

Livy, Cicero, and Ovid in the *Supplex Libellus* of Chauveton's *De Gallorum Expeditione*

Surprisingly few Americans have read the sixteenth and seventeenth century Latin histories of Florida, written mainly by Huguenots to protest the slaughter of French settlers executed at the command of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565. To the most famous of these little-known accounts, Urbain Chauveton's *De Gallorum Expeditione in Floridam et clade ab Hispanis non minus iniuste quam immaniter ipsis illata, Anno MDLXV, Brevis Historia*, is appended a *Supplex Libellus* that exhorts Charles the Ninth of France to take up arms according to *ius gentium* against the piratical (according to the *libellus*) Menéndez de Avilés. Charles, preferring peace with the Spanish, would do no such thing, but that in no way diminished the propaganda value of a good *suasoria*, which the *Supplex Libellus* in effect is, with the *Brevis Historia* serving as its extended *thema*. Like any declamatory exercise, the *Historia* and *Libellus* draw heavily on classical texts to provide *loci communes* that implicitly draw the associated concepts of their original texts into the new work. In the *Brevis Historia*, allusions are often patent and discrete: the third chapter lifts the supposedly eyewitness account of an alligator from Pliny, *NH* VIII 89 and the obviously fictitious, eyewitness account of a winged serpent likely from the book of Isaiah. The more subtle *Supplex Libellus*, however, offers a particularly rich and complexly intertextual *prosopopeia*, and delivered in the voice of Menéndez de Avilés and, by parenthetical remark, that of the French supplicant, both employing a variety of interlocking and contrasting allusions.

This one sentence alludes to no fewer than four passages in Livy, one in Ovid's *Heroides*, and another in Cicero's *De Officiis*. The Ovidian and Ciceronian allusions and one of the Livian allusions bring to bear various gendered impressions of the French: feminine and vulnerable to sexual assault in the Spanish *prosopopeia*, but masculine and ready to fight any attempt at

feminization according to the supplicant's voice. Deeper irony, however, lies in the remaining Livian allusions, which pertain to the proper behaviors of victors and victims, and especially in the opening allusion of the *prosopopeia*, taken from the ancient Spanish chieftain Indibilis' own supplication made to the Romans, and in a later allusion to horrors of the massacre of the Spanish city of Astapa. The Livian references to Spanish conflicts, twisted in the caricature of Menéndez de Avilés, portray the commander as a barbarian worthy neither of his Spanish ancestors nor of the civilization embodied in the classical tradition, which the Huguenot author masterfully uses in his own writing.