

## Roman History (Cicero's Version): An Examination of Cicero's Historical Narratives as Technology of Empire

Marcus Tullius Cicero, the famed Roman orator and statesman, is not known for being a historian, yet he employs historical anecdotes frequently throughout his works to significant ends. While historical narratives are present in various types of literary works outside the genre of history, Cicero's engagement with historical content and the genre of history is distinctive and responsive to his political and imperialist context. The connection between Cicero's historical narratives and his cultivation of authority and authorial self-fashioning has been well studied (Dugan 2005; van der Blom 2010; Fox 2007), as well as his approach to writing history (Rawson 1972; Hanchey 2014, Cornell 2001). This paper, instead, will examine Cicero's general engagement with the genre of history and discuss the larger imperialist ramifications of Cicero's historical narratives. Cicero invokes the genre of history throughout his texts and his discussions of generic distinctions (Brut. 42–4; De Leg. 4–5) create an interconnectedness between his works and history as a genre. Cicero's cultivation of specific historical narratives has meaning outside of the text and larger implications for Roman society. Due in large part to the Roman veneration of the *mos maiorum*, historical narratives have societal significance and can convey lessons about normative expectations which transcend the context of Cicero's immediate discussion (van der Blom 2010, 12–7). Cicero, in narrativizing history, interacts with the *mos maiorum* and appeals to the societal pressures associated with this cultural and political construct to further his personal and political aims (van der Blom 2010; Hanchey 2014; van den Berg 2021).

While Cicero's historical anecdotes serve multiple purposes, this paper will focus primarily on the role they play in the process of intellectual imperialism. This period in Roman history saw the emergence of Rome as a powerhouse player in the Mediterranean political and

military scene, a development evident in Cicero's writings (van den Berg 2021). Cicero and his literary works did not merely reflect the political circumstances of his time, they played an active role in shaping the appearance of Roman imperialism. This paper will therefore consider how Cicero utilizes the narration of history as a mechanism for his imperialist machinations. A key aspect of this discussion will be an exploration of Cicero's frequent positioning of Roman intellectualism as a dominating force over Greece, especially Athens. Cicero presents Roman literary and intellectual developments as usurping the Greek tradition and, in this way, he establishes the literary realm as an additional front for Roman imperialism. For Cicero, Roman literature, and his works specifically, are engaged in an intellectual battle, one which supplements the military battlefields of Roman imperialist expansion. An exploration of *De Re Publica* and the figure of Polybius specifically will illuminate these imperialist proclivities. Given Polybius' unique position in the Roman imperial system, as a captured Greek brought to Rome who write a history of Rome in Greek, he embodies the tensions around intellectual imperialism and warehousing (Padilla Peralta 2020) and provides an opportunity for investigating these acts within Cicero's writings.

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