Iovem = Jove, a common alias for Jupiter; in Rome, on the Capitoline Hill, was the enormous Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The cyclopean foundations still stand, and are preserved as substructures of the Musei Capitolini in Rome.
16 quaeso tribuat = Hortatory subj. Normally there would be an *ut* between 'quaeso' and 'tribuat,' an elliptical *ut* is more common with 2nd person constructions, but here it is omitted with a 3rd person.
17 firmo te laetoque = ablative absolute
18 quom = archaic form of "cum"

Text of Letter 1
(Letter 3.10, van den Hout)

Have mi magister optime

Scio die quoiusque pro eo, quoius is dies natalis est, amicos vota suscipere; ego tamen, quia te iuxta ut memet ipsum amo, volo hac die, tuo natali, mihi bene precari. deos igitur omnis, qui usquam gentium vim suam praesentem promptamque hominibus praebent, qui vel somniis vel mysteriis vel medicina vel oraculis usquam iuvant atque pollent, eorum deorum unumquemque mihi votis advoco meque pro genere cuiusque voti in eo loco constituo de quo deus ei rei praeditus facilius exaudiat. igitur iam primum Pergamei arcem ascendo et Aesculapio supplico uti valetudinem magistri mei bene temperet vehementerque tueatur. inde Athenas degredior, Minervam genibus nixus obsecro atque oro, si quid ego umquam litterarum sciam, ut id potissimum ex Frontonis ore in pectus meum commigret. nunc redeo Romam deosque viales et promarinos votis inploro, uti mihi omne iter tua praesentia comitatum sit neque ego tam saepe tam saevo desiderio fatiger. postremo omnis omnium populorum praesides deos atque ipsum Iovem, qui Capitolium montem strepit, quaeso tribuat hoc nobis, ut istum diem quo mihi natus es tecum firmo te laetoque concelebrem.

Vale, mi dulcissime et carissime magister. rogo, corpus cura, ut, quom venero, videam te. domina mea te salutat.

Letter 2

This letter is characteristic of the every day nature of the *Epistulae*, as Marcus discuss such topics as what he ate for lunch, and how his health is faring. It provides a fascinating portrait of a young Caesar and the Imperial family on vacation in the countryside (possibly at an estate in Naples), as Marcus carefully details his daily routine. Pay particular attention to the everyday vocabulary Marcus uses to describe food, his homework, and the theatre (among other things). There is also an instance of one of many of Marcus' uses of the diminutive form, in this case one he himself seems to have coined. Marcus was quite fond of using diminutives in his letters to Fronto. The Cratia Marcus refers to is Fronto's wife, while *Cratiam minusculam* is most likely Fronto's daughter.

2 perfrictiunculam = *perfrīgesco, -frīgescere, -frixi:* "to catch a chill." Note the diminuative *–iunculam*, *hapax legomenon.*
4 ex agri cultura = Most likely the *De Re Rustica*, written by M. Porcius Cato (Cato the Censor).
4 misere = refers to the condition Marcus was in at the time of the writing, not the quality of the writing.
4 mercule = *mehercule*: "By Hercules," a common oath used almost exclusively by men.
5 gulam = *gula, -ae, f:* "gullet, throat"
5 sorbenda… reictanda = gerundives with 'aqua mulsa' – ablative of means
6 fauces = *faux, usually plural fauces, -ium, f:* "the throat, gullet"
6 potius quam dicerem = *potius quam* + subj: relative clause of characteristic or result with a comparative: "too strong to say…"
7 immolanti = *immolo, -are:* "to sacrifice." It is unclear of what significance this sacrifice is. It is possible that the day Marcus writes about happened to be a festival day, and thus a sacrifice was called for. Little context exists for this off-hand remark, and thus, we can only speculate as to the nature of the sacrifice.
8 merendam = *merenda, -ae, f:* "luncheon"
8 prandisse = usually refers specifically to breakfast, here it seems to simply be "eat." It is very possible that lunch was Marcus' first meal of the day, which would make it, for him, breakfast.
8 cum = here, "although"
8 conchim = *conchis, -is, f:* a kind of bean
9 caepas = *caepa, -ae, f:* "onion"
9 maenas = *maena, -ae, f:* "a kind of small sea-fish, often salted"
9 praegnatis = *praegnates*
9 vorantis = *vorantes*
10 consudavimus = *consūdo, -are*: "to sweat profusely"
10 iubilavimus = *iūbilo, -āvi, ātum*: "to raise a shout of joy; be joyful"
10 auctor = To whom exactly this refers to is unclear, though it is most likely from Novius' *Vindemiatores.*
16 discus = *discus, -i, m:* "gong"
17 loti = *lavo, lavere, lavi, lautum or lotum or lavatum*
18 torculari = *torcular, -āris, n:* "a wine or oil press"
18 cavillantes = *cavillor, -ari:* "to jest, joke"
21 macerarer = *mācero, -are*: "to torment, tease, vex"

Text of Letter 2
(Letter 4.6, van den Hout)

Have, mihi magister dulcissime

Nos valemus. ego aliquantum prodormivi propter perfrictiunculam, quae videtur sedata esse. ergo ab undecima noctis in tertiam diei partim legi ex agri cultura Catonis, partim scripsi, minus misere, mercule, quam heri. inde salutato patre meo aqua mulsa sorbenda usque ad gulam et reiectanda ‘fauces fovi’ potius quam dicerem ‘gargarissavi’, nam est ad Novium, credo, et alibi. sed faucibus curatis abii ad patrem meum et immolanti adstiti. deinde ad merendam itum. quid me censes prandisse? panis tantulum, cum conchim et caepas et maenas bene praegnatis alios vorantis viderem. deinde uvis metendis operam dedimus et consudavimus et iubilavimus et ‘aliquos’, ut ait auctor, ‘reliquimus altipendulos vindemiae superstites’. ab hora sexta domum redimus. paululum studui atque id ineptum. deinde cum matercula mea supra torum sedente multum garrivi. meus sermo hic erat: ‘quid existimas modo meum Frontonem facere?’ tum illa: ‘quid autem tu meam Cratiam?’ tum ego: ‘quid autem passerculam nostram Cratiam minusculam?’ dum ea fabulamur atque altercamur, uter alterutrum vestrum magis amaret, discus crepuit, id est, pater meus in balneum transisse nuntiatus est. loti igitur in torculari cenavimus (non loti in torculari, sed loti cenavimus) et rusticos cavillantes audivimus libenter. inde reversus, antequam in latus converto, ut stertam, meum pensum explico et diei rationem meo suavissimo magistro reddo, quem si possem magis desiderare, libenter plusculum macerarer.

Valebis, mihi Fronto, ubiubi es, mellitissime, meus amor, mea voluptas. quid mihi tecum est? amo absentem.

Letter 3

This letter, the precise dating of which is uncertain, demonstrates the deep concern and obsession the pair shared over matters of health. Marcus spends the letter lamenting Fronto's illness, and insisting that Fronto's ill health is far worse for him (Marcus) than it is for Fronto, due to his great care for Fronto. This letter is also ripe with ambiguous, and potentially erotic, imagery, which is perfect fodder for an examination of Marcus and Fronto's relationship. Of particular note is the object ambiguity in lines 7-8, for instance, where it is highly uncertain what (or who) Marcus is caressing.

This letter illustrates the epistolary commonplaces of epistolary tenses, as well as the concern over the health of one's correspondent (taken to a bit of an extreme degree). This letter is replete with vocabulary of health and illness, as well as the Roman customs for treating such maladies.

2 dixerim = potential subjunctive

3 incusavero = epistolary future perfect; letter writers often chose tenses to account for the time delay between writing the letter and reading it. Hence, Marcus writes *incusavero* ("will I have blamed") instead of *incusabo* ("will I blame") to reflect that, by the time his letter reaches Fronto, he will have done so already.

5 animam = Marcus frequently uses this adjective in the feminine to describe Fronto, there are many speculations as to why. See Richlin's *Marcus Aurelius in Love*, for further information on Marcus and Fronto's possible erotic relationship.

7-8 adtrectare… subicere: "to lay hands on it gradually, to warm it in a bath, and to offer a hand to him as he steps in." While "it" and "him" have been supplied in the translation, they are lacking in the Latin text. As a result, it is very ambiguous here whether Marcus is describing himself caressing and caring for Fronto's foot… or Fronto himself.

11 conisus es = *conitor, -nīti, nīsus sum*: "to lean or press hard against, make great effort"

13 perpeti = *perpetior, -peti, pessus*: "to endure"

13-14 illo… quo… eum = refers back to animus

13 nisi hoc scio… profectum eum esse = "except that I know this, I do not know how my mind was turned to you." The text of this sentence is corrupt, so the original meaning is obscure.

14 miserere = "for pity's sake"

15 omnem istam = agrees with *valetudinem*

16 valetudinem = here: "ill-health"

16 ad aquas = "to the waters;" a reference to the Roman belief in the healing properties of bathing and water, especially natural springs.

14-16 cura, miserere… valetudinem depellere = "Take care, for pity's sake, to drive away that ill health of yours with all temperance and moderation…"

18 vel tales = "just such"

21-22 integro, inlibato, incolumi = ablatives of characteristic modifying "corpore."

Text of Letter 3
(Letter 1.2, van den Hout)

M. Caesar M. Frontoni magistro meo

Quid ego ista mea fortuna satis dixerim vel quomodo istam necessitatem meam durissimam condigne incusavero, quae me istic ita animo anxio tantaque sollicitudine praepedito alligatum attinet neque me sinit ad meum Frontonem, ad meam pulcherrimam animam confestim percurrere, praesertim in huiusmodi eius valetudine propius videre, manus tenere, ipsum denique illum pedem, quantum sine incommodo fieri possit, adtrectare sensim, in balneo fovere, ingredienti manum subicere? et tu me amicum vocas, qui non abruptis omnibus cursu concitato pervolo? ego vero magis sum claudus quom ista mea verecundia, immo pigritia. o me, quid dicam? metuo quicquam dicere, quod tu audire nolis; nam tu quidem me omni modo conisus es iocularibus istis tuis ac lepidissimis verbis a cura amovere atque te omnia ista aequo animo perpeti posse ostendere. at ego ubi animus meus sit, nescio; nisi hoc scio, illo nescio quo ad te profectum eum esse. cura, miserere, omnia temperantia, abstinentia omnem istam tibi pro tua virtute tolerandam, mihi vero asperrimam nequissimamque valetudinem depellere et ad aquas proficisci. si et quando et, nunc ut commode agas, cito, oro, perscribe mihi et mentem meam in pectus meum repone. ego interim vel tales tuas litteras mecum gestabo.

Vale, mihi Fronto iucundissime, quamquam ita me dispositius dicere oportet (nam tu quidem postulas talia): o qui ubique estis, di boni, valeat, oro, meus Fronto iucundissimus atque carissimus mihi, valeat semper integro, inlibato, incolumi corpore, valeat et mecum esse possit. homo suavissime, vale.

Letter 4

Unlike the previous three letters, Letter 4 can be dated with some degree of certainty, based on Marcus' opening formula. Fronto was consul only in the year 143 C.E., so it is likely that this letter was written somewhere in or around that year. The first part of this letter has been lost, destroyed before it was recoverd from the palimpsest, or possibly in the years since as the original text degraded and crumbled to nothing. Regardless of the lost portion, this letter provides valuable insight into Marcus' less-than-positive feelings towards the trappings of imperial power. Additionally, Letter 4 also contains a wealth of information concerning Marcus' education, and intimations of his souring relationship with rhetoric, much to Fronto's distress, undoubtedly.

Of additional interest in Letter 4 is the fragment of the play Marcus quotes. A great deal of information on lost Roman literature can be gleaned from these quotes, and the *Epistulae* provide quite a few of them. Of particular interest is Marcus' use of further daily-routine vocabulary, as well as his discussion of the Roman practice of "excerpting," in which the writer makes copies of select portions of a work.

2 sociatum = *socio, -are:* "to unite, combine, associate"
3 constitutum = *constituo, -stituere, -stitui, -stitūtum*: "to set up, establish;" here: "to arrange, settle"
6 data = agrees with "firmata"
6 fefellerint = *fallo, fallere, fefelli, falsum*: "to deceive"
6-8 This fragment from *Colax,* by Plautus, is one of the only pieces remaining of the play. A great many such fragments can be found throughout Roman letters, and they allow us to gather a small idea of what this lost play was like.
9 incommoda = agrees with "haec," predicate adjactive of 'fieri'
10 quei = archaism for *qui*
10 filiis = dative of person, object of 'faveant'
11 σκοπόν = goal; Greek accusative.
18 ut = *utinam*; ut… confitear = purpose clause
19 consumitur = impersonal passive; supply *dies* as the subject through the adverb 'interdiu'
22 Novianae = Novius; a famous writer of plays, contemporary of Pompinus. He was active around 103-83 B.C.E.
22 Atellianiolae = Atellan farces, ribald Latin "fluff reading"
27 quod = "the fact that"
28 tantum = "only"

Text of Letter 4
(Letter 2.8, van den Hout)

Amplissimo consuli magistro suo M. Caesar salutem

...adfinitate sociatum neque tutelae subditum, praeterea in ea fortuna constitutum, in qua, ut Q. Ennius ait, 'omnes dant consilium vanum atque ad voluptatem omnia'; item quod Plautus egregie in Colace super eadem re ait:

> qui data fide firmata fidentem fefellerint,
> subdoli subsentatores regi, qui sunt proximi,
> qui aliter regi dictis dicunt, aliter in animo habent.

haec enim olim incommoda regibus solis fieri solebant, atenim nunc adfatim sunt 'quei et regum filiis', ut Naevius ait, 'linguis faveant atque adnutent et subserviant'. merito ego, mi magister, flagro;[113] merito unum meum σκοπόν mihi constitui; merito unum hominem cogito, quom stilus in manus venit.

Hexametros meos iucundissime petis; quos ego quoque confestim misissem, si illos mecum haberem. nam librarius meus, quem tu nosti, Anicetum dico, cum proficiscerer, nihil meorum scriptorum mecum misit. scit enim morbum meum et timui, ne, si venissent in potestatem, quod soleo facerem et in furnum dimitterem. sane istis hexametris prope nullum periculum erat. ut enim verum magistro meo confitear, amo illos.

Ego istic noctibus, confiteor, studeo, nam interdiu in theatro consumitur. itaque minus ago vespera fatigatus, surgo luce dormitans. feci tamen mihi per hos dies excerpta ex libris sexaginta in quinque tomis, sed cum leges 'sexaginta', inibi sunt et Novianae Atellaniolae et Scipionis oratiunculae, ne tu numerum nimis expavescas.

Polemonis tui quom meministi, rogo ne Horatii memineris, qui mihi cum Pollione est emortuus.

Vale, mi amicissime, vale mi amantissime, consul amplissime, magister dulcissime, quem ego biennio iam non vidi. nam quod aiunt quidam duos menses interfuisse, tantum dies numerant. eritne, quom te videbo?

[113] In Hauler & van den Hout, this is written *fraglo*, although this is probably a textual corruption, and Haines supplies "flagro" in app. crit. number 16.

Letter 5

As with Letter 4, Letter 5 likely was written in the year of Fronto's Consulship (i.e. 143 C.E.). In addition, this letter and the three letters that follow it represent a window into Marcus and Fronto's epistolary relationship. Unlike the previous four letters, written solely by Marcus, these four represent an exchange between the two. In this letter, Marcus seems to be, once again, with his family visiting the countryside. Fronto had to remain in Rome at the time, due to his consulship, which explains their seperation and thus, the need to write letters. Marcus spends a great deal of time discussing the weather in Letter 5, citing examples of places where Marcus and Fronto presumably spent time together in the past, or possibly simply locales with signature weather known to most Romans.

In this letter is a great deal of vocabulary of weather, as well as evidence of Marcus' awareness of epistolary commonplaces, and his acknowledgement of the violation. For instance, Marcus expresses a wish that he had more to write to Fronto about, and then apologizes for rambling on and on too long at the end of the letter.

1 quod ad te… iuvaret = relative clause of characteristic
3 διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν = Greek; "through these things"
4 fere = "generally, usually"
4 tramismus = *transmitto, -mittere, -mīsi, -missum*; epistolary perfect
5 cottidie = *quottidie*; cottidie novatur = "it is renewed daily"
6 καὶ ἐπὶ ἰδίᾳ μούσῃ = Greek; "and in his personal style"
7 porrus = "leek"
12 Theopompus: Greek rhetorician and historian who wrote around 333 B.C.E. Reputedly the most eloquent of all the Greeks.
12-13 comparatum… posse = both of these clauses are objects of "sperem"
14 Opicum = Oscan; equivalent to philistine (one who is said to despise or undervalue art, beauty, intellectual content, or spiritual values).
14 perpulerunt = *perpuliverunt* from *perpolio, -ire*: "to perfect, polish; achieve"
15 Caecilius = Caecilius Statius, a writer of Comedy and predecessor of Terence.
17 scripulis = "a small general unit of measure, ounce, pinch; a moment of time"
18 Laurentina = refers to Laurens; all the location names that follow are adjectives that agree with nouns describing the weather in the preceding sentence
18 gallicinium = "cock's crow; dawn"
18 Lanuvinum = "an estate near Lanuvium," which was a town to the south-east of Rome.
19 conticinnum = *conticinium*: "early night"
20 Algidum = a high mountain south-east of Rome.
20 Tusculanum = another town in Latium, also to the south-east of Rome.
21 lautum = Supine of [urpose after verb of motion (*proficiscor*).
21 profectus = *proficiscor, -ficisci, -fectus sum*: "to set out, depart"
22 quod = relative adjective; agrees with genus, though the antecedent is not a specific word, merely an idea conveyed by the previous clause.
22-23 concubia nocte = "the dead of night"
25 scripturum = scripturum esse: future infinitive with 'promisi' + accusative of person 'me.'
25 Masuriana = Masurius Sabinus was a jurist during Tiberius' reign (14-37 C.E.), Marcus may thus be referring to the minutiae of legal language here.

Text of Letter 5
(Letter 2.11, van den Hout)

M. Aurelius Caesar consuli suo et magistro salutem

Postquam ad te proxime scripsi, postea nihil opera pretium, quod ad te scriberetur aut quod cognitum ad aliquem modum iuvaret. nam διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν fere dies tramisimus: idem theatrum, idem otium[114], idem desiderium tuum. quid dico 'idem'? immo id cottidie novatur et gliscit et, quod ait Laberius de amore, suo modo καὶ ἐπὶ ἰδίᾳ μούσῃ, 'amor tuus tam cito crescit quam porrus, tam firme quam palma.' hoc igitur ego ad desiderium verto, quod ille de amore ait.

Volo ad te plura scribere, sed nihil suppetit. ecce quod in animum venit: encomiographos istic audimus, Graecos scilicet, sed miros mortales, ut ego, qui a Graeca litteratura tantum absum quantum a terra Graecia mons Caelius meus abest, tamen me sperem illis conparatum etiam Theopompum aequiparare posse; nam hunc audio apud Graecos disertissimum natum esse. igitur paene me Opicum animantem ad Graecam scripturam perpulerunt 'homines', ut Caecilius ait, 'incolumi scientia'.

Caelum Neapolitanum plane commodum, sed vehementer varium. in singulis scripulis horarum frigidius aut tepidius aut torridius fit. iam primum media nox tepida, Laurentina; tum autem gallicinium frigidulum, Lanuvinum; iam conticinium atque matutinum atque diluculum usque ad solis ortum gelidum, ad Algidum maxime; exin antemeridie apricum, Tusculanum; tum meridies fervida, Puteolana; atenim ubi sol lautum ad Oceanum profectus, fit demum caelum modestius, quod genus Tiburtinum. id vespera et concubia nocte, 'dum se intempesta nox', ut ait M. Porcius, 'praecipitat', eodem modo perseverat.

Sed quid ego, me qui paucula scripturum promisi, deliramenta Masuriana congero? igitur vale, magister benignissime, consul amplissime, et me quantum amas tantum desidera.

[114] In Hauler & van den Hout, this is written *odium*, "otium" is supplied in app. crit. number 18.

Letter 6a & 6b

These two letters, while not necessarily a response to Letter 5, were written around the same time and, it is likely, represent Fronto's lamentation that his consulship prevents him from being with Marcus and his family in the countryside. These letters are very characteristic of Fronto's epistolary style, which is frequently laced with metaphor and numerous subordinating clauses. At times, it is nearly incomprehensible, though this may be due to textual corruption. Cratia, Fronto's wife, comes up again in these letters, as well as his brother, probably Q. Cornelius Quadratus, who, like Fronto, also appears to have lead a successful political career.

Fronto's style is much more complex than Marcus' in many ways, and a careful reading is necessary in order to fully engage with the text. Fronto's awareness of the spatio-temporal gap between Marcus and himself also manifests, as well as his desire to eliminate it as quickly as possible.

Letter 6a

2 meum fratrem beatum = accusative of exclamation
3 nec aliter… quam = "in no other way"
3 kal. Sept. = The Kalends of September
4 polluant = *polluo, -uere, -ui, -ūtum*: "to befoul, defile, pollute;" here "to violate"
4 decus = "glory, honor, grace"

Letter 6b

8 quoad = "until"
9 eiuravero = eiūro, -are: "to resign, abdicate"
10 mea fide = "upon my word"
10 spopondi = spondeo, spondere, spopondi, sponsum: "to promise, pledge"
12 causidicorum = causidicus, -i: lawyer
12 feruntur = in 3rd person plural: "they say"
13 quid me fiet = "what will become of me"
13 ne… quidem = "not even"
15 quod = "the fact that"
15 quid quod ego paratus sum… iurare = "How is it that, as to the fact that I am am prepared [to swear an oath by the gods], if only I may resign as many days earlier as gods I swear by?" A combination of overly complicated diction and textual corruption makes this entire sentence very difficult to translate.
16 dum = *dum* + imperfect subjunctive: "if only…"
16 ante = here: "earlier"
16 plures… plures = so many… as many…
16 quod = see note 15, above

Text of Letter 6a
(Letter 2.12, van den Hout)

Caesari suo consul

Meum fratrem beatum, qui vos in isto biduo viderit! at ego Romae haereo conpedibus aureis vinctus, nec aliter kal. Sept. expecto quam superstitiosi stellam, qua visa ieiunium polluant. vale, Caesar, decus patriae et Romani nominis. vale, domine.

Text of Letter 6b
(Letter 2.13, van den Hout)

Domino meo

Cratiam misi ad diem natalem matris tuae celebrandum eique praecepi ut istic subsisteret, quoad ego venirem. eodem autem momento, quo consulatum eiuravero, vehiculum conscendam et ad vos pervolabo. interim Cratiae meae nullum a fame periculum fore fide mea spopondi: mater enim tua particulas a te sibi missas cum clienta communicabit; neque est Cratia mea, ut causidicorum uxores feruntur, multi cibi. vel osculis solis matris tuae contenta vixerit. sed enim quid me fiet? ne osculum quidem usquam ullum est Romae residuum. omnes meae fortunae, mea omnia gaudia Neapoli sunt. oro te, quis iste mos est pridie magistratus eiurandi? quid quod ego paratus sum dum ante plures dies eiurem, per plures deos iurare? quid est autem quod iuraturus sum me consulatu abire? ego vero etiam illud iuravero, me olim consulatu abire cupere, ut M. Aurelium conplectar.

Letter 7

The next pair of letters spans Marcus and Fronto's conflict over the infamous Herodes Atticus case. Some time before his consulship (around 142 C.E.), Fronto took up the cause of a friend of his by the name of Demostratus, who was being prosecuted (possibly sued?) by one Herodes Atticus. While it is uncertain whether or not Fronto knew beforehand, Marcus writes in this letter to inform Fronto of Herodes Atticus' affiliation with him as a close family friend and teacher.

This letter represents Marcus' assertion of a new epistolary role for himself: that of Caesar. Note, in lines 10-13, Marcus' highly formulaic language, perhaps indicative of his use of a scribe to write this note. This choice may indicate that Marcus was not pleased with Fronto's acceptance of this case, though he seems unwilling to come out and order Fronto not to damage Herodes' reputation. Instead, Marcus couches his subtle imperative as giving advice, attempting to avoid further strain on their epistolary relationship.

2 dīco + infinitive: indirect command
3 augere = *augeo, augēre, auxi, auctum*: "to make grow, increase"
4 adproprinquat = *appropinquo, -are*: "to approach, draw near"
4 cognitio, -ōnis, f: "legal inquiry, investigation" referring to a case of uncertain provenance, in which Fronto opposed the Athenian sophist and orator Herodes Atticus, who was Marcus Aurelius' teacher of Greek and also a close personal friend.
4-5 non modo… sed: "not only… but"
5 videntur = subj. is *homines* in line 4.
5 ullum = antecedent of *qui* in line 6.
7 inconstantius = compar. adj. of *inconstans, -stantis*
9 elegentius = n. sing. comparative adj. or adv. of *ēlegentia, -ae*, f: "taste, grace, refinement"
9 meditatus es = *meditor, -ari,* dep.: "to think over, consider"
10 dictionem = *dictio, -ōnis*, f: "speech, oratory"
10 sustinent = *sustineo, -tinēre, -tinui, -tentum*: with infin. "to bear to, have the heart to"
11 benivolentiorem = *benevolentior*: comp. of *benevolens* with ablative of comparison (*adversario tuo*)
12 pedetemptius = comparative of *pedetemptim*: adv. gradually, carefully, cautiously
13 magno opere = *magnopere*: adv. of *magnus*: "greatly, very much"
14 inpetro = *impetro*
16 verum = *vērō*: "but indeed, but in fact," postpositive, formed as *vērum* at the beginning of a sentence
17 utcumque = adv. "in whatever manner, however"
17 poterit has impersonal force
19 vestrum = partitive genitive with 'utrumque'
19 scio = here: "I am mindful that…"
23 magis = used with verbs as "preferably, for preference, rather"
23 minus… minus = "not, not at all"

Text of Letter 7
(Letter 3.2, van den Hout)

Aurelius Caes. Frontoni suo salutem

Saepe te mihi dixisse scio quaerere te, quid maxime faceres gratum mihi. id tempus nunc adest: nunc amorem erga te meum augere potes, si augere potest. adpropinquat cognitio, in qua homines non modo orationem tuam benigne audituri, sed indignationem maligne spectaturi videntur. neque ullum video, qui te in hac re monere audeat. nam qui minus amici sunt, malunt te inspectare inconstantius agentem; qui autem magis amici sunt, metuunt ne adversario tuo amiciores esse videantur, si te ab accusatione eius propria tua abducant. tum autem, si quod tu in eam rem dictum elegantius meditatus es, per silentium dictionem auferre tibi non sustinent. adeo sive tu me temerarium consultorem sive audacem puerulum sive adversario tuo benivolentiorem esse existimabis, non propterea, quod rectius esse arbitrabor, pedetemptius tibi consulam. sed quid dixi ‘consulam’, qui id a te postulo et magno opere postulo et me, si inpetro, obligari tibi repromitto. et dices: ‘quid? Si lacessitus fuero, non eum simili dicto remunerabo?’ at ex eo tibi maiorem laudem quaeris, si nec lacessitus quicquam responderis. verum si prior fecerit, respondenti tibi utcumque poterit ignosci; ut autem non inciperet postulavi ab eo et impetrasse me credo. utrumque enim vestrum pro suis quemque meritis diligo et scio illum quidem in avi mei P. Calvisii domo eruditum, me autem apud te eruditum. propterea maximam curam in animo meo habeo, uti quam honestissime negotium istud odiosissimum transigatur. opto ut consilium conprobes, nam voluntatem conprobabis. ego certe minus sapienter magis scripsero, quam minus amice tacuero. vale, mi Fronto carissime et amicissime.

Letter 8

And now, Fronto responds to Marcus' "advice." The chronology of these letters is quite well laid out, and Letter 8 most definitely represents the response to Letter 7. In this letter, Fronto not only tries to appease Marcus by acquiescing to his advice, and thus accepting his epistolary role as Caesar, while also asserting his own epistolary role as teacher. Fronto questions Marcus' advice outright, and reminds Marcus of his integrity as a lawyer while also insisting that Marcus is absolutely in the right. In particular here, Fronto is remonstrating his right as a lawyer and rhetor to attack his opponent *ad hominem*, which was a common legal tactic in Roman courts (much more acceptable than today).

In both these letters, the language is much more formal than Marcus and Fronto's typical correspondence. Of note are the ways Marcus and Fronto assert their epistolary roles, and vie for a dominant position of authority in these letters in particular. The end of the letter is also of interest, in which Fronto reveals that Marcus has utilized a subtle tactic to voice his displeasure with Fronto by not writing in his own hand (strengthening the case for Marcus' use of a scribe to write his letter).

2 merito = adv. of *mereo*: "rightly, justly, duly, properly"
2 devovi = *dēvoveo, devovēre, devōvi, devōtum*: "to consecrate, devote"
6 minus = *non*
6 egomet = *-met* suffix is an intensifier
9 spectaculum = refers to the case Fronto is trying, in which Herodes Atticus is his opponent.
9 frugi = *frux, frūgis*, f: "fruits of the earth;" in dat. sing. used as indecl. adj.: "useful, honest, discreet, moderate, temperate"
9 protelarei = *prōtēlo, -are*: "to drive off, put to flight"
protelarei → *protelari*
10 non est verum = here, take 'verum' as "right;" this is followed by an indirect statement based off 'virum' and 'protelarei.'
11 detrimenti capitur = idiomatic: "to suffer"
11-12 omnis… conplexus = "every embrace, every contact"
12 superes = generic, similar to the English pronoun "one," i.e. "even if one overcomes"
13 dignum tutela tua = *dignus* + abl: "worthy of… X"
13 scissem = *scivissem*
14 adflixint = adflixerint: perf. subj. of *adflīgo, -flīgere, flixi, flictum:* "to dash, knock down, knock about"
15 pro tuo erga me amore, quo sum beatissimus = take as an aside.
16-17 quin… non dubito = *non dubito quin*: "I do not doubt but that…"
17 Heroden = Greek accusative
24 fac me… certiorem = "make me more certain" i.e. "inform me, tell me"
26 factu = dative supine of purpose for *facio*
34 δίς = Greek; "twice, doubly"

Text of Letter 8
(Letter 3.3, van den Hout)

Domino meo Caesari Fronto

Merito ego me devovi tibi, merito fructus vitae meae omnis in te ac tuo parente constitui. quid fieri amicius, quid iucundius, quid verius potest? aufer ista, obsecro, ‘puerulum audacem’ aut ‘temerarium consultorem’. periculum est plane ne tu quicquam pueriliter aut inconsulte suadeas! mihi crede, si tu vis (si minus, egomet mihi credam), seniorum a te prudentiam exsuperari. denique in isto negotio tuum consilium canum et grave, meum vero puerile deprendo. quid enim opus est aequis et iniquis spectaculum praebere? sive sit iste Herodes vir frugi et pudicus, protelarei conviciis talem a me virum non est verum; sive nequam et inprobus est, non aequa mihi cum eo certatio neque idem detrimenti capitur. omnis enim cum polluto conplexus, tametsi superes, commaculat. sed illud verius est, probum virum esse quem tu dignum tutela tua iudicas. quod si umquam scissem, tum me di omnes male adflixint, si ego verbo laedere ausus fuissem quemquam amicum tibi. nunc me velim pro tuo erga me amore, quo sum beatissimus, in hac etiam parte consilio iuves. quin nihil extra causam dicere debeam quod Heroden laedat, non dubito. sed ea quae in causa sunt (sunt autem atrocissima) quemadmodum tractem, id ipsum est quod addubito et consilium posco: dicendum est de hominibus liberis crudeliter verberatis et spoliatis, uno vero etiam occiso; dicendum de filio impio et precum paternarum inmemore; saevitia et avaritia exprobranda; carnifex quidam Herodes in hac causa constituendus. quodsi in istis criminibus, quibus causa nititur, putas debere me ex summis opibus adversarium urgere et premere, fac me, domine optime et mihi dulcissime, consilii tui certiorem. si vero in his quoque remittendum aliquid putas, quod tu suaseris, id optimum factu ducam. illud quidem, ut dixi, firmum et ratum habeto, nihil extra causam de moribus et cetera eius vita me dicturum. quodsi tibi videbitur servire me causae debere, iam nunc admoneo ne me inmoderate usurum quidem causae occasione: atrocia enim sunt crimina et atrociter dicenda; illa ipsa de laesis et spoliatis hominibus ita | a me dicentur, ut fel et bilem sapiant; sicubi Graeculum et indoctum dixero, non erit internecivum.

Vale, Caesar, et me, ut facis, ama plurimum. ego vero etiam litterulas tuas δίς amo, quare cupiam, ubi quid ad me scribes, tua manu scribas.

Appendix I: Concordance

For the convenience of both scholars and students who are interested in exploring the *Epistulae* further, I have provided a guide to locating the letters in this paper in other works, namely Michael van den Hout's Teubner edition of the text and C. R. Haines' Loeb version with translations.

Letter 1 = (van den Hout: 3.10, pg 43; Haines: 3.9, vol. I, pg 50)

Letter 2 = (van den Hout: 4.6, pg 62; Haines: 4.6, vol. I, pg 180)

Letter 3 = (van den Hout: 1.2, pg 1; Haines: 1.2, vol. I, pg 80)

Letter 4 = (van den Hout: 2.8, pg 28; Haines: 2.10, vol. I, pg 136)

Letter 5 = (van den Hout: 2.11, pg 30; Haines: 2.6, vol. I, pg 140)

Letter 6a = (van den Hout: 2.12, pg 31; Haines: 2.7, vol. I, pg 144)

Letter 6b = (van den Hout: 2.13, pg 31; Haines: 2.8, vol. I, pg 144)

Letter 7 = (van den Hout: 3.2, pg 36; Haines: 3.2, vol. I, pg 58)

Letter 8 = (van den Hout: 3.3, pg 36; Haines: 3.3, vol. I, pg 62)

Appendix II: Translations

Translation of Letter 1
(Letter 3.10, van den Hout)

Hail My Best Teacher

I know that friends undertake prayers for the onewhose birthday it is, on said birthday; I however, because I love you just as I love my very self, want on this day, your birthday, to pray for myself. Therefore I call all the gods, who anywhere in the world provide their present and prompt force to men, who, either through sleep or mysteries or through the healing art or oracles ever help and strengthen, and I call one among those gods with my prayers and I place myself according to the nature of each prayer so that the god in charge of this thing may hear more easily. Therefore now first I ascend the citadel of Pergamum and supplicate Aesclepius so that he may moderate the health of my teacher well and preserve it vehemently. Then I depart to Athens and beseech Minerva upon bended knee and beg, if I should ever know anything of letters, that it come into my heart solely from the mouth of Fronto. Now I return to Rome and beg the gods of the roads and of the sea routes, that every journey be undertaken within your presence and that I not be fatigued by so frequent and so savage a desire for you. After all this I ask the guardian deities of all peoples and Jove himself, who shakes the Capitoline Hill, that he may guard this for us, that I may celebrate jointly this day on which you were born to me with strength and happiness.

Farewell, my sweetest and dearest teacher. I ask you to care for you body so that, when I come, I may see you. My lady greets you.

Translation of Letter 2
(Letter 4.6, van den Hout)

Hail to my Sweetest Teacher,

We are well. I slept a good deal on account of a little chill, which seems to have passed. From the eleventh hour of the night to the third part of the day I read a little from the Agriculture of Cato; I also wrote a little, feeling less miserable, by Hercules, than yesterday. After my father's morning greeting, 'I caressed my throat.' by swallowing honey water all the way to my throat and then ejecting it out. For it is too strong to say 'I had gargled,' as it is in Novius, I believe, and others. But with my throat having been cared for, I went out to my father and stood at the sacrifice. Then, I departed for lunch. What do you think that I took for lunch? A small amount of bread, although I saw others devouring beans and onions and fish full of caviar. Then we performed the work of harvesting the grapes and we sweated profusely and we were happy and, 'some,' so says the writer, 'survivors of the vintage we left hanging high.' From the sixth hour we returned home. I studied a very little something and it was wasteful. Then I chatted a lot with my mother sitting on the bed. My speech was this: 'What do you think my Fronto is doing now?' then she said: 'What however, do you think my Cratia is doing?' Then I said: 'What about our little sparrow Cratia the littlest?' While we discussed these things and we argued which of us loved one or the

other of you more, the gong resounded. That is, my father was announced to be going into the bath. We, having been washed therefore, dined in the press-room (not washed in the press-room, but rather having washed we dined!) and we heard the rustics jesting freely. Then, upon returning, before I turned onto my side and snored, I explained my thoughts and recounted the events of the day to my sweetest master, whom if I were able to desire more, I would be tortured a little more willingly.

You will be well for me Fronto, wherever you are, most honey-sweet, my love, my pleasure. Why is it like this for me with you? I love you, absent one.

Translation of Letter 3
(Letter 1.2, van den Hout)

M. Caesar to M. Fronto My Teacher

What should I say sufficiently about this foul fortune? How will I blame appropriately that most difficult necessity of mine, which holds me bound with shackles in this place, with an anxious mind and with much worry? This fortune which does not allow me to go to my Fronto, to run immediately to my most beautiful soul, to look first hand at the state of his health, to hold his hand, and even that foot itself, however much can be done without discomfort, to lay hands on it gradually, to warm it in a bath, and to offer a hand to him as he steps in.

And you call me a friend, I who do not fly to you with a rapid course, with everything interrupted? But I am too shut in with my blasted shame, nay, my indolence. Oh me, what shall I say? I fear to say anything which you do not wish to hear; for you indeed, make a great effort in every way with those jokes of yours and lightest words to move me away from worry and to show that you are able to bear all these ills with a steady spirit. And where my mind should be, I do not know; except that I know this, I do not know how my mind was turned to you. Take care, for pity's sake, to drive away that ill health of yours with all temperance and moderation, and take care to go to the waters; for you are enduring the illness on account of your virtue, but for me, it is the harshest and worst thing. If and when you do this, I beg that you do so commodiously, and that you write to me and place my heart back into my chest. In the interim I will hold close just such letters of yours as I have with me.

Farewell to my sweetest Fronto, although it is appropriate that I speak so much more orderly (for you indeed demanded just this): oh, good gods, those who are everywhere, may he be well, I beg, my sweetest Fronto, dearest to me, may he be well, always whole, unimpaired, and uninjured in body, may he be well and able to be with me. Sweetest man, farewell.

Translation of Letter 4
(Letter 2.8, van den Hout)

M. Caesar Sends Greetings to His Most Honorable Consul and Teacher,

Related by marriage, but not under guardianship, in addition, having been placed by this circumstance, in which, as Q. Ennius says, "Everyone gives empty

advice and everything for pleasure;" similar to what Plautus skillfully said on the same business in *Colax*:

> Those who will have deceived the trusting, with a promise given in faith,
> Those crafty observers who are nearest to the king,
> Those who speak to the king one thing, but have another in mind.

Indeed, these things were once accustomed to be troublesome for kings alone, but indeed now there are even, as Naevius says, "Those who favor the sons of kings with their tongues and nod in assent and abase themselves." I am duly passionate, my teacher; I properly appoint this one goal to myself; I justly consider one man, when a stylus comes into my hand.

You ask most kindly for my hexameters; which I would have also sent immediately, if I had them with me. For my scribe, whom you know, I call him Anicetus, when I departed, he sent none of my writings with me. Indeed, he knows my disease and fears that if they had come into my control, I would do what I am accustomed to and throw them into the fire. Yet there was almost no danger for these hexameters. As, indeed, I confess truly to my teacher, I love them.

I study in the night, I confess, for the day is consumed in the theater. Therefore I do less in the evening, having been exhausted. Sleeping, I rise at first light. I made, nevertheless, through these days for myself sixty excerpts in five books, but when you read 'sixty,' know that there are in them both Novian Atellan farces and the little orations of Scipio, so that you don't grow too frightened at the number.

As of your Polemo, whom you remember, I ask that you not remind me of Horace, who is dead to me along with Polio.

Farewell my dearest, farewell my most beloved, most honorable consul, sweetest teacher, whom I have not seen in a space of two years now. For when they say that two months have passed, they count only the days. When will it be that I will see you?

Translation of Letter 5
(Letter 2.11, van den Hout)

M. Aurelius Caesar Sends Greetings to his Consul and Teacher,

After I had written to you most recently, nothing worth mentioning has happened which could be written to you or which, once known, could help in any way. For we generally pass through these days like this: the same theatre, the same empty time, the same desire of you. Why do I say 'the same?' Indeed, it is renewed daily and it swells up and, what was it Laberius said about love, in his way and in his own style? "Your love grows faster than a leek, and as firm as a palm tree." This, therefore, I turn toward my desire, what that one says about love.

I wish to write more to you, but nothing is at hand. Behold what came into my mind: we heard those writers of eulogy, Greeks, of course, but wondrous mortals, as I, who am as distant from Greek literature as my Caelian Hill is from Greece. However, I would hope that I, like them, might be able to embellish even Theopompus as they do; for I hear this one was born the most eloquent in the house

of the Greeks. Therefore they have achieved that I, scarcely an animate philistine, intend to write Greek, as Caecilius says, “in sound knowledge.”

The Neapolitan sky is clearly commodious, but violently variable. In a single measure of the hours it becomes either colder or warmer or tepid. Midnight is lukewarm at the start, Laurentine, even; then, however, at the cock’s crow it is a little cold, Lanuvinine, even; now the early night and the early morning and dawn is continuously chill till the rising of the sun, exactly as at Algidus. From afternoon it is sunny, as Tusculanum; while at midday it is boiling hot, like Puteoli; and indeed when the sun departs to wash at the Ocean, at last the sky becomes more moderate, the same type as at Tibur. In the evening and darkest night, “While the dead of night itself falls headlong,” as M. Porcius says, it persists in the same way.

But why have I, who promised myself to write little, gathered Masurian nonsense. Therefore goodbye, my most blessed teacher, most honorable consul, and desire me as much as you love me.

Translation of Letter 6a
(Letter 2.12, van den Hout)

Consul to his Caesar,

My brother is blessed, who saw you these two days! And I am trapped in Rome, having been chained by golden fetters, I await the Kalends of September as the superstitious do a star, which, having been seen, they violate their fast. Farewell, Caesar, glory of your fatherland and the Roman name. Farewell, my lord.

Translation of Letter 6b
(Letter 2.13, van den Hout)

To My Lord,

I have sent my Cratia to celebrate the birthday of your mother, and I have ordered her to remain there, until I arrive. However, in the same moment in which I will have abdicated the consulship I will ascend a carriage and fly to you. Meanwhile, I have promised upon my word that there will be no danger to my Cratia from hunger: indeed, your mother will share the crumbs having been sent from you to her with her client; nor does my Cratia, as the wives of lawyers are said to be, eat much food. She will have lived having been satisfied solely by the kisses of your mother. But indeed what will become of me? There is not even a single kiss remaining in Rome. All of my fortune, all my happiness is in Neapolis. I beg you, what is that custom of abdicating office a day early? How is it that, as to the fact that I am am prepared to swear an oath by the gods, if only I may resign as many days earlier as gods I swear by? What is it, however, the fact that I will swear to abdicate my consulship? But I will even swear that I have long desired to resign the consulship, in order that I may embrace M. Aurelius.

Translation of Letter 7
(Letter 3.2, van den Hout)

Aurelius Caesar sends Greetings to his Fronto,

I know that you often said to me to ask you for any favor you could best do for me. Now that time is at hand. Now you are able to increase my love toward you, if it can be increased. The investigation approaches, in which not only, it seems, will men be hearing your orations kindly, but will also be looking poorly upon indignities. I do not see anyone who dares to advise you in this affair. For they are less friendly, who prefer to examine you acting out of character; and they, however, are more friendly, who fear that they seem to be friendlier to your opponent, if they lead you away from your own accusation of him. However, if you have more gracefully prepared some saying in this affair, they do not have the heart to steal the speech from you through mandated silence. Whether you judge me to be a brash counselor, or an audacious boy, or more benevolent to your opponent, not on that account will I judge what is more correct, or counsel you more cautiously. But why have I said, 'I will counsel,' I who request this from you, who requests this great favor, and if I obtain this, promise in return that I am obligated to you? And you say: 'What? If I am provoked, will I not repay him in a similar speech?" You gather greater praise for yourself out of this, if you, having been provoked, will respond with nothing. But if he does it first, you can be pardoned for responding in whatever way. For I love each of you on account of his own merits and you should know that he was indeed educated in the house of my ancestor P. Calvisius, whereas I was educated in your house. On that account I have the greatest care in my mind, that that most hateful business is completed as nobly as possible. I desire that you approve my counsel fully, for you will approve my wish. I would certainly rather have written without wisdom, than I would have been silent without friendship. Goodbye to my dearest and most beloved Fronto.

Translation of Letter 8
(Letter 3.3, van den Hout)

Fronto to my Lord Caesar,

Justly have I devoted myself to you, rightly have I, entirely, attributed the success of my life to and your father. What can be done more lovingly, more delightfully, more truly? Carry off, I beg you, that 'audacious boy' or 'brash counselor.' The danger is plainly not that you advise something in the manner of a little boy or without counsel! Believe me, if you wish (if not, I believe myself), that the wisdom of elders is surpassed by you. Further, in this business I take your counsel as grave and aged, but mine as boyish. For why is it necessary to display a spectacle for equals and unequals? If that man Herodes is honest and modest, he is not to be driven off by me with shouts; if he is dishonest and worthless, my contest with him is not equal, and the same thing is not suffered. For any man, having been embraced with the defiled,

even if he overcomes it, is polluted. But this thing is truer, that an honest man is one whom you judge worthy of your guardianship. But if I had ever known, or if I had dared to wound with a word any friend to you, then would that all the gods strike me down mightily. Now I wish that you, on behalf of your love for me, in which I am most blessed, help me also in this portion of advice. Why I ought not to say anything beyond the case, which hurts Herodes, I do not doubt. But how I might manage those things which *are* in the case (they are indeed most atrocious), that is itself what I doubt and about which I ask your advice: I must speak of the free men cruelly flogged and despoiled, one even killed; and I must speak about an impious son unmindful of fatherly prayers; savagery and greed must be reproached; a certain Herodes must be appointed scoundrel in this case. Even if, on these crimes, on which the case rests, you think I ought to drive and press my opponent from the high resources, make me, my best and sweetest lord, more certain of your advice. But if in these too you think anything must be relaxed, which you will have advised, I will lead the best thing with a deed. This one thing, indeed, as I have said, I consider firm and rational, that I will say nothing beyond the case about his ways and the rest of his life. But if it will seem to you that I ought to use it for the case, then advise me now that I will not use it immoderately for the occasion of the case: for the atrocities and crimes must be spoken of atrociously; these things themselves, about such wounding and despoliation of men, I will speak of, although they taste bitter and bilious; if anywhere I have spoken an unlearned or slightly Greek thing, it will not be deadly. Farewell, Caesar, and love me most, as you do. But I doubly love your little letters, on which account I desire that, when you write something to me, you write it in your own hand.

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