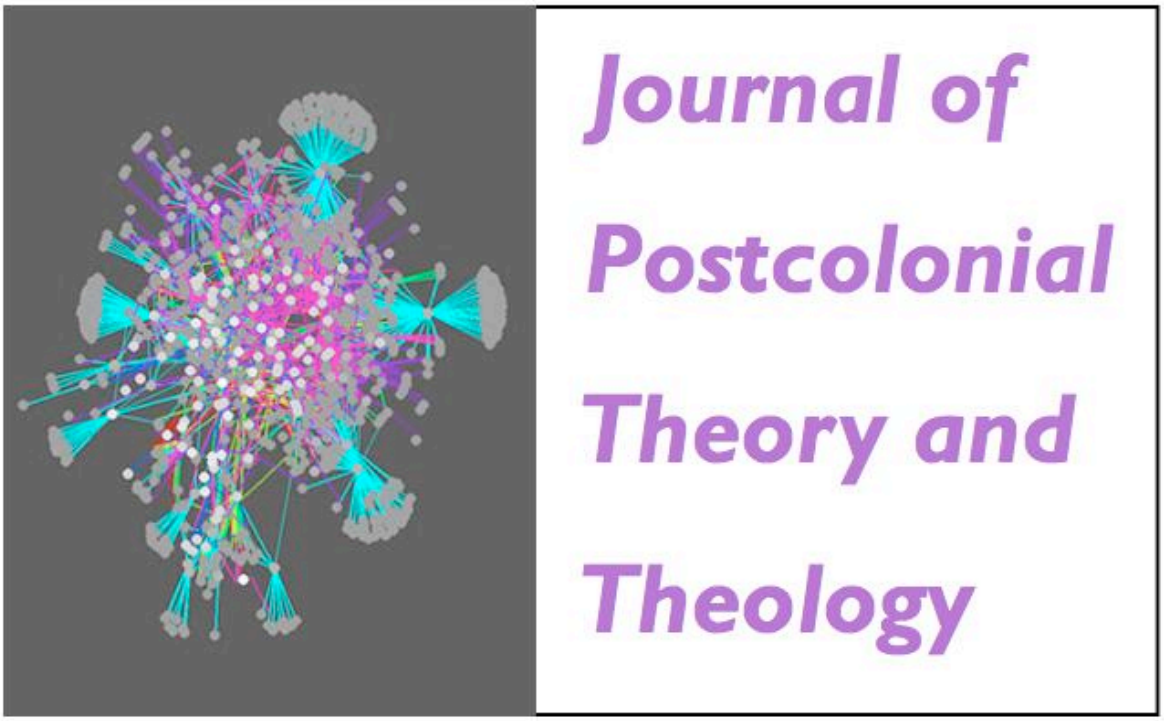

Postcolonial Ambivalence and Cicero's Philhellenism

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Identity and identity politics are central concerns in a diverse array of scholarly conversations, among them postcolonial studies. Colonization is in some ways an external activity—a process of economic or political take-over—but the wounds of colonialism are interior.[1] The postcolonial presses the notion that identities are binary, recognizing instead that they are "sites of

[1] There are many instances one could cite. The work of Frantz Fanon comes to mind first. His background as a psychiatrist is evident as he critiques the psychology of colonialism. See both *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1970), and *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld). More recently, one could point to either Ashis Nandy (e.g. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988]) or even Homi K. Bhabha's Lacanian analysis in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), as further examples.

ambiguities internal and external to the self."[2] The guiding model is hybridity rather than assimilation on the one hand or a fetishized diversity on the other. And although hybridity refers to culture and discourse, at root it speaks to the disconcerting experience of identity transformation that is an inherent part of any colonial encounter.

This interest in identity is just as central to the study of the ancient Mediterranean. In the study of the Roman Empire, there has been an explosion of interest in the content of local identities. The emergence of Roman Greece as a discrete area of study is an example of this turn. Where scholars once asked how Roman the provinces were, they now ask what it meant to be Greek (or some other local identity) in the context of the Roman Empire.[3] This is a corrective to a previous generation's assumption that the Mediterranean slowly and inevitably marched toward a state of being Roman. The term Romanization has been retained but now, as described by Susan Alcock, it allows for "independence of action, and a degree of agency, on the part of the subject, the "Romanizee."[4] It is no longer about "tracing a one way flow of influence" but rather

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2 Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 4.

3 Interest in identity among scholars of the Roman Empire is pervasive. One need look no further than the essays in Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry, eds., *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Interest in the intersection between power and identity is also evident, as in David Mattingly's *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). This drift has produced an increased interest in local contexts, especially in conversations about Romanization. In addition to renewed interest in the context of Roman Britain, Roman Greece has emerged as a distinct area of study. See, for example, Susan Alcock, *Graecia Capta: Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1993) or the essays in Simon Goldhill, ed., *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic, and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). In addition to general studies, here has been an explosion of interest in the literature of Roman Greece, including Pausanias. See for example the essays in Susan Alcock, John Cherry, and Jaś Elsner, eds., *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

4 Susan Alcock, "The Problem of Romanization, the Power of Athens," in *The Romanization of Athens: Proceedings of an International Conference held at Lincoln, Nebraska (April 1996)*, ed. Michael C. Hoff and Susan I. Rotroff (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 2.

encompasses “a far wider range of potential transformations...evolved through a complex dialogue between ruler and ruled.”[5]

Identity is especially relevant to Cicero's first letter to his brother Quintus (*ad Quintum fratrem* 1.1), which addresses Roman character by setting it against Greek behavior as a foil.[6] The intent of the letter is to illustrate appropriate behavior for a Roman governor in the provinces, but the text itself includes significant discussion of the Greeks as a people. The views expressed in the letter seem somewhat ambiguous on a first reading. Cicero’s philhellenism—that is, his love for Greek culture and learning—is easy to identify in the letter. But like most Roman philhellenes his ideas about the Greeks were not that simple. Other parts of the same express distaste for the Greek people. His philhellenism was rooted in a deep respect for the philosophical and cultural heritage of Greece, and yet his statements about contemporary Greece in the same text suggest disdain. Like many of his contemporaries, it seems Cicero was of two minds about the Greeks.[7]

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5 Ibid., 3.

6 A significant body of Cicero’s letters survives, including three books comprising twenty-one letters from Cicero to Quintus. The letters are a mix of purely private correspondence and tracts intended for wider circulation. Written in 60 BCE when Quintus was a proconsul in Asia Minor, Cicero’s first letter to Quintus seems intended for a wider audience. Although clearly addressed to Quintus’s specific problems, the letter is a general treatise on how to rule properly in the Greek provinces held by Rome. For a succinct overview of the events of Cicero’s life, see Charles Brittain, *Cicero: On Academic Scepticism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), ix-xii. A more detailed account can be found in Elizabeth Rawson, *Cicero: A Portrait* (London: Duckworth, 1975). On the literary aspects of Cicero’s letters, see G. O. Hutchinson, *Cicero's Correspondence: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1-24. D. R. Shackleton Bailey produced an edition with introduction and commentary on the whole letters. For Cicero’s letters to Quintus and Brutus, see Shackleton Bailey, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus. Letter Fragments. Letter to Octavian. Invectives. Handbook of Electioneering,* Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

7 Cf. Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1992, 223 on the double-minded character of Roman philhellenism.

There is some ambiguity here but ambiguity is not enough to describe this double-mindedness fully. Ambiguity suggests a lack of clarity or some indecision. To the contrary, the text is careful and precise in its description of the Greeks. Cicero seems to rely on a settled classification of the Greeks in relationship to Rome and the other conquered peoples of the Roman Empire. His position is not therefore unclear. Rather, it embraces positions that seem internally contradictory. The Greeks are by turns praised and denigrated. It follows that the text is not simply ambiguous but rather ambivalent in the etymological sense of that term. Cicero seems pulled figuratively in two directions.

This paper will read Cicero's double-mindedness as a kind of ambivalence. My interpretation is informed by comparison with modern imperial rhetoric. This presents certain difficulties; the first section will address the problems posed by bringing a modern theory to bear on an ancient text. The second section is built on this theoretical foundation and comprises a careful comparison with modern imperial rhetoric as described by David Spurr. The comparison highlights Cicero's relative lack of anxiety about the Greeks and his reliance on classification as a form of rhetorical mastery. His overall position is ambivalent, as fits the uneasy identity of a member of the dominant party in a cross-cultural encounter.

Historical Difference, Comparative Analysis, and Scholarly Discourse

Bringing a postcolonial approach to ancient Mediterranean data can be a contentious proposition. Many scholars of the ancient Mediterranean resist as a form of anachronism attempts to bring

their data into conversation with postcolonial theory.[8] It is true that postcolonial theory as such can only describe ancient dynamics by analogy and we have to reach across time to do it. There is a straightforward sense in which the purists have it exactly right.

But analogy is a powerful mode of explanation and as a result, the similarities between ancient and modern are almost irresistible. Cicero, for example, was an intellectual who was attracted to an ancient form of Greek culture while still maintaining his distance from the Greeks of his time.[9] Max Müller was also an intellectual who was powerfully attracted to the ancient culture of a subjugated people. As a Western scholar and one of the leading commentators on Indian culture and religion during the age of British imperialism, Müller championed the Indian philosophical tradition as encoded in ancient Sanskrit texts. This interest in Sanskrit allowed him to easily sidestep the non-Sanskrit cultures of contemporary India, just as Cicero praised the Greek philosophical heritage of men like Plato while at the same time maintaining distance from contemporary Greece. Müller's views on India were fundamentally double-minded, not unlike Cicero's view of the Greeks.[10]

Comparison is not merely an exercise in delineating similarities, since the differences between Cicero and modern imperial discourses are just as instructive. Homi Bhabha theorizes

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[8] Postcolonial ideas are often dismissed out of hand by ancient historians and classicists, and where they are deployed, they are used with extreme caution. Cf. the essays in Henry Hurst and Sara Owen, *Ancient Colonizations: Analogy, Similarity, and Difference* (London: Duckworth, 2005) and the essays in J. Webster and N.J. Cooper, eds., *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, Leicester Archaeology Monographs (Leicester: Leicester, 1996).

[9] Cf. Nicholas Petrochilos. *Roman Attitudes to the Greeks* (Athens: National and Capodistrian University of Athens, 1974).

[10] I draw here on Sharada Sugirtharajah's description of Müller's project in *Imagining Hinduism: A Postcolonial Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 50-61.

colonial double-mindedness as ambivalence by appealing to Enlightenment ideals, such as autonomy or sovereignty, that were fundamentally at odds with the practices of colonization. The colonizer experienced a tension between the values and ideals of her culture and the activity of colonization. The resulting discourse was at odds with itself. The uneasy experience of the colonizer stands beneath this discourse as another site of ambivalence. The native culture was perceived as a threat to identity and, according to Bhabha, the colonial project was justified and rationalized in order to ease anxiety and neutralize the threat.[11]

Described this way, postcolonial ambivalence has very little to do with Cicero's philhellenism. There was a tension in early Roman imperialism between the Republican value of shared power and the reality of autocracy—emerging but not complete during Cicero's lifetime —but even this is not quite what Bhabha means.[12] By comparison with the modern world, there is relatively little in Roman culture or thought that would seem to contradict or undermine the practices of empire building, at least within certain constraints. Moreover, the reading proposed above relies on the inference that Cicero (and his contemporaries) felt some anxiety about the Greeks. But Cicero's philhellenism was founded more on an entanglement with Greek culture

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11 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

12 Ronald Syme (*The Roman Revolution* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939]) famously described this shift as a revolution. Following Syme, Paul Zanker (*The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Jerome Lectures [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988]) described Augustan art in terms of propaganda, suggesting the model of a totalitarian regime forcing cultural change. Against these views, Karl Galinsky (*Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]) proposes that Augustan culture worked by establishing a system of guiding ideas that were repeated in a variety of contexts. This entailed both a recapitulation of existing values and the introduction of new concepts. Galinsky sees a Roman evolution rather than a revolution. In any case, there was undeniably a tension between Republican government and the kind of autocratic power exercised by Augustus that required a massive cultural shift.

than it was on the gnawing anxiety that characterizes modern empires—what Bhabha describes as the repeated turn from mimicry to menace and back again.[13]

The profundity of these differences might support an argument for separating postcolonial ideas from the study of Mediterranean antiquity except that comparison relies more on difference than on similarity, as already mentioned. In fact, J.Z. Smith argues that there can be no comparison without difference. The more similar a pair of objects are, the less useful comparing them is. Rather, the scholar must ask and answer the questions prompted by the differences between the things compared.[14] Smith acknowledges that comparison exaggerates similarities but with the purpose of producing new questions directed toward a better grasp of the particularities of the things compared.[15] Put another way, comparison can actually clarify historical differences rather than obscure them.

There is a kind of tension, then, between the truth of the purist's position and the parallel knowledge that comparison is an intellectually vital practice. This tension is visible in the work of some scholars of the Roman Empire. Jaś Elsner warns against these "stimulating" comparative cases, going so far as to argue that the term "colonialism" should not be applied to the ancient world at all.[16] He goes on to use the concept of resistance to interpret Roman art in the provinces.

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13 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 91.

14 J.Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 14.

15 On comparison as a method, see also J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 14 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1990.

16 Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 254.

The comparison is useful to him because it illuminates something that would otherwise be overlooked, even if Elsner clearly expresses some anxiety about the practice.

The tension is further evident in the frequently unacknowledged overlap between postcolonial scholars and scholars of the ancient Mediterranean. Stephen D. Moore observes that there is already a high degree of correlation between the themes engaged by scholars of the ancient Mediterranean and postcolonial studies—something he attributes it to a common vantage point. As modern people, historians cannot help but see antiquity through the lens of a postcolonial world.[17] This produces a largely unconscious and mostly unacknowledged overlap. This is equally true of conversations about the Roman Empire, not least in the pervasive interest of such scholars in questions of identity—an interest that has engendered, among other things, a scholarly fascination with the variations between local contexts within the Roman Empire.

For a reader versed in postcolonial thought, the sense of correlation is palpable. Susan Alcock's vision of Romanization as a process of cultural exchange (quoted above) suggests a trace of the Foucauldian insight that power is always and everywhere negotiated. The insight that new cultural forms that were neither quite Greek nor Roman resonates with the postcolonial insight that culture is produced at the margins. Alcock writes of a wealth of potential transformations. Kwok Pui-lan writes of an "interaction between two cultures with asymmetry of power," which is "often not voluntary and one-dimensional, but is full of tensions, fractures, and

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[17] Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 9-11.

resistance."[18] Their views are not identical but both intend to clarify that the exchange is never one-sided. This is as true for the Roman Empire as for Korea or India.

The most relevant question is not whether postcolonial ideas are relevant to the ancient world. The question is audience. Although there is an overlap between scholars like Kwok and Alcock, there is also a clear distinction. They may have similar interests and proclivities but they do not speak the same scholarly language, nor do they belong to the same discourse. Alcock's primary goal is to contribute to an existing conversation that is focused solely on further clarifying our understanding of the ancient Mediterranean world and secondarily on revising our understanding of Romanization as a conceptual category. Postcolonial ideas function to clarify Kwok's point as she contributes to a conversation about postcolonial theologies. To the contrary, postcolonial theory is unlikely to help Alcock communicate that with her audience. Explicit reference may well disrupt their understanding.

My analysis of Cicero in this paper is comparative. The comparison is between Cicero and the description of imperial discourse offered by David Spurr.[19] Spurr's survey of journalism, administrative, and travel literature identifies a complex web of overlapping rhetorical strategies that together comprise modern imperial discourse.[20] Not all of the strategies Spurr describes are relevant to Cicero's first letter to Quintus but a careful reading of Cicero's treatment of the

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18 Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 43.

19 David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004 [1993]). A comparison between Cicero's text and some specific text written by a modern colonialist would fit Smith's model somewhat better. I draw out similarities between Cicero's rhetorical choices and imperial rhetoric as described by Spurr in order to keep the discussion tightly focused on Cicero.

20 Ibid., 11.

Greeks does suggest several points of comparison. There is an instructive similarity between his representation of the Greeks and the strategies Spurr describes as insubstantialization, debasement, and classification.

Postcolonial ideas are not strictly speaking necessary to a reading of Cicero or even the navigation of Roman identity inherent in his letters. Including them signals a shift in audience. This paper transgresses the conventional boundary that maintains that the study of Cicero and his peers belong to disciplines other than Religion or Theology. It brings Cicero into an emerging discourse about a postcolonial understanding of religion as a helpful comparative case. Thus the analysis makes explicit use of postcolonial ideas by analogy with the Roman Empire in recognition that my intended audience is engaged in some way with postcolonial thought.

Cicero on the Greeks

As described above, Cicero's first letter to his brother, Quintus, outlines an appropriate Roman demeanor in a provincial context. Roman identity is at issue. Because the treatise has everything to do with the governor's place, Cicero has in mind a public identity. This public persona is formulated with specific reference to the local population. Cicero works out what it means to be a Roman by describing how a Roman should behave in relationship to the Greek community, an exercise that builds on an existing representation of Greek identity.

Roman identity was always connected with the other, as might be expected in an imperial context. Davina Lopez describes the situation this way:

> The kind of local identity permissible to display in the Roman imperial system was limited to what the Romans found acceptable from their subjects. On the underside of

> promoting elite cooperation with Roman constructions of reality in the colonies and provinces, the production of outsider identities based on stereotypes was no less vigorous or consistent. In fact, Roman imperial identity was directly linked to specific representations of "others," particularly others in the provinces and frontiers into which the Romans expanded through territorial conquest.[21]

Although he predates the imperial period, the kind of stereotypes to which Lopez alludes is already at work in Cicero's text. And thus his understanding of the governor's Romanitas has everything to do with what he thinks the Greeks are like.

This section will describe the content of the letter itself, with special attention to Cicero's discussion of the Greeks. In the course of this discussion, I draw out points of contact with Spurr's description of modern imperial discourses. This serves both to clarify Cicero and to situate his imperialism in relationship to modern examples. His apparent lack of existential anxiety by comparison with modern examples seems related to the public nature of the identity he is describing. But like his modern counterparts, there is a kind of double-mindedness in his view of the Greeks that suggests ambivalence—again, in the sense of being pulled in opposing directions.

Cicero's first letter to Quintus was intended for circulation and it addresses three central issues. The first is the relationship between the governor and his subordinates (1.1.5-1.1.7). Cicero warns Quintus about relationships with three distinct populations: slaves, provincial Romans, and Greeks, each of which presents distinct issues. Intimacy with slaves is inadvisable as a violation of the social order.[22] Intimacy with provincial Romans is inadvisable because they

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[21] Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 27-28.

[22] There is some indication that Quintus had taken one of his own slaves, whom he freed, into his confidence and the advice may directly address that situation (Rawson, *Cicero,* 176).

may be mercenary. Roman provincials are also suspect because they may have adopted Greek customs. The Greeks are a distinct category for Cicero and will be treated separately below.

Cicero next addresses conflict over the collection of taxes, which was a major problem for governors in Asia. There was conflict between the locals and the Roman *publicani* primarily because the local people regarded the taxes as burdensome and unfair. Cicero disagreed with them, of course, but he also recognized that the dishonesty of the *publicani* exacerbated the situation. Still, Cicero advises changing how the locals saw the tax burden. He proposes reminding them that there were taxes before Rome and that tax revenue was used to improve life in the province, especially security (1.1.33), although he also recommends restraining the *publicani* (1.1.36).[23]

The third issue is Quintus's temper. Cicero shifts from extolling his brother's virtues to addressing his most persistent fault (1.1.37).[24] Although his tone is gentle, the advice is pointed. He makes some excuses for his brother's prior behavior—perhaps he was so shocked by the depravity of his constituents he simply lost himself—but urges him to show greater restraint in the future (1.1.40).

In the course of this discussion, Cicero refers to the Greeks as a distinct class using the Latin term *Graecus* nine times. In what follows, I will explore the complexity of Cicero's position by examining each of his uses of *Graecus*. His comments range in tone from

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[23] Rawson (*Cicero*, 174) suggests that tax revenue was not put to good use in Quintus's province, which makes Cicero's advice a little hollow.

[24] There is every indication that Quintus was unpopular because of his hot temper and Cicero is clearly invested in doing whatever he can to address the problem. Cicero also seems to have been invested in his brother's prospects as affecting his own reputation. See Rawson, *Cicero,* 99-100.

complimentary to disdainful. Near the beginning, he refers indirectly to the Greeks as the most civilized (*humanissimum*, 1.1.6) of all people. Not long later, he calls them false and untrustworthy (*fallaces sunt permulti et leves*, 1.1.16). This is typical of his double-minded approach to the Greeks, the specifics of which are more complicated than is apparent on the surface. Comparison with modern imperial discourse clarifies.

Cicero and Colonial Anxiety

All of Cicero's uses of *Graecus* are concentrated in the first two parts of the letter—that is, in his discussion of the governor's relationship to local populations and his discussion of the *publicani*. This section will survey the first seven. There are similarities between Cicero's rhetorical choices in these places and two of Spurr's strategies, namely insubstantialization and debasement. These are related ideas in Spurr. Debasing the threatening Other is a way of subverting the threat of dissolution he identifies with insubstantialization. Although Cicero lacks the sense of existential panic that permeates the rhetoric of insubstantialization, he does present the Greeks as a potentially corrupting influence. His response is also similar. Although Cicero does not debase the Greeks with the same abandon one often finds in modern colonialism, he does represent them collectively in negative terms as part of an argument for keeping them at a distance. There is thus a similarity between Cicero and modern imperialism in rhetoric, while at the same time there is a significant difference in tone.

Cicero's first three uses of *Graecus* warn Quintus directly about the danger of intimate friendships with Greeks. Cicero makes a distinction between many or perhaps most Greeks and a special category of Greeks who are worthy of their heritage. He warns Quintus that

> much caution is called for with respect to friendships which may arise with certain among the Greeks themselves, apart from the very few who may be worthy of the Greece of old. Nowadays a great many of these people are false, unreliable, and schooled in over-complaisance by long servitude (1.1.16).[25]

Cicero's appreciation for the Greeks is apparent in his division between those who are worthy of their heritage and those who aren't. The distinction he makes between worthy and unworthy Greeks carries over into his advice about friendships. He continues:

> My advice is to admit them freely to your company in general and to form ties of hospitality and friendship with the most distinguished; but too close intimacies with them are neither respectable nor trustworthy. They do not dare to oppose our wishes and they are jealous not only of Romans but of their fellow countrymen (1.1.16)

Friendships mattered because they affected how the governor was perceived publicly, an issue with enormous implications for a Roman. A well-regulated life was integral to the governor's authority, an inherent trait that was effectively an extension of his character and bearing.[26] His manner of life was in some ways most evident externally in the company he kept. The character of his friends reflected on his own character. The reports they gave of him also

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[25] Every translation is an act of interpretation. In order to keep myself honest and to avoid the impression that I am bending the text to my interpretation, I have chosen to use another scholar's translation. All quotations from Cicero are Shackleton-Bailey 2002.

[26] Authority (*auctoritas*) was a trait that inhered in a person and was evident in his lifestyle and manner. Augustus exploited the concept of authority (*auctoritas*) in order to argue for his fittingness to rule as an autocrat (Galinksy, *Augsutan Culture,* 15-20). This is also the basis on which Plutarch would later critique Coriolanus. Coriolanus embodied certain aspects of Roman virtue, which demanded that a governor maintain a certain manner of life in order to establish his authority. Unfortunately, the austerity of his life ingratiated him to the ruling classes but not to the people, which in turn undermined his position (Plut. *Cor*. 1.4).

determined his reputation.[27] Governorship was "a key test of character whose results were watched closely by peers and rivals in Roman society."[28] Without authority and reputation, he could lose influence among his peers, which would undermine his position as a governor. In the words of Sarolta A. Takács:

> A successful Roman man was competitive yet disciplined and was in the public sphere. The latter provided the mechanism for the behavioral controls. Whenever the control mechanism and the checks-and-balances of government failed, the competition turned violent, became uncontrollable, and spilled inward. The political structure was thus vulnerable to internal upheaval.[29]

She goes on to note that Cicero, in particular, was a champion of this way of being, which makes him a kind of champion of "the very idea of Romanness itself."[30]

Cicero's reasoning reflects these realities. He advises his brother to show self-control in his manner of life—including the regulation of subordinates—first because the local Greeks will perceive him as divine if he does (1.1.7).[31] This would establish his authority with the local population. Cicero further recommends careful conduct in governing subordinates and navigating personal relationships because these were the foundation of his honor. Honor, in turn, was the basis of his fittingness to rule (*fundamenta dignitatis*, 1.1.18). Failure here would affect his reputation among Romans. More bluntly, it would undermine the core of his identity.

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27 David Braund, "Cohors: The Governor and His Entourage in the Image of the Roman Republic," in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, ed. Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry (London: Routledge, 1998), 12-14.

28 Braund, "Cohors," 11.

29 Sarolta A. Takács, *The Construction of Authority in Ancient Rome and Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

30 Takács, *Construction of Authority*, 9.

31 Cicero actually says that they will believe he is a *divinum hominem*, either from their own history (*ex annalium memoria*) or from heaven (*de caelo*).

Cicero advises his brother not to form intimate relationships with slaves (1.1.17) but only the Greeks are singled out and divided into these two classes. There are effectively two reasons not to form friendships with the lesser Greeks. The first has to do with their inherent characteristics. The second has to do with their subordinate relationship to the Romans.

Cicero presents the danger of intimacy by arguing that the Greeks were a potentially corrupting influence. The opening of the letter urges Quintus to keep distance between himself and his subordinates in order to maintain the proper public perception, as already discussed, but he also describes the issue in terms of purity (*integritate*, 1.1.8). By inference the Greeks were an adulterating influence. This is even clearer in Cicero's second letter to Quintus, which is a more personal and thus more frank version of the first letter.[32] In it, Cicero calls the Greeks shallow (*levitatis*) and flatterers (*assentationis*) and further states that they have a kind of genius for deception (*ingenia ad fallendum*, 1.2.4). This is the subtext of his first letter's description of the Greeks, with the clear implication that Quintus could be overtaken by their negative influence if he associated with them too closely.

Corrupting influence is an idea that has a place in modern imperial discourses. In modern contexts, the fear of corrupting influence often produces an extreme form of anxiety. David Spurr illustrates this using the trope of the cannibal, which belongs to a rhetorical strategy he calls insubstantialization. Stories of cannibalism are an extreme expression of colonial anxiety, where the colonized threatens to engulf and incorporate the colonizer in a direct, physical, and gruesome way. Loss of identity by dissolution into a foreign Other is the more subtle threat

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32 Cf. Lintott, *Cicero as Evidence*, 254.

encoded in such stories. Reassertion of identity alleviates the threat, often by placing both self and the other in the context of a familiar discourse. The encounter is narrated as a psychic drama in the mind of the colonizer—a frequent feature of colonial travel literature. The narrator describes the Other as mysterious, enchanting, or unnerving. The narrative then moves through the anxiety produced by the encounter before finally reasserting the original self.[33]

Spurr also describes debasement, a related rhetorical strategy that represents the colonized native in negative terms in order to establish distance. This is one way colonial writers neutralized the psychic threat posed by the native. Debasement establishes an absolute difference between colonizer and colonized. Debasement further conveys that the native culture is intrinsically disordered—a situation that demands the imposition of order.[34] Debasement thus distances colonizer and native from one another and justifies colonial activity. Taken together, insubstantialization and debasement delineate the uneasiness experienced by the dominant group and one way it can be subverted.

This bears some resemblance to Cicero's representation of the Greeks. He isolates them as a category of people and associates them with a clear set of negative characteristics. As in the modern rhetoric of debasement, these are presented as intrinsic qualities. For those Greeks who are unlike their ancestors, their character is problematic. They are just not respectable or trustworthy as inherent characteristics.

The behavior of the governor toward them is dictated by this representation, although this is somewhat more complex in Cicero than in Spurr's description. Debasement creates an

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33 Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire,* 142-155.

34 Ibid., 90-91.

exclusionary boundary between colonizer and colonized. In Spurr's words, the "supposed danger of the European's degeneration in the presence of the primitive becomes both the source and the pretext for an obsessive reprehension of the Other."[35] Cicero's denigration is more dismissive than obsessive, but he does argue for a fairly unyielding separation between a certain kind of Greek and the Roman governor in this text. The boundary is only permeable because a subset of Greeks rises above this reputation.

There are significant differences, on the other hand. In modern texts, debasement addresses anxiety. By comparison with modern material, Cicero's admonition to avoid negative influence lacks any real sense of urgency. He identifies the Greeks as an unhealthy influence but the stakes are significantly lower than a total loss of self. He never outlines consequences more serious than vexation (cf. 1.1.1). Sheer familiarity is the simplest explanation for this. Spurr's colonialists encountered previously unknown cultures, for which they lacked any frame of reference. This had a profoundly disorienting effect. By contrast, Greeks and Romans were well acquainted with one another.

There is perhaps also a relevant difference between ancient and modern conceptions of the self. The understanding of character implicit in Cicero's discussion of Quintus's temper is illustrative. He identifies irascibility as a character flaw (*vitium*, 1.1.37) although Cicero also describes it as a habit (*moribus*, 1.1.38). In either case, it is not something that can be rooted out easily. On the contrary, this would require a total change in disposition (*mutare animum*, 1.1.38), which Cicero claims is the most difficult thing one can undertake. Cicero instead suggests

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35 Ibid., 82-84.

practices that would help Quintus keep his temper in check. The well-governed life is characterized by self-control expressed outwardly. This is easier to achieve without vices but once formed, character itself seems relatively fixed by Cicero's account.

The most significant difference, then, is Cicero's focus on exterior rather than interior realities. Because his primary concern with the governor's identity—indeed, his *Romanitas*—has to do with perception, there is nothing in the text that speaks directly to the kind of existential panic apparent in modern texts. Nothing suggests that either Cicero or Quintus—or any other Roman governor for that matter—experienced the anxiety or the fear of psychological dissolution described by Spurr.

Given these differences, the boundary Cicero constructs between Greek and Roman must serve some other purpose than protecting the governor from the threat of interior dissolution. Cicero refers to the Greeks four further times in his discussion of the conflict between the locals and the *publicani* responsible for collecting their taxes (1.1.33-36). This discussion runs parallel to the section in Cicero's second letter to Quintus described above. Although Cicero advises Quintus to make peace between the Greeks and the *publicani*, he also warns him not to take Greek complaints too seriously because the Greeks are deceitful (1.2.4). Cicero understands the cultural vices of the Greeks as necessary information for an effective governor. This is also not at odds with modern empires. Vast bodies of knowledge were produced under modern empires for the purpose of mastering the native and governing effectively.[36] And in Cicero, it seems the best

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[36] Cf. Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 13-27 and Sugirtharajah, *Imagining Hinduism*, 67-73.

explanation for why he chooses to describe the Greeks the way he does: It set an effective policy for the governor.

Cicero and Classification

The previous seven references were directly related to the substance of Cicero's advice. This section will address the remaining two uses of *Graecus*. The first is a brief remark Cicero makes about an individual named Paconius, whom he classifies as unworthy of the name Greek. The second also relates to classification and is part of a discussion about the relationship between ancient Greece and contemporary Rome.

After his discussion of appropriate and inappropriate friendships, Cicero turns from the specifics of the conflict with the *publicani* to some more general discussion. He writes:

> For you are not to suppose that I pay attention to the grumblings of a fellow called Paconius (not a Greek, even, but a Mysian, or rather Phrygian) or the talk of a crazy money-grubber like Tuscenius, whose unsavory plums you most justly plucked from his disgusting jaws (1.1.19-20).

Cicero refers here to some of Quintus's judicial decisions, particularly against Tuscenius. He approves at least of the decision to ignore the complaints of a man like Paconius, who after all, isn't even a real Greek (*hominis ne Graeci quidem*).

This reinforces the division between Greeks who live up to their heritage and those who don't. The Greek language was a key marker of Greek identity under Rome and a Mysian or Phrygian could easily be considered a Greek by those standards.[37] But Cicero separates Paconius

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[37] On the relationship between Greek identity and language, see in particular the first half of Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, Ad 50-250* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996).

from Greekness because it suits his purpose, which is to debase the man as justification for ignoring his complaints. The statement resonates in the same division between good Greek and worse Greek.

Rhetorically, the statement adds another layer of hierarchy. There are better and worse Greeks but there is also a distinction between the average, perhaps habitually deceptive Greek and a thoroughgoing scoundrel like Paconius, who isn't even a real Greek. Those Greeks who are most like their ancient counterparts are worthy of Roman friendship. They are few in number and the rest do not meet the same standard. But even they are better than Paconius, who isn't even worthy of the lowest level of Greekness.

In postcolonial terms, this is a form of classification. Turning again to Spurr, classification establishes standards of judgment that are then used to rank and order nations and peoples. These rankings are not value neutral. Cultures are judged by how closely they approximate the cultural ideals of the colonizer. Cultures and nations are praised for their concurrence and vilified for their deviation from this norm. In modern contexts, this order of nations is often imposed on an evolutionary timeline. Thus in addition to being superior, Western culture is also perceived as more developed. Cultures are classified by their concurrence. Those that differ the most from the West are identified as primitive, while those most similar to it are classified as more advanced.[38]

Roman thought lacks any sensibility for evolutionary progression but Cicero's system of classification does introduce a similar sense of hierarchy. At a basic level, classification is the

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[38] Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 61-75.

construction of a system that places cultures and peoples in a hierarchical relationship to one another. In modern contexts, this frequently justifies an unequal distribution of power because it favors those at the top of the hierarchy. There is a similarity between this and Cicero's hierarchy. He ranks the Greeks among themselves and he does so according to a system he has devised to judge them. Moreover, he places the highest level of Greeks on more or less equal footing with the Romans.

There is a further similarity when classification is placed in the broader context of representation in postcolonial studies. Representation can be defined as the process by which the native culture is defined and fixed—as in Edward Said's deconstruction of Orientalism as a set of discursive strategies that represented the East as the West's Other.[39] Representation places the native culture in a subordinate position, always understood in relationship to the dominant culture and never on its own terms. Classification discursively elevates and insulates the dominant culture and establishes a position from which to argue for the interests of the dominant group. Classification also construes subordinate groups in terms that favor the dominant group, which in turn means that classification is primarily about the self-definition of the dominant party.

According to Erich S. Gruen, this dynamic is characteristic of Roman attitudes toward the Greeks during the Republican period. The appeal of Greek culture for Romans was undeniable, even before the age of Roman expansion, and Cicero was clearly attracted to it. Later Republican writers show even greater investment in Greece than is evident in this text, some going as far as

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39 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1979).

theorizing that Latin had its linguistic roots in Greek.[40] This was not a simple appropriation, on the other hand. It was not awe, nor was the Roman position merely about denigrating the Greeks. Instead, the focus was always preserving Roman interests. Gruen sets this against the commonplace assumption that the Romans were in some way embarrassed by their own attraction to Greek culture or that their position was ambiguous. He argues instead that the Roman "response to Greek culture was consistent, sophisticated, and purposeful."[41] He makes a case that much discussion of the failures of Greek culture or of individual Greeks was not intended as a discourse about them but rather as a means to "shed a bright light upon those qualities that set Romans apart."[42]

Cicero does not justify Roman rule on the basis of Greek failings or primitivism but rather argues that Rome has a peculiar duty to Greece. In his view, Rome has a paternalist view of Roman government. He summarizes his advice simply: "[L]ove those whom the Senate and People of Rome have committed to your charge and authority, protect them in every way, desire their fullest happiness" (1.1.27). And then he draws a distinction:

> If the luck of the draw had sent you to govern savage, barbarous tribes in Africa or Spain or Gaul, you would still as a civilized man be bound to think of their interests and devote yourself to their needs and welfare. But we are governing a civilized race, in fact the race from which civilization is believed to have passed to others, and assuredly we ought to give its benefits above all to those from whom we have received it (1.1.27-28).

The other provinces are characterized as savage and barbarous (*immanibus ac barbaris*) and it is the governor's duty to seek their interests as a function of his character as a civilized—that is

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40 Gruen, *Culture and National Identity*, 227-234.

41 Ibid., 235.

42 Ibid., 271.

humane (*humanitatis*)—person. This sets the Romans apart from the other tribes mentioned but the Greeks are a special case. They are also civilized. The relationship between Rome and Spain is not the same as the relationship between Rome and Greece. Not only does he identify the Greeks as a civilized people. For Cicero, they were arguably the source of civilization. This is the source of Rome's special duty to Greece, which exceeds the Roman duty to all humankind. They are related as student and teacher: "schooled by their precepts, we must wish to exhibit what we have learned before the eyes of our instructors" (1.1.28).

Cicero's philosophical work draws significantly on Greek predecessors.[43] In this section, he appeals especially to Plato as a proper basis for government. Plato is "a prince among thinkers and scholars" who believed that rulers should devote "all their energies to acquiring virtues and wisdom" (1.1.29). Cicero concludes that Quintus is that kind of ruler for his province. His use of Plato calls to mind his own appropriation of Platonic ideas elsewhere. Cicero's companion treatises *De legibus* and *De republica* follow a pattern set by Plato. Plato's *Laws* followed from his outline of the ideal state in the *Republic* and Cicero also seems to intend his laws to follow from his vision of the state.[44] He has a clear sensibility for continuity between what he sees as the very best of the Greeks and Rome.

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[43] Cicero's philosophical output was largely intended to address Roman ignorance regarding Greek philosophy. His project in *De natura deorum* was to present Greek philosophical ideas to a Latin audience. By his own account, he kept his personal opinions out of the discussion entirely (*Nat. D*. 1.3-5). The dialogue is carried out between a representative Epicurean, Velleius, a Stoic, Balbus, and Cotta, an Academic. Although Cicero distances himself from the content, there is likely some resonance between his views and those of Cotta, as Cicero himself should be counted an Academic (Brittain*, Cicero*, viii-xxix).

[44] Andrew R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 238-241. Cf. Cicero, *Leg.* 2.6.

In one sense, this turns the postcolonial concept of classification on its head. Modern colonialists often appealed to their own cultures against the deficiencies of the native culture. Cicero appeals instead to the superiority of Greek culture. In another sense, it is quite similar to Müller's approach to Indian culture, to return to my earlier comparison. Müller's appeal to the Aryans as intellectually and culturally equal to the West bypassed modern India entirely. Müller posited a common origin between the Aryans and the West, which placed then in a genealogical relationship, and he imagined a kind of evolution from one point to the next. Müller also co-opted the Aryans as ancestors of the West and not of the India he knew. Cicero does not make use of evolutionary ideas but, like Müller, he bypasses his contemporaries and makes a link with their ancestors instead.

Müller and Cicero still have one further point in common. Müller's rhetorical move addresses a point of tension between the scholar and his own culture. If by his own account Indian culture is immoral, how can he justify his attraction to Indian learning? Cicero's assertion of continuity between Classical Greece and contemporary Rome was troubled by the specter of unworthy Greeks. There is no question that he was aware of the reputation of the Greeks among his peers, as can be inferred from his own words:

> Yes, I say it without shame, especially as my life and record leaves no opening for any suspicion of indolence or frivolity: everything that I have attained I owe to those pursuits and disciplines which have been handed down to us in the literature and teachings of Greece (1.1.28)

The subtext is that he should be ashamed by his connection with Greek philosophy. His own character is the stated reason he is willing to admit to it. Again, the subtext is that Greek

influence ought to produce indolence and frivolity (*inertiae aut levitatis*). It is only because it hasn't that Cicero owns up to the influence.

Taken together with his use of classification, the position is not ambiguous. It is ambivalent. Like Müller, Cicero occupies uneasy, hybridized space between Greece and Rome. With respect to Greece, classification allows him to argue for Roman domination. He expresses a highly developed and sophisticated system of representation that classifies the Greeks as a civilized race in decline and therefore in need of support. Rome is like a child or student, grown up and now ready to care of a decrepit parent. With respect to Rome, classification carves out space for an acceptable philhellenism. Cicero separates out unacceptable Greeks and then represents the more ancient Greeks in terms that should be palatable to a Roman. This was the substance of his philosophical project as well, expressed here in political terms.

As in modern examples, this communicates the basic vulnerability of the Roman position. Cicero may argue that the Romans have a right and duty to rule; the fact that the he must argue this position rather than simply inhabiting it means his position is implicitly ambivalent, at least in a limited sense. His position in relationship to his own culture is similarly fraught. He declares that he is not ashamed, leaving the reader the unsettling sense that he might be, if only a little. At the very least, he's concerned that others will, which is why he must immediately appeal to the austerity of his life to reassert himself as a Roman. It is possible to conclude, in that case, that while he lacks a keen sense of existential anxiety, his was a man caught between cultures, made to navigate a divided identity, and pulled in contradictory directions.

The Character and Significance of Cicero's Ambivalence

I have drawn out some surface similarities between Cicero's overall representation of the Greeks in *ad Quintum fratrem* 1.1 and the rhetorical strategies deployed by modern colonialists. From this, several points of difference emerged. Cicero's letter does not convey any significant anxiety about the Greeks. Further, although Cicero deploys a system of classification, unlike modern examples he does not impose this system on an evolutionary timeline. He also does not use classification to justify explicitly the imbalance of power between Greece and Rome.

Although he does not convey significant psychological anxiety about the Greeks, Cicero's position does relate to the construction of identity. Nicola Terrenato argues that the major conflicts and cultural tensions of the Roman Empire differed significantly from modern empires but cultural identity worked in a similar way in both contexts.[45] In addition to setting a Roman policy with respect to the Greeks, Cicero's use of classification also expresses a Roman identity. As Gruen argues, the purpose of the classification is to shed light on what it means to be a Roman. The classification establishes a Roman identity in relationship to the Greeks. The challenges of his time were distinctive but they prompted the need for new cultural identities, which is the same dilemma created by modern empires.

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[45] Nicola Terrenato, "The Deceptive Archetype: Roman Colonialism in Italy and Postcolonial Thought," in *Ancient Colonizations: Analogy, Similarity, and Difference*, ed. Henry Hurst and Sara Owen, 59-72 (London: Duckworth, 2005), 70.

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