Marika Rauhala (2018) Graecia capta, Roma rapta? Hellenisation and Roman Identity in the Expanding Empire . In: Alenius et al. (eds.) Studia historica septentrionalia Vol. 80. Transcultural Encounters II : Understanding Humans in Change. (pp. 131-149). Rovaniemi: Pohjois-suomen historiallinen yhdistys.

Graecia capta, Roma rapta? Hellenisation and Roman Identity in the Expanding Empire

In the course of the third and second centuries BCE, a new powerhouse, Rome, arose to dominate the Mediterranean. For several centuries, Greek civilisation had been the foremost military and cultural power in the area, and Greek influences had shaped the development of the nascent Roman culture. Since the eighth century, Greek colonies had thrived in southern Italy and the northern neighbours of the Romans, the Etruscans, were also immersed in Greek culture. Various religious practices and concepts traced to Greek ideas, and often the Romans also acknowledged the Greeks' antecedence in religious matters.[1] Likewise, the birth of Latin literature was owed to Greek models, and Greek education including rhetorical training became a status symbol of the Roman elite[2]. By the third century BCE, several members of the elite had mastered the language well enough to explore Greek letters, produce Greek texts and use the language in diplomatic dealings – if they so wished.[3] However, in a relatively short time, Rome subdued the Hellenistic Greek powers. In the first quarter of the third century BCE, the Romans clashed with Greek armed forces for the first time; despite his repeated victories, King Pyrrhus of Epirus was unable to defend the Greek cities of Southern Italy which consequently fell under Roman rule. The noted military leader Marcellus sacked the rich Sicilian city of Syracuse in 211 BCE, which resulted in a flood of Greek artwork to Rome. The Macedonian kingdom was defeated at the battle of Pydna in 168 BCE which ended the Third Macedonian War and, two decades later in 146 BCE, the Achaean League was crushed and the city of Corinth was demolished by the Roman general Lucius Mummius, hence known by the agnomen Achaicus.

As a consequence, the image of Greece as a source of ancient and superior civilisation was largely replaced by that of a conquered and corrupted subordinate. In the meantime, the influx of Greek cultural borrowings – including Greek slaves and spoils of war – increased in Rome, and the Hellenised Roman elite struggled to build a distinctive Roman identity that would duly emphasise the

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[1] See, e.g., Cicero, *Pro Flacco* (Cic. *Flac*.) 62. See also A. J. S. Spawforth, *Greek Culture in the Roman World: Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, 142.

[2] The elite should be understood here broadly denoting the wealthy and educated upper social strata that had both the means and the leisure to pursue politics, philosophy and other cultural interests. See Hans van Wees and Nick Fisher, "The Trouble with 'Aristocracy'". *'Aristocracy' in Antiquity: Redefining Greek and Roman Elites*. Edited by Hans van Wees and Nick Fisher. The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea 2015, 8–10.

[3] See Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*. Duckworth, London 1992, 229–232, 242–249 with references; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom. The Limits of Hellenization*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1975, 16–19. On the sociolinguistic conditions that shaped early Latin literature, see Thomas N. Habinek, *Politics of Latin Literature. Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1998, 41–44.

Romans' superiority while also accommodating their rich cultural borrowings. In this article, I will reflect the Roman elite's mixed reactions towards Hellenism by considering it as a way of adjusting the ideas of Romanness in the changing situation. In other words, I will review how the new configurations of power affected the development of Roman identity and created a need for the Roman elite to redefine their relationship with Greek cultural learnings. I will focus on the symbolic attempts to curb the effects of Hellenisation in education and religion, and how the delicate line between acceptance and rejection helped to forge an identity for the nascent empire while solidifying the existing power relations in the rapidly changing Roman state.

Drawing the Limits of Greek Letters

Traditionally, the education of children had been their parents' responsibility but, from around the mid-third century onwards, wealthy Romans started to employ private Greek teachers to instruct their children. At first, the tutors came from the Greek-speaking areas of Italy but, after the conquest of Greece, more and more people flocked to Rome from the eastern Mediterranean.[4] Besides basic language skills, Greek tutors would also offer teaching in literature. Gradually, Greek education became a status symbol among the Roman elite, and good teachers were in demand. In the end, it became practically impossible to pursue a political career without sufficient learning in the Greek language, literature and philosophy.[5] Even ordinary Romans learnt their lessons of Roman history and identity through the essentially Greek media of theatre and public speeches.[6] Theoretical studies in mathematics or astronomy did not interest the Romans as much as skills applicable on the political arena but, as the late-republican statesman and philosopher Cicero admits, they could stimulate the inborn abilities of elite youngsters thus guiding them towards manliness and cultivated manners.[7] Since Greek was the language of this scientific education, it was only available for the elite youngsters trained in Greek letters.[8]

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[4] The Greek-born historian Polybius, who was brought to Rome as a hostage in 167 BCE, also mentioned the Greek literati gathering in Rome (Plb. 32.10).

[5] Anthony Corbeill, "Education in the Roman Republic: Creating Traditions". *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. Edited by Yun Lee Too. Brill, Leiden 2001, 269–271; Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome. From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*. Methuen &Co Ltd, London 1977, 10–33; Jorma Kaimio, *The Romans and the Greek Language*. Commentationes humanarum litterarum 64. Societas scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki 1979, 195–207. After the Roman conquest of Greece, many children would have learnt Greek as well as received basic care and education from a Greek slave serving their family. It became customary for the better-off Roman families to employ *paedagogi*, that is, Greek-type (although not automatically Greek) slaves whose special duty was to accompany the boys to school and oversee their studies (see Bonner 1977, 34–46).

[6] Corbeill 2001, 262.

[7] Cicero, *De re publica* (Cic. *Rep.*) 1.30; *De oratore* (*De or.*) 3.58. The Augustan poet Virgil later encapsulates this attitude in his *Aeneid* (6.849–853) as he declares that while others may excel in arts and astronomy, the Romans are destined to rule the world. Although the value of the traditionally Greek skills is recognised, the capabilities of the Romans outweigh this.

[8] Corbeill 2001, 267.

Rhetorical training was the most important phase of an elite youth's education, and the learning derived substantially from the rich tradition of Greek oratory. Since public rhetorical schools were probably not available before the first century BCE, those who could afford private tutors would again have the upper hand.[9] In 92 BCE the censors issued an edict expressing their condemnation of those teachers who called themselves "Latin rhetoricians". The stated reason was that their practice was not in accordance with the educational principles of Roman ancestors; at the same time, the censors, by implication, gave preference to Greek rhetorical training.[10]

Yet, the publicly articulated image of Greek culture and the Greeks themselves appears in several republican sources belittling and even hostile. Even before the mid-second century BCE, the Roman playwright Plautus (ca. 254–184 BCE) regularly portrayed Greeks as excessive and debauched, which must have complied with the sentiments of the audience.[11] 'To act like a Greek' (*pergraecor*, *congraeco*) became synonymous with self-indulgence,[12] philosophy with deceitfulness and hot air.[13] Yet, the Roman comedians, Plautus included, were greatly indebted to their Greek ideals, not only for their art form, but also for their subjects, characters and plots. What is more, the Latin of the plays is also supplemented by copious Greek loans, which for its part evidences the audience's familiarity with the language.[14] These seemingly paradoxical elements, the alleged immorality and froth of Greek culture combined with the writer's own indebtedness to Greek education and intellectual influences, are hallmark features of subsequent Roman writings that seek to reconcile the precedence of Greek culture with Roman rule.

The dominant Roman discourse strongly idealised the ancestral way of life which combined frugality and modesty with agrarian rectitude.[15] Many leading figures expressed their concern about the looming moral corruption, which would follow from the reckless indulgence in Greek riches. As early

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[9] Corbeill 2001, 271; Bonner 1977, 65–68, 250–253.

[10] Suetonius, *De rhetoribus* (Suet. *Rhet.*) 1.2; Cic. *De or.* 3.93–94; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* (Gell. *NA*) 15.11; Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus* 35.1. See also the discussion of Erich S. Gruen, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1990, 179–191; Corbeill 2001, 272–273; Kaimio 1979, 196–199; Momigliano 1975, 21; cf. Bonner 1977, 71–74. According to Aulus Gellius, also the banishment of philosophers and rhetoricians in 161 B.C.E. (see below) was directed against Latin-speaking practitioners.

[11] Gruen 1992, 262–263; Tim Whitmarsh, "Hellenism". *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*. Edited by Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, 733. Plays were produced to be performed at public *ludi scaenici* in connection with religious festivals, but MacMullen (1991, 421–423) emphasises the elitist nature of Roman drama. Yet, as Gruen (1990, 152–157) justly points out, as Plautus' Greek characters belittlingly comment on their fellow Greeks in front of a Roman audience in Latin, the playwright also exposes the Romans' own prejudice along with their airs and graces to derision.

[12] Plautus, *Bacchides* (*Bacch.*) 743, 813; *Mostellaria* 20–22, 64, 959–960; *Poenulus* 600–603; *Truculentus* 87; see also *Curculio* 288–295; *Stichus* 226–227.

[13] Plautus, *Captivi* 284; *Pseudolus* 974; cf. *Mercator* 147; *Rudens* 986. See also Gell. *NA* 5.15.9; 13.8.3–5.

[14] See Habinek 1998, 43; Gruen 1992, 232.

[15] For instance, several stories celebrated republican heroes who were content to return to their humble rural life after defeating Rome's enemies. See, e.g., Sen. *Controv.* 1.6.4, 2.1.8; Valerius Maximus (Val. Max.) 4.3.5, 4.4.4–9; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (Plin. *HN*) 18.4; Plutarch, *Cato Maior* (Plut. *Cat. Mai.*) 2.1–2, 3.1–2.

as second century BCE, the historian Polybius (9.10) considered that the introduction of the extravagant lifestyle of the Greeks made the Romans effectively “abandon the habits of the conquerors and adopt those of the conquered”.[16] Cicero strongly contrasted the luxurious city life that leads to avarice, insolence and wickedness with parsimonious, assiduous and upright rural life.[17] The first-century BCE historian Sallust, in his turn, regarded that the factional strife that tore the Republic apart was caused by people’s immeasurable avarice.[18] Likewise, in the preface to his historical work *Ab urbe condita*, the Augustan writer Livy asks his readers to watch out for the ever growing level of moral decay in Rome which was due to idleness and the recent riches that gave rise to greed and love of luxury. According to Sallust, foreign riches were also dangerous for the divine relations because people failed to make a difference between sacred and profane things: houses were built like temples and guests entertained like gods.[19]

Interestingly, when the Romans complained about the degenerative effects of a self-indulgent lifestyle that foreign wealth produced, they were following a Greek pattern.[20] While the image of the East as soft, effeminate, lavish and ultimately enervating and corrupting was borrowed from the Greeks, the object of that image shifted to include not only Asia but also Greece. Even though several Roman literati contented themselves with describing the perils of easy living in general, perhaps the most vehement critic of vain luxuries, Cato the Censor (234−149 BCE), did not hesitate to attribute the root of all evil directly to Greek culture. The Augustan historian Livy records a speech that Cato delivered in 195 BCE, thus expressing his strong resistance to the plans to abrogate Lex Oppia that restricted women’s public display of wealth. According to Livy, Cato considered luxury and avarice to be the ruin of great empires. He stated that the artworks brought from conquered Syracuse had signalled danger which was now ever more present since Rome had advanced to Greece and Asia,

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[16] Plb. 9.10: “τὸ γὰρ ἀπολιπόντας τὰ τῶν νικώντων ἔθη τὸν τῶν ἡττωμένων ζῆλον ἀναλαμβάνειν”. Translated by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. See also Whitmarsh 2010, 737; Gruen 1992, 260–261.
[17] Cicero, *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* 27.75.
[18] Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* (Sall. *Iug*.) 41; cf. *Bellum Catilinae* (Sall. *Cat.*) 10–13. See also Thomas Wiedemann, “Sallust’s *Jugurtha*: Concord, Discord, and Digressions”. *Greece & Rome*, Vol. xl, No. 1, April 1993, 51–52. Sallust traces the development back to the destruction of Carthage which left Rome without a unifying enemy; this, however, also coincides with the subjugation of Greece. In *Bellum Catilinae* (11), Sallust clearly states that the Roman armies had first got accustomed to unconventional comforts and luxuries in the East, which had softened their spirits. Cf. Val. Max. 9.1.3; see also Whitmarsh 2010, 740.
[19] Sall. *Cat*. 10–12; Sall. apud Macrobius 3.13.7–9; cf. Val. Max. 9.1.5 On the Roman discourse deploring the effects of luxury, see also Ramsay MacMullen, “Hellenizing the Romans (2nd Century B.C.)”. *Historia*, Band XL, no. 4, 1991, 430–434.
[20] See, e.g., Herodotus 1.79.3, 1.155; Thucydides 1.6.3; Xenophanes fr. 3 (Diels); Leslie Kurke, “The Politics of ἁβροσύνη in Archaic Greece”. *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 11, no. 1, April 1992, 92–104; Pierre Briant, “History and Ideology: The Greeks and the ‘Persian Decadence’”. Translated by Antonia Nevill. *Greeks and Barbarians*. Edited by Thomas Harrison. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2002, 202–206.

which are places that are "filled with every enticement of illicit pleasures". Thus, Cato feared that those treasures would capture the Romans, and not the other way around.[21]

In his biography of Cato, Plutarch paints a picture of the obdurate patriot that despised the pretentiousness of Greek culture. The most vehement advices were given to his son, whose education Cato persistently supervised himself despite having a qualified Greek slave.[22] He tried to turn the son against any Greek preoccupations by provocatively proclaiming that the infestation of Greek learning would become the ruin of Romans. In particular, the Censor warned his son against the evil intentions of Greek doctors.[23] Pliny even claims that Cato wanted all Greeks expelled from Rome.[24] The sting of Cato's criticism seems to be directed at the dishonesty that was in-built in the Greek eloquence: by twisting words, the rhetoricians and philosophers would dizzy their audience making them lose the perception of right and wrong. Whereas the Romans spoke from the heart, the words of the Greeks were born on their lips, and a concise Roman speech required a long and verbose translation.[25] Cato labelled Socrates as a chatterbox with tyrannical aspirations that had trampled on traditions and enticed youngsters away from the laws.[26] When the representatives of three philosophical schools arrived from Athens to Rome on a diplomatic mission in 155 BCE, their lectures attracted vast and enthusiastic crowds. In particular, Carneades, the head of the Academy, was praised for his mesmerizing eloquence, and young men thirsting for knowledge grew a passion for philosophy because of him. As the fame of the philosophers grew, Cato hastened their departure so that they could return to lecture to Greek boys and Roman youngsters would again obey the laws and magistrates.[27]

The stereotypical image that Cato also fed portrayed Greeks as cunning obscurantists, whose trickery and verbal pretentiousness could turn things inside out but who could not compete with Roman moral rectitude and integrity.[28] That negative image was made concrete in 161 BCE as the Senate banished philosophers and rhetoricians from Rome; the stated reason was that their activities were harmful to

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[21] Livy 34.4.1–4: "*avaritia et luxuria* […] *quae pestes omnia magna imperia everterunt*. […] *iam in Graeciam Asiamque transcendimus omnibus libidinum illecebris repletas* […] *eo plus horreo, ne illae magis res nos ceperint quam nos illas. infesta, mihi credite, signa ab Syracusis illata sunt huic urbi*." See also Gruen 1992, 54. Cf. Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 3.7; Val. Max. 9.1.3. Even later Roman poets, who – embracing their Greek exemplars – celebrated the pleasures of life, would declare that idleness was the ruin of kings and prosperous cities (Catullus, *Carmina* 51.15–16) and that simplicity by far outranked eastern luxuries (Horace, *Odes* 1.38).
[22] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.3.
[23] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 23.2–4; Plin. *HN* 29.14.
[24] Plin. *HN* 7.113: "*ille semper alioquin universos ex Italia pellendos censuit Graecos*".
[25] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 12.5. On Cato's anti-Hellenic statements, see also Gruen 1992, 52–55.
[26] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 23.1; cf. Plin. *HN* 7.112.
[27] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 22.1−5; Plin. *HN* 7.112.
[28] See, e.g., Livy 42.47.4–8. As Livy's, account reveals, however, all Roman nobles did not reject artifice in external relations.

the state.[29] Either in 173 or 154 BCE, the expulsion fell on two Epicurean philosophers for introducing pleasant lusts to Rome.[30] Plutarch states that Cato's own decision to send the embassy of Athenian philosophers away was motivated by his strong personal aversion to philosophy; he used to drag all Greek education and cultural achievements through the mire because of his conceited obstinacy.[31] This, however, is not the whole truth. Even though Cato chose to address the Athenians through an interpreter in 191 BCE and was the first to write Roman history in Latin instead of Greek, he knew Greek well enough, which Plutarch also acknowledges.[32] The tradition has it that Cato familiarised himself with Greek literature only late in his life, but it is known that already in his younger years Cato had shown interest in Greek learning, and his own writings were saturated with Greek influences.[33]

Instead, we might pay closer attention to Cato's stated concern that an unconditional surrender to Greek treasures and learning would make the Romans lose control. Accordingly, not only did he seek to protect impressionable youngsters from philosophical enchantment, but he also lashed out at those Roman philhellenes who seemed too eager to embrace the fruits of Hellenism. For instance, Cato castigated Aulus Postumius Albinus who made the mistake to apologise for his less than perfect language skills when writing his historical work in Greek.[34] The point that was becoming increasingly important and also seems to lie behind Cato's criticism is the persistence to construct and uphold a boundary between the acclaimed Roman customs, on the one hand, and the precarious aspects of emblematic Greekness on the other hand.[35] Greek philosophy or education as such was not the problem but rather how the Romans could achieve a sense of positive distinction suited for their status as conquerors while also considerably relying on Greek cultural accomplishments. The solution was, on the one hand, to define a proper context for the display of Hellenisation and, on the other hand, to emphasise the superiority of those qualities that were identified as ancestral values.

The first thing to notice is that the Romans' adoption of Greek culture was never a matter of passive assimilation but rather a process of active adaption and adjustment. For example, as regards education, the Romans were far less enthusiastic about embracing systematic physical education which emphasised individual accomplishments than the teaching of Greek letters – even though

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[29] Suet. *Rhet.* 1.2; Gell. *NA* 15.11. See also Bonner 1977, 65–66; Gruen 1990, 171–174.
[30] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 12.547a; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 9.12. See also Gruen 1990, 177–178.
[31] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 23.1: "ὅλως φιλοσοφίᾳ προσκεκρουκὼς καὶ πᾶσαν Ἑλληνικὴν μοῦσαν καὶ παιδείαν ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας προπηλακίζων".
[32] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 12.4.
[33] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 2.3–4; Cicero, *De senectute* 3, 26, 39–41, *Academica* 2.5; Val. Max. 8.7.1. See also Gruen 1992, 56–59; Kaimio 1979, 45–46, 98–99, 229–230.
[34] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 12.5.
[35] Cf. Gruen 1992, 68, 75, 81–83; Habinek 1998, 60.

military prowess was highly valued.[36] In particular, the Greek gymnasiums where nude youngsters would train under the watchful – and often lustful – eyes of older men were seen as a seedbed of moral corruption.[37] The Greek custom of tutoring adolescent boys by their mature lovers, *erastai*, was rejected by the Romans, and the urge to ensure the bodily integrity of citizen boys became a critical matter for them.[38] On the other hand, the Greek practice of hunting was eagerly adopted by high ranking Roman families as part of their youngster's education, and by the end of the Republic, it was already viewed as something traditionally Roman.[39]

Secondly, the changed power relations made it important to attest Roman domination also in the cultural arena. In 282 BCE, during the controversies which ultimately led to the Pyrrhic War and Roman conquest of Southern Italy, the Roman ambassador to Tarentum Lucius Postumius Megellus did not consider it beneath him to address the Tarentines in Greek. Unfortunately, Postumius was met with gross insults which may have discouraged the use of Greek in future diplomatic dealings.[40] In any case, whereas the Roman officials might later on still speak Greek as a gesture of goodwill,[41] only Latin was to be used when the interests of the Roman state were discussed with foreign envoys. Valerius Maximus takes this as a demonstration of Roman dominance,[42] and his interpretation reflects the situation where Rome had evolved from a position of petitioning to that of dictating. Cato's tendency to pigeonhole the use of Greek learning so that it underlines the superiority of Roman traditions is analogous with this reappraisal of Roman identity. As Gruen (1992, 259–260) duly notes,

[36] Corbeill 2001, 277–280. The Roman concept *virtus* entailed the idea of ideal citizen who actively engaged in political life and showed his valour on the battlefield. Thus, bravery as well as fitness and physical endurance were counted among the characteristics that had built the greatness of Rome. See Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness.* Virtus *and the Roman Republic*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, 2–3, n. 6 and *passim*. On the interconnectedness between the elite's internal contest for leadership and military performance, see Robin Waterfield, *Taken at the Flood. The Roman Conquest of Greece*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, 16–18.

[37] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* (*Tusc.*) 4.70; *Rep.* 4.4; Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 40 (274d–e). See also MacMullen 1991, 434.

[38] See Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought". *Roman Sexualities*. Edited by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997, 33–35, 41–42.

[39] Plutarch (*Aemilius Paullus* 6.4–5) tells us that the Roman consul Lucius Aemilus Paullus bathed his sons in Greek education; their tutors included Greek grammarians, philosophers and rhetoricians but also teachers of hunting. Polybius (32.15) describes hunting as a particularly popular exercise among the Macedonians. He relates that an adopted son of Aemilius Paullus, Scipio Aemilianus, took upon the task to drill the Roman troops residing in Macedonia after the battle of Pydna in 168 BCE. This he did by engaging them in hunting which was deemed to train the body as well as build up courage. Later on, Scipio also introduced this practice to Rome. Hunting soon became viewed as suitable pastime for young men (e.g. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.104), and Horace (*Epistles* 1.18.40–51; cf. *Carmina* 3.24.54–58) refers to it as part of the Roman tradition. See also Corbeill 2001, 280–281.

[40] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.*) 19.5. See also Val. Max. 2.2.5. The point of Dionysius' description is to represent the Romans as the embodiments of ancient Greek values whereas the unbecoming behaviour of the Greeks reveals their regression into barbarism. See Irene Peirano, "Hellenized Romans and Barbarized Greeks. Reading the End of Dionysius of Halicarnssus, *Antiquitates Romanae*". *Journal of Roman Studies*, Volume 100, November 2010, 32−53.

[41] See, e.g., Livy 45.8.1–7; Val. Max. 5.1.8; 8.7.6; Cicero, *Brutus* 20.79 and Gruen's (1992, 249) comments. On the language policies in Roman diplomacy, see Kaimio 1979, 94–102.

[42] Val. Max. 2.2.2. See also Gruen 1992, 235–237.

even the expulsions of philosophers and rhetoricians were not meant to be absolute. Instead, they served the same purpose, that is, the construction of a positively distinctive idea of what it meant to be a Roman.

It seems that by the late republic, an acceptable relationship between Romanness and Hellenisation had been solidified. Thomas Habinek (1998, 64–68) accredits Cicero, an aficionado of Greek-style rhetoric and philosophy, with the transformation of the Greek cultural capital to a resource for communicating and passing on the connective values of Roman elite in Latin letters. Yet, Cicero scornfully refers to garrulous *Graeculi* whose knowledge is estranged from real life and to who truth is less important than the argument.[43] Thus, it might do credit to a Roman orator (to pretend) to know Greek letters only superficially or not at all and always to favour Roman customs over Greek.[44] Cicero raises *ineptus* as the key term that characterizes Greek inefficiency: they are not sensitive to situational requirements and they cannot moderate their comportment but indulge to self-aggrandisement.[45] Like Cato before him, Cicero seems to emphasise that the pursuits of philosophy were leisure activities which should not interfere with political duties. Even though Cicero willingly admits the Greeks' precedence in literature as well as their achievements in philosophy, he points out that the Romans have substantially developed Greek philosophy, and their military skills, institutions and laws are far superior to those of the Greeks; the authority and usefulness of the ancient Law of the Twelve Tables exceeds any philosophical libraries.[46] Cicero's writings also underline the compartmentalisation of Greek letters in Roman discourse: they were suited for frivolous writings or leisure musing but the serious and weighty matters of law, war and politics were a Roman domain.[47]

It remains to ask why the Roman elite still insisted on having a Greek education despite the public need to conceal one's proficiency. It is apparent that the notably Greek learning served to bolster the standing of the traditional Roman elite: they had the financial means to carry out Greek education and, thus, reproduce their privileged status for the next generation, whereas the availability of Latin rhetorical teaching would have enabled members of the rising classes to pursue political careers as well. It is also notable that the low social status of the Greek teachers themselves, who were mostly slaves or freedmen, ensured that they could not capitalise their knowledge into political power.[48] It

[43] Cic. *De or.* 1.47, 102; 2.75–76.
[44] Cic. *De or.* 1.82; 2.4; cf. 2.77. Likewise, the tradition on the general and statesman Gaius Marius emphasises his practical experience and countervailing ignorance in Greek theoretical knowledge (Sall. *Iug*. 63.3; 85.12–13, 31–32; Plutarch, *Marius* 2.2; Val. Max. 2.2.3). See also Gruen 1992, 264–268.
[45] Cic. *De or.* 2.17–18.
[46] Cic. *Tusc*. 1.1–3; *De or.* 1.192.
[47] Similarly, Kaimio (1979, 324–325) notes the historicisation tendency of the Romans to admire past Greek achievements while looking down on the contemporary Greek customs.
[48] Corbeill 2001, 274; Bonner 1977, 76; cf. Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* (Sen. *Controv*.) 2. *Praef.* 5.

seems that the implementation of the kind of physical training that remained in the hands of restricted elite circles also served the same purpose, that is, to secure the prevailing power structures by eliminating alternative paths of social leverage.[49] While the well-established and wealthy senatorial families had the easiest access to Hellenisation, they benefitted from the elevation of Greek education as a criterion for legitimate rule. Thus, the enshrinement of certain Greek elements within Roman culture becomes a sign of ancestral gentility. Nowhere else is this as obvious as in religion.

Domestication of Greek Religion

A Greek element in Roman religion is apparent from very early on. One of the oldest known cult sites in Rome, the Ara Maxima close to the Forum Boarium, is dedicated to the Greek hero Hercules. According to ancient stories, the establishment of the altar dated back to the Labours of Hercules as the hero defeated certain Cacus residing in the area and was consequently recognised as a god-to-be by the local leader Evander.[50] In other words, Roman tradition acknowledged that the existence of Greek influences predated the foundation of the city itself. Furthermore, a vase painting depicting the Greek god Hephaestus that was found in the cult site assumedly belonging to the Roman Vulcan indicates that these two gods were identified already in the sixth century BCE.[51] The divine triad Ceres, Liber and Libera – strongly influenced by the Greek grouping of Demeter, Dionysus and Persephone – got their temple in Rome in 493 and the twins Castor and Pollux, who were derived from the Dioscuri of Greek mythology, ten years later in Forum Romanum.[52] Likewise, the Greek god Apollo was worshipped in Rome by the mid-fifth century. When Latin literature was born in the third century BCE in the wake of Greek literary models, it also embraced the Greek mythological tradition. As Vergil’s epics or Horace’s lyrics, for instance, attest, literature developed as a valid means of describing the divinity in Rome as well.[53]

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[49] Cf. Corbeill 2001, 282–284. In addition, the apparent reason why the birth of literature in republican Rome as well as the form it took relied so heavily upon Greek ideals and outside producers is that it served to cement the power of the traditional elite. Habinek 1998, 35–39, 44–48, 53–56. One should note, however, that Habinek repeatedly refers to the “aristocratic hegemony” that Greek cultural production was harnessed to support even though he does not define who belonged to this “aristocracy” or what were those quarters that threatened the status quo but had no access to Greek letters.

[50] See, e.g., Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.40; Livy 1.7.3−15; Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.200−272.

[51] On the Greek influences in early Roman religion, see, e.g., Eric M. Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 33−36; Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome vol. 1: A History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, 2−4, 12, 64−65. See also Hubert Cancik, “The Reception of Greek Cults in Rome: A Precondition of the Emergence of an ‘Imperial Religion’”. *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* Band 1, Heft 2, 1999, 161−173.

[52] Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 6.13−14) connects the establishment of the temple on the Forum to the manifestation of two youthful figures at the battle of Lake Regillus and later on the spot where they were to receive a shrine. See also Ibid. 6.17.2−4 on the building of the temple for Ceres, Liber and Libera.

[53] Denis Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, 103−104.

Perhaps the most conspicuous Greek elements of Roman religion were, first, those cults that were classified as Greek (*Graeca sacra*) or performed according to Greek tradition (*Graeco ritu*) and, secondly, the Sibylline Books, a collection of oracular utterances written in Greek. The former were often cults of Greek origin but the division was far from being unambiguous. For instance, the aforementioned cults of Hercules and Apollo were celebrated with 'Greek' rituals, whereas the cults of the Dioscuri or the Epidaurian healer god Asclepius were not counted as Greek *sacra*. On the other hand, some ceremonies that became characteristically Roman ways of celebrating or supplicating the gods, such as *lectisternium* or *ludi saeculares*, were always executed according to 'Greek rite'. If anything, the so-called Greek rite was a distinctively Roman invention which, on the one hand, advertised Rome's age-old belonging to the Greek cultural sphere and, on the other hand, underlined the uniqueness of Roman rituals which were implicitly set against more or less fabricated Greek backdrop.[54] The Sibylline Books, in their turn, had a notable role in the management of religious crises and the acceptance of new cults. They were usually consulted in times of predicament, and they commonly recommended that a new cult, ritual or religious celebration – often of Greek origin or style – be introduced to Rome. It seems remarkable that an ostensibly foreign quarter dictated the directions of Roman religion but, again, it is important to recognise that the procedure did not have a direct Greek equivalent and thus rather represented a Roman adaptation of the Greek practice of consulting oracular shrines. The interpretation of the Sibylline Books was in the hands of a priestly college called *decemviri* (originally *duoviri* and from 2nd century onwards *quindecemviri*) *sacris faciundis*, and both the consultation and the college was under the control of the Senate.[55] Thus, the Roman authorities could indirectly voice their political interests as well as channel social pressures through this nominally Greek religious instrument.

The third century BCE, in particular, saw many religious innovations take place in Rome. This included several Greek components, such as the introduction of the healer god Aesculapius from Epidaurus in 293 BCE, the adjustment of the cult of Ceres according to 'Greek rituals' in the middle of the century and the introduction of the Hellenised cult of the Great Mother from the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of the century.[56] On the one hand, religious readjustments of the third century demonstrate the role of religion as a way of establishing positive connections with areas of

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[54] See John Scheid, "*Graeco ritu*: A Typically Roman Way of Honouring Gods". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, 1995, 19–30; John Scheid, "Religions in Contact". *Religions of the Ancient World. A Guide.* Edited by Sarah Iles Johnston. Belknap Press, Cambridge, 2004, 117–119.

[55] E.g. Beard, North & Price 1998, 29–30 emphasise the decisive role of the Senate. Another major priestly college, the haruspices, was also based on foreign, namely Etruscan, art of divination, and it can likewise be seen as an attempt of the Romans to involve themselves in a tradition that is considered ancient.

[56] On the cultic developments of the third century, see, e.g., Orlin 2010, 59–82; Beard, North & Price 1998, 69–71, 80–84.

interest but, on the other hand, the ongoing Hellenisation also evidences the persistent significance of Greek cultural ties for the construction of Roman identity and the continued primacy ascribed to Hellenism. In other words, it was important for the Romans to show their belonging to the Hellenic cultural sphere despite the emerging quest for uniquely Roman character that would suit their nascent imperialistic aims.

By the third century BCE, the Romans had embraced the idea that they were the descendants of legendary Trojans. The entrenchment of this view is interconnected with the growing sense of Roman cultural identity. On the one hand, it enabled the Romans to share in Greek cultural legacy, thus advertising their belonging to the civilized world, while it simultaneously offered them a distinctive identity that was not dependent on – or indeed subordinate to – any Greek community of the day.[57] The new heightened consciousness of particular Roman ancestry became a factor of Roman politics in the course of the third century and it can also be seen to motivate religious developments.[58] In particular, this is clear as regards the cult of Magna Mater whose cult was transported from Asia Minor to Rome in 205. The goddess that was associated with Mount Ida, the birthplace of Romans' mythical ancestor Aeneas, was celebrated as the protector of the Trojans who had now returned amongst her own people. Her cult site was established on the Palatium, the legendary cradle of Rome, which signalled her interconnection with the early phases of the city.[59] The cult of Magna Mater offers a good example of the Romans' religious identity building also in other ways: firstly, it shows how the Romans actively modified new cults and rituals to meet their needs, for instance, by emphasising the goddess' connection with the Trojan region, her role in civic life and establishing Roman-style *ludi* to celebrate her festival in April; secondly, despite giving a more prominent public role to the goddess' young consort Attis and her eunuch priests than had been customary (perhaps with the exception of the Pessinuntean cult site),[60] the Romans effectively denied that these features would have been particularly Roman but instead insisted on labelling them Phrygian.[61] Thus, the idea of a uniquely Roman way of worship becomes elucidated against a nominally foreign practice.

In the second century BCE, as Roman supremacy grew in the aftermath of the Second Punic War and Rome started to become increasingly involved in the politico-military skirmishes of the Eastern

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[57] See Gruen 1992, 26–31.
[58] Gruen 1992, 44–49.
[59] See esp. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.247–348; for further references see the discussions of Gruen 1990, 5–33; Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother. The Cult of Anatolian Cybele.* University of California Press, Berkeley 1999, 263–273, 279–285; Marika Rauhala, "Devotion and Deviance. The Cult of Cybele and the Others within". *The Faces of the Other: Religious Rivals and Ethnic Encounters in the Later Roman World*. Edited by Maijastina Kahlos. Cursor Mundi 10. Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 2012, 52–55.
[60] See Maria G. Lancellotti, *Attis: Between Myth and History: King, Priest, and God.* Leiden 2002, 42–51 and *passim*; Roller 1999, 192–194.
[61] See esp. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 2.19.4–5.

Mediterranean, a more definitive boundary between the unacceptable Hellenic religious elements and ancestral Roman piety also needed to be created. A couple of incidents reported by the Augustan historian Livy illustrate this point in question. The first episode involves the suppression of the so-called Bacchanal conspiracy in 186 BC, which led to the execution of several thousand attendants of the cult followed by strict authoritative regulation for future Bacchic activities.[62] The cult of the Greek god Dionysus, or Bacchus, was well established in Rome and Italy by that time, and frequent references in several plays evidence people's familiarity with the cult.[63] Livy's account of the events, however, underlines the sudden discovery of the previously unknown and secretive cult. Livy relates that the cult was introduced by "an unknown Greek" (*Graecus ignobilis*) to Etruria, from where it spread like a disease to Rome.[64] As the alleged conspiracy has been exposed, Livy gives a voice to the prevailing Consul, Spurius Postumius Albinus, who emphasises the opposition between the ancestral Roman way of worshipping gods and corrupting alien practices represented by the Bacchic cult. Livy's Postumius celebrates how the Roman forefathers had established proper modes for gatherings and claims that in the past foreign cults and non-Roman sacrifices had time and again been forbidden, just as wannabe performers of sacrifices and soothsayers had been banned from public places and their books of prophesies had been burnt. The defining factor that either upholds or dissolves religious traditions is the sacrificial ritual and whether it is performed according to the native Roman or a foreign custom (*non patrio sed externo ritu sacrificaretur*).[65]

Interestingly, Livy reports the introduction of detrimental luxuries to Rome taking place just before the Bacchanalian affair.[66] Thus, the incident appears as a prime moralising example of the perils that the adoption of non-Roman habits could lead to, while it also praises the abilities of Roman authorities

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[62] See Livy 39.8–18; *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, vol. 1. Edidit Hermann Dessau. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin 1892, no. 18; cf. Cicero, *Leges* 2.37; Val. Max. 1.3.1; 6.3.7. Scholarly discussions on the affair abound; see, e.g. J. A. North, "Religious Toleration in Republican Rome". *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 205, 1979, 86–95; Gruen 1990, 34–78; R. A. Bauman, "The Suppression of the Bacchanals: Five Questions". *Historia*, Band XXXIX/3, 334–348; Sarolta A. Takács, "Politics and Religion in the Bacchanalian Affair of 186 B.C.E." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100, 2000, 301–310; Victoria Emma Pagán, *Conspiracy Narratives in Roman History*. University of Texas Press, Austin 2005, 50–67; Sarah Limoges, "Expansionism of Fear: The Underlying Reasons for the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 B.C." *Hirundo* 7, 2008–2009, 77–94; Matthias Riedl, "The Containment of Dionysos: Religion and Politics in the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 BCE". *International Political Anthropology* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012, 113–133.

[63] E.g. Plautus, *Menaechmi* 828–841; *Amphitruo* 702–705; *Aulularia* 408–413; *Bacch.* 53, 371–372; *Casina* 979; *Miles gloriosus* 1016; see also Harriet I. Flower, "*Fabula de Bacchanalibus*: The Bacchanalian Cult of the Second Century BC and Roman Drama". *Identität und Alterität in der frührömischen Tragödie*. Edited by Gesine Manuwald. Identitäten und Alteritäten, Band 3. Ergon-Verlag, Würzburg 2000, 25–27, 32; Robert Rousselle, "Liber-Dionysus in Early Roman Drama". *Classical Journal* vol. 82, No. 3, 1987, 193–198 ; North 1979, 88; André Arcellaschi, "Les Bacchides de Plaute et l'affaire des Bacchanales". *Theater und Gesellschaft im Imperium Romanum*. Herausgegeben von Jürgen Blänsdorf. Francke, Tübingen 1990; Gruen 1990, 50–51; P. G. Walsh, "Making a Drama out of a Crisis: Livy on the Bacchanalia". *Greece & Rome* Vol. 43, No. 2, October 1996, 191–192.

[64] Livy 39.8.3; 39.9.1: "*huius mali labes ex Etruria Romam veluti contagion morbi penetravit*."

[65] Livy 39.15.2–3, 11; 39.16.8–9. Cf. Livy 4.30.9–11; 25.1.6–12. See also Jason P. Davies, *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus, and Ammianus on Their Gods*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, 79–82.

[66] Livy 39.6.7–9; see also Walsh 1996, 189–190; Tamás Adamik, "Livius über die Bacchanalienverschwörung". *Acta Antiqua* 47.4, 2007, 338.

to defend and fortify the confines of proper Romanness. Livy's steadfast view was that the proper Roman way of worshipping the gods was determined by the Senate and that it was free from any alien superstitions.[67] Accordingly, Livy's entire narrative underlines the determination and ability of the Senate to respond to a looming crisis. The threat was that of a namely Greek cult, which undermined the *mos maiorum* guarded by the Senate with its unconventional, non-Roman ways. These included secret initiations and nocturnal meetings where men and women could mingle freely, which, according to Livy, resulted in unspeakable lewdness and criminal activities, and even in human sacrifices.[68] Furthermore, the leadership of the cult was highly organised and demanded absolute obedience; it almost constituted a second state (*alterum iam prope populum esse*) and its ultimate purpose was, Livy claims, to overthrow the established order.[69] In addition, the authorities discover that for the past two years the cult had solely recruited people under the age of twenty, which also compromised the basis of the Roman military.[70] Such desecration of the young as well as of the Roman religious traditions well justified the executions of the cult leaders and the suppression of the Bacchic communities by the Senate. True to the principle of ancestral piety, praised in the speech of the Consul Postumius, the ancient cult sites of Dionysus were spared, and official control for any further activities of the Bacchants was established.

Other sources also suggest that towards the end of the middle republic there was a tendency to eliminate groups or charismatic figures that might challenge the authority of the Roman officials: the restrictions imposed on the Bacchants were followed by an expulsion of philosophers and rhetoricians in 161 BC and the banishment of certain Epicureans either in 173 or 154 BC (see the previous section); furthermore, according to Valerius Maximus (1.3.3), both Chaldean astrologers and Jews were expelled in 139 BC. All of these measures indicate senatorial interest in controlling the production of knowledge, including religious knowledge. Another account by Livy (40.29.2–14), set shortly after the Bacchanalian affair, also illustrates this point. In 181 BC, two large caskets were found from the property belonging to the scribe (of) Lucius Petilius[71] at the foot of Janiculum hill.

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[67] Limoges 2008–2009, 78–79; Orlin 2010, 10.

[68] Livy 39.8.4–8; 39.10.7–8; 39.11.7; 39.13.9–13; 39.15.9; 39.16.1–2; 39.18.4. Matthias Riedl (2012, 123) seems to take Livy's description to the letter, as he states that "to the majority of initiates the experience of drunkenness, unrestrained sexuality, and lustful violence was at the same time a religious experience." Likewise, Eric Orlin (2010, 168) considers that the allegations against the Bacchants were truthful and the Senate's vehemence was directed at their crimes. Cf. Bauman 1990, 342–343, 347. I am inclined to concur with John North's (1979, 87) conclusion that "Livy gives us a much better chance of understanding contemporary senatorial propaganda than of reconstructing what actually happened."

[69] Livy 39.13.13–14; 39.15.10; 39.16.3. Many scholars, including Erich S. Gruen, have perceived predominantly political motivations behind the Senate's repressive measures, and undoubtedly they played an important role; Robert Turcan perhaps takes this to the extreme as deems the Bacchants to be a political movement that formed a real "réseau de résistance" against the Roman authorities. Robert Turcan, "Religion et politique dans l'affaire des bacchanals". *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 181, 1972, 21–27.

[70] Livy 39.10.6; 39.15.13–14. See also Pagán 2004, 56–61; Limoges 2008–2009, 90–91.

[71] Livy 40.29.2: "*in agro L. Petilii scribae sub Ianiculo*"; the text is usually understood indicating that the estate belonged to a scribe named L. Petilius (thus also Val. Max. 1.1.12), but Pliny the Elder (*HN* 13.27.84) sites earlier writer Cassius

The inscriptions, both in Latin and Greek, stated that one chest contained the body of the legendary Roman king Numa and the other a collection of his books. After opening the sealed lids, the coffin of Numa himself was found empty while the other revealed two bundles of books that appeared pristine. Seven of the books were in Latin and dealt with pontifical law, seven others were in Greek and contained philosophical writings, more specifically, Pythagorean doctrines.[72] As the knowledge of the books spread, the *praetor urbanus* Quintus Petilius also took an interest in them and received the texts from his friend Lucius Petilius. After having inspected them, he declared that the books threatened to dissolve religious traditions (*dissolvendarum religionum esse*). The Senate was also consulted on the matter and they considered that the praetor's estimation was sufficient grounds to recommend an immediate disposal of the books. As a result, the writings were burnt in the *comitium* and the scribe even refused to accept any compensation for them.[73]

Books were, of course, potentially perilous in the wrong hands, since they provided an independent – and in this case ancient – source of religious knowledge and authority.[74] However, Livy's presentation of the severity of the Roman officials goes even further. According to tradition, Numa was the second king of Rome who was accredited with organising the religious life of Rome and thus establishing the city's good relations with the gods.[75] Furthermore, tradition also held that Numa had been a pupil of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, which is implied by the philosophical writings buried with him.[76] Originally, a connection with a recognised Greek sage would have elevated the status of one of the founding fathers of the Roman State, but by the 180s, Numa's dependence on an eccentric *Graeculus* from Croton, running a quasi-religious sect, had become a problem. Due to the apparently pre-arranged discovery of Numa's burial, the Senate could not only eradicate the Pythagorean implications but also restore religious authority once and for all to the Senate.[77] Not even

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Hemina who names the scribe Gnaeus Terentius (thus also Varro *apud* Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (August. *De civ. D.*) 7.34); thus Gruen (1990, 165) considers the potential reading "in the land of L. Petilius' scribe" more plausible.

[72] Livy (40.29.8–9) mentions the first-century BCE annalist Valerius Antias as his source, but earlier sources also seem to be concur with this the attribution to the Pythagorean school (referred to by Plin. *HN* 13.27.85–87). The exact number of the books varies in different sources.

[73] See also Plin. *HN* 13.27.84–87; Val. Max. 1.1.12; Plutarch, *Numa* 22.4–5; August. *De civ. D.* 7.34.

[74] A similar incident is reported by Livy taking place in 213 BCE (25.1.6–12): The changing fortunes in the ongoing war had turned the Roman masses to foreign superstitions, so that Roman rites and gods were abandoned both privately and publicly. According to Livy, petty priests and diviners had mesmerised the rustics so that even the magistrates could not stop their foolishness. Finally, backed by the senatorial authority, the praetor ordered to hand down any books pertaining to prophesies, prayers or rituals in order to put an end to foreign rites and sacrifices.

[75] Livy 1.18–21.

[76] See Gruen 1990, 158–162.

[77] Gruen (1990, 165–168), for one, has judged the whole episode as a premeditated machination of Roman authorities. Whereas late-republican Cicero (*De or.* 2.154) celebrates the antecedence of Numa and his institutions to Pythagoras, and Livy (1.18.4) hails Numa's indigenous abilities making him a manifestation of Sabine virtues, Gruen rightly points out that the burning of Numa's books in 181 BCE attempts to achieve neither. Instead, an idea is put forward that under senatorial guidance the management of Rome's divine relations has surpassed the Greek-inspired practices instituted by Numa.

supposedly age-old Latin texts and Numa's high repute could stand against this claim. Just like the nominal banishment of Greek rhetoricians and philosophers declared Roman elite's independence from Hellenisation, the demonstrative burning of Numa's books symbolically purged the contemporary Roman religion, steered by the same elite families, from Hellenic overtones.

Sharing in Greek Culture, Becoming Roman – Identity in Development

During the formative period of the Roman Empire, we may detect three phases in the publically articulated attitude towards Hellenisation: early zeal to align Roman culture with the more ancient and higher Hellenic civilisation, the mid-republican need to distance Roman achievements from Greek points of reference, and the more balanced view of Romanness that acknowledges and subsumes Greek influences achieved by the early principate. As has been established hereinabove, on the one hand, it was crucial for the Roman self-esteem to showcase their belonging to the Hellenic cultural sphere which had become nearly synonymous with civilisation. This is evident as regards both the preference given to Greek education and the sustenance of prominently Greek element in Roman religion. On the other hand, the emerging Roman Empire and its domination over Greek areas created a need to display Roman superiority also in the cultural arena. This meant elevating those characteristics that were considered to be ancestral as well as uniquely Roman first and, secondly, allocating a strictly limited role for Hellenisation in Roman culture and society and, thirdly, emphasizing the leadership and authority of Roman elite in all circumstances.

What has traditionally puzzled scholars is the contradictory perception of Greek culture in republican Latin sources: the unconditional embrace of Hellenisation, on the one hand, and its vitriolic denunciation, on the other hand. Nowadays, the earlier simplifying explanatory model that personified the anti- and pro-Hellenic sentiments to certain individuals, traditionally believed to centre on Cato the Elder and Scipio Aemilianus, respectively, has largely been rejected. Instead, the coexistence of and simultaneous need for discourses on Hellenisation as both a civilising and a demoralising orientalist narrative has been recognised.[78] Cultural practices of the subjugated Greek world were not wiped out; instead, their sustenance and even adoption by the ruling Roman elite proved to be useful not only for establishing the Roman power over the Hellenised eastern Mediterranean but also for the legitimation of both the elite's own dominance and the entire imperial project.[79] Yet, the explanations offered for these seemingly contradictory standpoints as well as for the apparent shifts in the Roman attitude are less than satisfactory. Tim Whitmarsh (2010, 742) passes the ambivalence off as a typical feature of colonial discourses. Even though Erich S. Gruen duly

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[78] E.g. Whitmarsh 2010, 731–742.
[79] See Whitmarsh 2010, 729–731.

emphasises that Hellenisation and Roman reactions to it go hand in hand with the development of Roman self-perception, he contents himself with the reductionist explanation that the sheer number of Greek immigrants and extent of Greek influences following the Roman conquests would explain the reassessment of Hellenisation during the middle republic.[80]

I would argue that sufficient attention has not been paid to the emergence of the conqueror – conquered setting and the pressures it generated for the definition of Roman identity and its relationship with Hellenisation. For the early Romans, Greek culture had appeared as admirable and worthy of pursuit and, by embracing the symbols of this high-status group, the Romans could strive to form a more positive social identity.[81] Towards the end of the third century BCE, the status of the Greeks started to decrease in the eyes of the victorious Romans and even though this perception did not by and large involve Greek cultural products, the admiration became mingled with contempt. The whole-hearted adoption of Hellenic culture – now proved fundamentally weak and enervated – started to appear disconcerting. The public denunciation of Hellenism did not mean the actual rejection of Rome's cultural Hellenisation, quite the opposite, but it was a necessary measure in order to sustain the positive self-perception and create an identity suited for the needs of a ruling power despite its considerable debt to the subjugated culture. What was significant was the act of elevating Romanness above Greekness, whether it meant celebrating ancestral piety, superior morals or solemn integrity, and setting symbolic boundaries by means of occasional expulsions or prohibitions.

While the construction of Roman identity against Greek cultural legacy during the middle republic had problematised the appeal of Hellenistic learning and knowledge, the fuller assimilation of Greekness by the early imperial age brought new antipodes to the stage. This is evident also as regards Augustus' religious politics, and the treatment of the cult of Apollo serves as an illustrative example. In the celebration of the Secular games in 17 BCE, which marked the beginning of a new 'Golden Age' during the reign of Augustus, the new century was placed under the aegis of Apollo. Augustus also favoured Apollo in other ways, for example, by consecrating a temple to the god on Palatine Hill, in connection with the Princeps' own house, in 28 BCE and by moving the Sibylline Books there; in this manner prophecies and poetry, the Greek aspects of Apollo, were emphasised.[82] During

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[80] See, e.g., Gruen 1990, 169: "As Roman individuals embraced Hellenic intellectual imports in ever greater numbers, the community felt a correspondingly greater need to define itself as distinct from those imports." Cf. ibid. 174. Similarly, Robin Waterfield (2014, 209, 213) considers the phenomenon as a concomitant of increased cultural contacts.

[81] See Katherine J. Reynolds and John C. Turner, "Prejudice as a Group Process: The Role of Social Identity". *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*. Edited by Martha Augoustinos and Katherine Jane Reynolds. Sage Publications, London 2001, 166−167.

[82] See Eric M. Orlin, "Octavian and Egyptian Cults: Redrawing the Boundaries of Romanness". *American Journal of Philology* Vol. 129, no. 2, 2008, 245−247, Beard, North & Price 1998, 198–199, 202–205; on the Secular games, see also Feeney 1998, 28–38.

Augustus' reign, the *pomerium* was cemented as the symbolic line between Roman and non-Roman cults. Thus, the Greek Apollo was showcased as a more than presentable illustration of Roman religion, whereas the foreignness of the Egyptian gods Isis and Sarapis was pinpointed by prohibiting their cult inside the *pomerium*.[83] Analogously, Greek letters were no longer held as the only or even the main culprit for moral corruption;[84] as a matter of fact, the Augustan poets could mock the republican severity and sneeringly celebrate the soft and lavish way of life nominally renounced by their ancestors.[85]

All in all, by the early imperial period, the idea of Romanness had subsumed Hellenism, and Greek culture could be understood as part of the Roman tradition.[86] This development was undoubtedly advanced by the concurrent "Romanisation" of Greece, which could be described as the acculturation of the (elite) Greeks to the values and discourses of Roman ruling class. Therefore, "Greekness" was no less a static concept than Romanness. On the other hand, influential Romans, starting from Cicero (*Flac*. 62–66), could distinguish commendable Greek achievements from deplorable vices, now identified as belonging to the Asiatic Greeks. The greatest Greek triumphs, in their turn, were projected to the past. Above all, these were embodied by Athenian mental cultivation and Spartan manly valour and discipline. These values were also cornerstones of Roman identity, so that the imperial regime could represent itself as the representative and guardian of true Greekness, and they were used to legitimise Rome's imperial mission.[87] In sum, the laudability of Greek culture could be acknowledged again by returning to the pre-conquest Greece. The classical Hellenic heritage was made common property for the contemporary Greeks and Romans alike. What is more, the Romans could identify themselves as the genuine standard bearers of Hellenic civilisation. This was an identity congruent with ancestral values, yet suited for the new world power.

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[83] Orlin 2008, 241–244.
[84] See Juvenal, *Satires* 3.60−62; Whitmarsh 2010, 741.
[85] Whitmarsh 2010, 738−739.
[86] This line of thinking is already apparent, for instance, in the edict issued against the Latin rhetoricians in 92 BCE. Cf. Gruen 1990, 190.
[87] See Spawforth 2011, 1–3, 12–13, 25, 28–33, 55–58, 271–271; on the emphasis laid on certain Greek achievements, see ibid. ch. 2–3.