

### Success and Failure in Cicero: the Case of Titus Albucius

A. *Ad Att.* IV.6 (late April/early May 56 BCE)

nam quid foedius nostra vita, praecipue mea? nam tu quidem, etsi es natura πολιτικός, tamen nullam habes propriam servitutem, communi uteris omnium; **ego vero qui, si loquor de re publica quod oportet, insanus, si quod opus est, servus existimor, si taceo, oppressus et captus, quo dolore esse debeo?** quo sum scilicet, hoc etiam acriore quod ne dolere quidem possum ut non in te ingratus videar. **quid si cessare libeat et in oti portum confugere? nequiquam.**

For what could be more shameful than our life, especially my own? As for you, although you are a natural *politico*, you lack your own special kind of servitude, enjoying only a common share. **But as for me, I am regarded as insane if I say what I ought about the Republic, if [I say] what is necessary, I am judged a slave, if I remain silent, I am thought beaten down and captured**—what pain must I feel? And indeed I do feel pain, and all the more bitterly, since I cannot even show my pain without seeming ungrateful to you. **What if I could leave public life and find refuge in leisure? In no way is this an option.**

B. *De Provinciis Consularibus* 15-16 (May 56)

Cuius amici si qui sunt, aut si beluae tam immani tamque taetrae possunt ulli esse amici, hac consolatione utuntur, etiam T. Albucio supplicationem hunc ordinem denegasse.

**Quod est primum dissimile, res in Sardinia cum mastrucatis latrunculis a propraetore una cohorte auxiliaria gesta et bellum cum maximis Syriae gentibus et tyrannis consulari exercitu imperioque confectum.** Deinde Albucius, quod a senatu petebat, ipse sibi in Sardinia ante decreverat. Constabat enim **Graecum hominem ac levem** in ipsa provincia **quasi triumphasse**, itaque hanc eius **temeritatem** senatus supplicatione denegata notavit.

Sed fruatur sane hoc solacio atque hanc insignem **ignominiam**, quoniam uni praeter se inusta sit, putet esse leviolem, dum modo, cuius exemplo se consolatur, eius exitum expectet, praesertim cum in Albucio nec Pisonis libidines nec audacia Gabini fuerit ac tamen hac una plaga conciderit, **ignominia** senatus.

If [Gabinus] has any friends, if such a monstrous and savage beast can have any friends, they might console themselves with the fact that the Senate also denied a thanksgiving to Titus Albucius. **But an initial distinction must be made that the conflict in Sardinia was waged against rag-tag sheepskin-clad bandits by a propraetor with a single auxiliary cohort, while this war was fought between the greatest races and generals of Syria and a consular army and commander.** Furthermore, Albucius had already declared for himself while in Sardinia the honor that he asked from the Senate. For it

was widely agreed that **that useless Greek man** had, in fact, achieved a **kind of triumph** in his province, and so the Senate ratified his **rashness** by denying him a thanksgiving.

But let Gabinius take comfort in his consolation properly and think this signal **disgrace** more slight since it has been visited upon another beside him, just as long as he looks forward to the same end as that man with whose example he consoles himself, especially since Albucius had neither the depravity of Piso nor the arrogance of Gabinius and even still he was overthrown by this single blow: the **disgrace** distributed by the Senate.

C. *Brutus* 131 (Composed late 47 - early 46)

Doctus etiam Graecis T. Albucius vel potius paene Graecus. Loquor, ut opinor; sed licet ex orationibus iudicare. fuit autem Athenis adulescens, perfectus Epicurius evaserat, minime aptum ad dicendum genus.

Titus Albucius was learned in all things Greek, or rather you could call him almost a real Greek. I give you my opinion, but you can judge from his orations. He spent his youth at Athens and turned out a complete Epicurean, a type ill-suited to public speaking.

D. *De finibus* 1.8-9 (=Lucilius fr. 88-94M; composed March - June 45)

Sed ex eo credo quibusdam usu venire ut abhorreant a Latinis, quod inciderint in inculta quaedam et horrida, de malis Graecis Latine scripta deterius...res vero bonas verbis electis graviter ornateque dictas quis non legat? Nisi **qui se plane Graecum dici velit**, ut a Scaevola est praetore salutatus Athenis Albucius. Quem quidem locum **cum multa venustate et omni sale** idem Lucilius, apud quem praeclare Scaevola:

“Graecum te, Albuci, quam Romanum atque Sabinum,  
Municipem Ponti, Tritanni, centurionum,  
Praeclarorum hominum ac primorum signiferumque,  
Maluisti dici; Graece ergo praetor Athenis,  
Id quod maluisti, te, cum ad me accedis, saluto:  
**‘Χαῖρε,’ inquam, ‘Tite!’ Lictores, turma omnis cohorsque;**  
**‘Χαῖρε, Tite!’ Hinc hostis mi Albucius, hinc inimicus.”**

But I believe the reason that some people come to dislike Latin literature is that they have happened upon **certain ill-formed and offensive tracts which are bad Greek books in worse Latin translations**... Who would not read something with good subject matter and written seriously and beautifully in a choice style? Unless, of course, **you’re someone who wishes to be called openly “a Greek,”** just like Albucius when he was greeted at Athens by Scaevola, the praetor there. That same Lucilius I just mentioned related this anecdote **with much charm and a heavy dose of wit**, which he puts into the mouth of Scaevola:

“You prefer that you be called Greek, Albucius, more than Roman and Sabine, a fellow-native of the city of Pontius and Tritanus, centurions,

outstanding men and standard-bearers to boot. Therefore as praetor at Athens I greet you in Greek, just as you prefer, when you approach me: **‘Ciao, Titty!’ I say, and the lictors and the whole troop and cohort say, ‘Ciao, Titty!’ That’s why Albucius is my foe, that’s why he’s my enemy.’**

E. *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5.107-109 (July - August 45)

Iam vero exsilium, **si rerum naturam, non ignominiam nominis** quaerimus, quantum tandem **a perpetua peregrinatione** differt?...

Postremo ad omnes casus facillima ratio est eorum, qui ad voluptatem ea referunt, quae sequuntur in vita, ut, quocumque haec loco suppeditetur, ibi beate queant vivere....

**Socrates** quidem cum rogaretur cuiatem se esse diceret, ‘Mundanum,’ inquit; totius enim mundi se incolam et civem arbitrabatur. **Quid T. Albucius? nonne animo aequissimo Athenis exsul philosophabatur? cui tamen illud ipsum non accidisset, si in re publica quiescens Epicuri legibus paruisset.** Qui enim beatior Epicurus, quod in patria vivebat quam quod Athenis Metrodorus? aut Plato Xenocratem vincebat aut Polemo Arcesilam, quo esset beatior? **Quanti vero ista civitas aestimanda est, ex qua boni sapientesque pelluntur? Damaratus** quidem, Tarquini nostri regis pater, tyrannum Cypselum quod ferre non poterat, fugit Tarquinius Corintho et ibi suas fortunas constituit ac liberos procreavit. **Num stulte anteposuit exilii libertatem domesticae servituti?**

Indeed, if we inquire into **the nature of things, not the disgrace of a name**, what difference is there, ultimately, between **exile and a continual living abroad?**...

In the end, the best method for dealing with all plights of fortune is provided by those who refer their life pursuits to pleasure, so that, wherever this happens to be provided, there they can live happily....

Whenever **Socrates** was asked to what country he belonged, he used to say, “To the world”; for he judged himself to be an inhabitant and a fellow citizen of the world. **What about Titus Albucius? Did he not live in exile as a philosopher at Athens with complete peace of mind? Although, this very thing wouldn’t have happened to him if he had obeyed the laws of Epicurus and eschewed participation in the state.** For how was Epicurus happier, because he lived in his homeland, than Metrodorus who lived at Athens? Or did Plato and Polemo enjoy more happiness than Xenocrates and Arcesilaus? And, indeed what value can be redeemed in the sort of community from which good and wise men are driven? For instance, **Damaratus**, the father of our king Tarquinius, because he could not bear the tyranny of Cypselus, fled to Tarquini from Corinth and there made his fortune and bore children. **Was he then foolish for preferring the freedom of exile to enslavement at home?**

Appendix: Cicero's citations of the Albucius exemplum:

- *In Caec.* 63 (70 BCE)
- *De Prov. Cons.* 15-16 (56 BCE)
- *In Pis.* 92 (55 BCE)
- *De Orat.* 2.281; 3.171 (55 BCE)
- *Pro Scaur.* 40 (54 BCE)
- *Brutus* 131 (46 BCE)
- *Orat.* 149 (46 BCE)
- *De Fin.* 1.9 (45 BCE)
- *Tusc.* 5.109 (45 BCE)
- *De Nat. De.* 1.93 (45 BCE)
- *De Off.* 2.50 (44 BCE)

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