

HELLENIZATION AND ROMANIZATION THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURES IN THE 1ST AND 2ND CENTURIES

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It is well known that the Western Culture as we know it today pays a big debt to the encounter of two among the biggest civilizations of the antiquity: the Greeks and the Romans. Since the cultural roots of our present European world are to be found in the Greek and Roman cultures, it could be useful to determine to what extent these cultures were related between each other and how they interacted to create the so-called Classical Culture that has proven to be so fundamental for our common cultural development.

The relationship between the Greeks and the Romans began officially with the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 BCE, after which the roman consul Titus Quinctius Flaminius proclaimed the freedom of the Greek cities from the Macedonian dominance, and lasted for other two centuries before the definitive conquest of the Greek mainland by the Romans with the creation of the Province of Achaia in 27 BCE under the rule of the emperor Augustus. During these centuries was established a continuous contact and interchange of people and ideas that made possible the creation of a fruitful and durable cultural dialogue, the main topic of this paper. We will analyze the meaning of the words Hellenization and Romanization and focus the effects of the reciprocal influences, particularly their literary aspects.

Prior to get into the topic, I would like to recall the famous quote of Horace, *Ep. 2, 1, 156-157*: “Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes / intulit agresti Latio”.¹ The sense of this famous verse is clear, especially if the author is Horace, who owes an enormous debt to the previous Greek lyric poetry.

The Greeks, conquered by the Romans with their army, had in turn conquered the Romans on a cultural level. To what extent is this true?

In order to investigate the Hellenistic influences on the Roman culture in the Imperial age we will take into account three fundamental aspects: the philhellenism in the political and cultural choices of the emperors Augustus, Nero and Hadrian; the influence wielded by the Greek culture on the Roman educational system; the influence wielded by the Greek literature on the Latin one.

First, we must determine what it meant to be Greek and to Hellenize. According to the *Liddell-Scott Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, the verb ἡλληνίζειν (*hellenizein*) had the

¹ Horace, *Ep. 2, 1, 156-157* “Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts to rustic Latium.”. Text and translation by: Fairclough, H. Ruston: Horace, Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica. Loeb Classical Library 194. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1978, p. 408-409.

primary meaning of “speak or write pure or correct Greek”². Thus, we could infer that what made a person a Greek was the fact of speaking the most correct possible form of Greek language. Nevertheless, some literary sources shed a light on the real meaning of the word *hellenizein* and on what was the true signal of the Greek identity. The main feature of greekness was to adhere to the cultural, social and moral beliefs shared by the community of the Greeks, a codex of values that overcame the internal differences within the Greek world. Therefore, being Greek meant to embrace the Greek παιδεία (*paideia*), the Greek culture, as pointed out by Isocrates, *Panegyri*. 50

τοσοῦτον δ' ἀπολέλοιπεν ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ λέγειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ὥσθ' οἱ ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασι, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποιήκε μηκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν τεκμήριον εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείας τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας.³

Our city has so far surpassed other men in thought and speech that students of Athens have become the teachers of others, and the city has made the name “Greek” seem to be not that of a people but of a way of thinking; and people are called Greeks because they share in our education rather than in our birth.⁴

At a thorough analysis of its usage throughout the whole era of the Greek literature, the aforementioned verb *hellenizein* reveals that the Greeks were well aware of their own cultural identity and that they recognized whoever spoke fluent Greek. But, as we have seen before, the fact of just speaking the language fluently was not sufficient to be considered a real Greek.

On the same ideological path shown by Isocrates in that passage of the *Panegyricus*, we can find, several centuries later, in the 2nd century CE, the writings of the sophist Favorinus of Arelate.

Favorinus was born as a Gaul, under the Roman dominance, he was part of the *ordo equester*, he was indeed a Roman citizen with all the privileges that this condition carried and he spoke fluent Greek.

We should see now a passage of his speech to the Corinthians which is related to our topic:

² Ἑλληνίζω: Liddell, Henry George / Robert Scott / Henry Stuart Jones: A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford 1996, p.?

³ Text in: Isocrates, *Opera Omnia* vol. 2, ed. by Mandrilas, B.G.: Bibliotheca Teubneriana. Leipzig: Saur 2003, pp. 77-78.

⁴ Translation of the passage by: Papillon, Terry L.: *The Oratory of Classical Greece. Isocrates II*. Austin: University of Texas Press 2004, p.40.

οὐκ ἐχρῆν παρ' ὑμῖν ἐστάναι χαλκοῦν; καὶ κατὰ πόλιν γε: παρ' ὑμῖν μὲν, ὅτι Ῥωμαῖος ὦν ἀφηλληνίσθη, ὥσπερ ἡ πατρίς ἢ ὑμετέρα, παρὰ Ἀθηναίους δέ, ὅτι ἀττικίζει τῆ φωνῆ, παρὰ Λακεδαιμονίοις δέ, ὅτι φιλογυμναστεῖ, παρὰ πᾶσι δέ, ὅτι φιλοσοφεῖ καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν ἤδη τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπῆρε συμφιλοσοφῆσαι αὐτῷ. οὐκ ὀλίγους δὲ καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐπεσπάσατο.⁵

Should he have not a bronze statue set up by you? Yes, and city by city: by you [Corinthians], because though a Roman he has become perfectly Hellenic, just as has your city; by the Athenians, because he speaks Attic dialect; by the Spartans because he is devoted to gymnastics; by all because he philosophizes and he has already inspired many of the Hellenes to philosophize with him, and has in addition pulled in no small number of barbarians.⁶

This passage of the so called *Korinthiakos* speech has been transmitted in the *corpus* of speeches of Favorinus' teacher, the orator Dio of Prusa, and here we can see Favorinus defending himself in front of the whole city of Corinth whose citizens wanted to destroy his bronze statue after his quarrel with the emperor Hadrian. In this context, Favorinus said that he "became a perfect greek" (*aphelleniste*). This implies that he not only spoke fluent Greek, despite being a Roman Gaul, rather that he lived and thought like a Greek in a perfect manner because of his philosophical activity as a sophist, as he points out in the final part of the reported text.

So, from the two literary passages we have seen, "Hellenize", in antiquity, meant "to embrace the Greek lifestyle and the Greek culture (*paideia*)". To what extent is this concept applicable to the Romans? Why and how did they embrace the Greek culture? Certainly, we should not forget that Rome was in a dominant position towards the Greeks. So, we can individuate two main reasons behind the Hellenization of the Roman Culture:

- a) a sincere admiration for the ancient Greek tradition, made of culture, philosophy and literature (cultural philhellenism).
- b) an attempt to make the Roman ἡγεμονία (*hegemonia*) on Greece more palatable through embracing the Greek παιδεία (*paideia*) (political philhellenism).

Despite their different premises and purposes, the cultural and the political Philhellenism are not to be considered as opposites. The Romans wanted to legitimate their power on the Greeks and in order to do so, they embraced the Greek culture. The dichotomy *hegemonia/paideia* represents two faces of the same medal. While dominating the Greeks, the Romans used the *humanitas* and the *mediocritas* - that are

⁵ Dio Chrys, *Or.*, 37.26 – In: Favorinos d'Arles: Œuvres. Tome I: Introduction générale - Témoignages - Discours aux Corinthiens - Sur la fortune. Edited by E. Amato. Paris: Le Belles Lettres 2005.

⁶ Hadrill, A. Wallace: Rome's Cultural Revolution. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 5.

the virtues considered by the Greeks as inseparable from their own culture. Thus, the cultural Philhellenism of the Romans should legitimate their hegemony, and created the impression that it was palatable and sufferable to the subjected Greeks.⁷

Therefore, some emperors, so-called “philhellenes”, despite their sincere admiration for the Greek world, nonetheless embraced several aspects of the Greek *paideia* for their own good.

Particularly, I will briefly focus on Augustus, Nero and Hadrian. Augustus (44 BCE – 14 CE), amidst his restoration of the *mos maiorum*, the traditional Roman ethos, can be considered a philhellene emperor. He encouraged bilingualism and created the first library with both a Greek and a roman section. The monumental altar *Ara Pacis Augustae* that celebrated the Augustan Peace, a great achievement after several years of civil wars, shows the big influence of the Greek art: low-reliefs (recalling the Altar of the Gods in Athens) portray the imperial family parading in Greek fashioned clothes; representations of the city’s foundation myths refer to the myth of Aeneas, the Greek hero who escaped from Troy with the very mission of founding the city of Rome. Augustus was also the first emperor to introduce new games in the περίοδος⁸, the *Aktia*, held every four years, which celebrated his victory in the battle of Actium in 32 BCE. During the Augustan age, several Greek authors spent much time in Rome, Diodorus of Sicily, Dionysius of Alicarnassus, Cecilius of Calactes. Rome became in the words of the rhetorician Polemon, reported by Athenaeus of Naucratis, a real ἐπιτομή τῆς οἰκουμένης, a privileged place for the encounter of the Greek and Roman cultures.⁹ Under Augustus the building of theatres, *odeia* and gymnasia had a great boost in Rome¹⁰, in Athens and other cities of Graeco-Roman world.

Nero (54 – 68 CE) was the first and only emperor who was officially called “Philhellene”, in the Akraiphia inscription¹¹ dated at 67-66 CE.¹² Why, among all of his crazy acts, Nero gained the title of Philhellene? We know that Nero had a sincere admiration for Greek culture and he loved singing and acting like a Greek. His love for the Greek culture led him in 67 CE to pronounce a famous speech, reported in the

⁷ Ferrary, J. L.: Rome, Athènes et le Philhellénisme dans l’empire Romain, d’Auguste aux Antonins. In: Aa. Vv., Filellenismo e tradizionalismo a Roma nei primi due secoli dell’impero. Atti dei Convegni Lincei 125. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 1996, pp. 183-210, here p. 200.

⁸ περίοδος (*periodon*) was the name given to all of the four major traditional athletic competitions in Greece, that took place every two or four years: the *Olympics*, the *Nemeans*, the *Pythians* and the *Isthmian Games*.

⁹ Ferrary: Rome, Athènes et le Philhellénisme dans l’empire Romain, d’Auguste aux Antonins (note 6), p. 204.

¹⁰ It is well known that the traditional Roman theatres were not permanent. The first permanent theatre in Rome was built in 55 BCE under the second consulship of Pompey the Great. During the Augustan age the building of the Roman theatres reaches its maximum and canonized form with the *Theatrum Marcelli* in 13 BCE. See Paratore, E.: Storia del teatro latino. Venosa: Osanna Edizioni 2005, p. ?.

¹¹ Holleaux, M.: Discours de Néron prononcé à Corinthe pour rendre aux Grecs la liberté. In: Bulletin de correspondance hellénique 12 (1888), pp. 510-528, here p. 526.

¹² Ferrary: Rome, Athènes et le Philhellénisme dans l’empire Romain, d’Auguste aux Antonins (note 6), p. 186.

aforementioned Akraiphia inscription, to give the freedom to the Greeks. Nero, after having participated in all the competitions of the περίοδον and having won them all (obviously!), from the city of Corinth, where the Isthmian Games were held, proclaimed the Freedom of the Greek People, a fact that guaranteed him the title of Philhellene. This kind of declaration was very different from the same kind of declaration made by Flamininus in the 2nd century BCE. This declaration aimed to be a statement of cultural deference, in fact it simply consisted in a tax relief, while the previous one had mainly a political connotation, implying the first real interference of the Romans in the Greek internal affairs.

After the brief parenthesis of Nero (his declaration was repealed immediately after his death by the emperor Vespasian) the main emperor who can be considered a philhellene was Hadrian.

Under Hadrian the Romans developed the greatest interest in the Greek culture. The most important thing Hadrian did to underline his love for Greece was the gift of a huge amount of money to Athens, which gained back in the Hadrianic age its supremacy as the leading city of the Greek cultural world. Athens became in this period the object of a series of donations that led to restore its predominant role within the Greek Culture.¹³ Another thing that Hadrian did, was the creation of the so-called *Panhellenion*. The *Panhellenion* was primarily a religious institution that tried to recreate the environment of the Classical Greece in the 5th century BCE. Having Athens as its center, this institution, created in 132 CE, had strict admission rules, based primarily on the Greek origin of the cities that required admission.¹⁴ This was the last attempt to relive the big Panhellenic ideal that was so powerful in the classical Greek world. In 137 CE the Panhellenic Games were held in Athens in order to celebrate the restoration of this ancient cultural value.

This project did not last longer than Hadrian's life and the *Panhellenion* disappeared after his death.¹⁵ It is no surprise, given this admiration for the Greek world, that the largest part of Roman education in the imperial age was based on the learning of Greek language and literature.

The main source we possess about the Roman education at this time is Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. The learning of grammar and poetry from the Greek models was a possession of the elites, and had its importance in the social life of every Roman noble child. Given also the close relation between culture and power that we have previously noticed, learning the Greek παιδεία was thus considered as an instrument of power. But in the 2nd century CE, learning the basics of the Greek *paideia* was not sufficient anymore. Anyone who wanted to tower above the others had to go deeply in the knowledge of the Greek culture and literary models, in order to enlarge his repertoire of *exempla* and gain a better eloquence. An example concerning this *advanced learning*

¹³ Spawforth, J. / S. Walker: The World of Panhellenion. In: The Journal of Roman Studies 75 (1985), pp. 78-79.

¹⁴ About the criteria of admission of the cities in the Panhellenion see idem, pp. 78-104 and Preston, R.: Roman Questions Greek Answers: Plutarch and the construction of identity. In: Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire. Edited by S. Goldhill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, pp. 86-119.

¹⁵ Spawforth: The World of Panhellenion (note 12), pp. 78-104.

of the Greek models is provided by the famous school of Statius' father. In *Silvae* 5.3, the poet Statius recalls his father and his activity as a teacher. For what we can see, the canon of authors taught by Statius' father was at the very least unusual. In the 1st century CE, the knowledge of Homer and Hesiod only was not sufficient anymore to excel in the Roman imperial world:

Hinc tibi vota patrum credi generosaque pubes | te monitore regi, mores et
facta priorum | discere, quis casus Troiae, quam tardus Ulixes, | quantus
equum pugnasque virum decurrere versu | Maeonides quantumque pios
ditarit agrestes | Ascraeus Siculusque senex, qua lege recurat | Pindaricae
vox flexa lyrae volucrumque precator | Ibycus et tetricis Alcman cantatus
Amyclis | Stesichorusque ferox saltusque ingressa viriles | non formidata
temeraria Chalcide Sappho, | quosque alios dignata chelys. tu pandere
doctus | carmina Battiadae latebrasque Lycophronis atri | Sophronaque
implicatum tenuisque arcana Corinnae.¹⁵

Hence parents' hopes were entrusted to you, and noble youth governed by your guidance, as they learned the manners and deeds of men gone by: the tale of Troy, Ulysses' tardiness; Maeonides' power to pass in verse through heroes' horses and combats; what riches the old man of Ascra and the old man of Sicily gave honest farmers, what law governs the recurring voice of Pindar's winding harp, and Ibycus, who prayed to birds, and Alcman, sung in austere Amyclae, and bold Stesichorus and rash Sappho, who feared not Leucas but took the manly leap, and others by the lyre approved. You were skilled to expound the songs of Battus' son, the lurking places of dark Lycophron, Sophron's mazes, and the secrets of subtle Corinna.¹⁶

In this brief passage, we are able to recognize some names of the most representative Greek epic and lyric poets but, while some of them, like Homer and Hesiod, were commonly studied in all the schools of the Graeco-Roman world, some others, like Ibycus, Alcman or the poetess Corinna, were not that usual. Their Greek is complex and their literary genre, the choral lyric, due to its typical celebrative function in the Greek society and their polished and subtle language, could appear rather useless to a soon-to-be roman politician.

Evident in this case is that the knowledge of the Greek poetry, even that which we could consider 'niche literature', was a possession of the élites and if they wanted to maintain this élites status, they had to go deep in Greek literature. The knowledge of the Greek poetry could be useful for a Roman student and provide a wider set of rhetorical means to construct their own speeches – "learning the Greek poets taught by

¹⁶ Text and translation by Bailey, D.R. Shackleton: Statius vol. 1. *Silvae*. Loeb Classical Library 206. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2005, p. 358-361.

the elder Statius consequently provided access to the language of the élite and led to the possession of a desirable form of cultural capital”¹⁷.

Thus, we witness, in the imperial age, the rise of the Greek culture as a social improvement instrument, through which the Roman élites had the opportunity to legitimate their power both in the Greek provinces and in their hometown.

The last aspect of the so-called Hellenization of the Romans on which I would like to focus, though briefly, is the influence wielded by the Greek literature on the Latin one.

Since this topic is boundless and discussing it would deviate us from the main topic of the paper, I decided to recall what two eminent authors, Horace and Ovid, have written about this cultural colonization of the Greeks towards the Latin literature.

As Horace summarized: “Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts to rustic Latium” (Ep. 2,1,156-157). These two verses, among the most famous ever written by the Apulian author, do not leave room for further interpretations. The Greeks conquered by an army had in turn conquered the Romans on a cultural level. This model implies basically a passive role of the Romans in the process of Hellenization.¹⁸ The Romans, according to this model proposed by Horace, would be the ‘willing victims’ of the Greek culture, acknowledging their ‘rustic’ culture as inferior to the sophisticated Greek one.

This model which implies the transformation of the ‘loser’, despite, in this case, his willingness in being defeated, reveals itself as unsatisfactory, since it would imply a fusion between the two cultures that never happened, if not a real cultural appropriation of the Greek culture by the fierce Romans.

The fusion model proves to be inapplicable to the specific case of the Hellenization because this same process can be seen as a ‘defeat’ of the Romans (as in the words of Horace) or as a ‘victory’, as we can read in Ovid’s *Fasti*: “nondum tradiderat victas victoribus artes / Graecia, facundum sed male forte genus”.¹⁹

This duplicity of interpretations of the same phenomenon led A. Wallace Hadrill to identify the relationship between the Greeks and the Romans as a “continuous dialogue with no winners and no losers”.²⁰ The dialogic process cannot be better described than Wallace Hadrill did:

The cultures do not fuse, but enter into a vigorous and continuous process of dialogue with one another. Romans can ‘hellenise’ (speak Greek, imitate Greek culture) without becoming less Roman: indeed, the mutual awareness may have the effect of defining their Romanness more sharply by contrast. Reciprocally, the Greeks under Roman rule

¹⁷ McNelis, C.: Greek Grammarians and Roman Society during the Early Empire: Statius’ Father and his Contemporaries. In: *Classical Antiquity* 21 (1) (2002), pp. 67-94, here p. 71.

¹⁸ Hadrill: *Rome’s Cultural Revolution* (note 5), p. 23.

¹⁹ Ovid: *Fasti*, 3, 101-102. “Conquered Greece, had not yet transmitted her arts to the victors; her people were eloquent but hardly brave.” Both text and translation by Frazer, J.G.: *Ovid vol. 5 Fasti*. Loeb Classical Library 253. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1989, pp. 126-127.

²⁰ Hadrill: *Rome’s Cultural Revolution* (note 5), p.17.

define their own identity more sharply by *paideia* even as they become Romans in other ways.²¹

Thence, given that there are no winners and no losers in this endless dialogue, how should we describe the process of Romanization? In which way we can say that the Greeks were 'romanized'?

Before analyzing the process of Romanization in itself, it could be useful to follow up on the concept of dialogue between cultures and look at the models that have been proposed to describe the relationship between the Greeks and the Romans before attaining the dialogic one.

Several models describe the relationship between the Romans and Greeks in the light of the following colonial experiences. Some of them are more convincing than others but none of them reaches the goal of describing accurately this relationship.

I propose here a brief list of the different models proposed in the recent scholarship on the topic:

- a) The traditional colonial model (*top-down model*), in which the conqueror takes over the conquered and replaces the original culture and social system with his system cannot be applied in this case, since we have already seen that the Romans did not destroy the Greek traditions.
- b) Acculturation (proposed by M. Millet²²): this model could not be applied to the present case because it assumes a culturally superior population that replaces certain aspects of the native culture (barbarian) with its own culture (we have seen how Horace brilliantly summarized in just one verse the fact that the Romans considered themselves as barbarians before they came in contact with the Greek culture²³);
- c) Creolization (*bottom-up model* proposed by J. Webster²⁴): from the encounter of colonizer and colonized derives a new culture (fusion) – see e.g. the creoles of the Caribbean. Certain aspects of the dominant culture blend with the native culture. This is not satisfactory because once again it assumes that the colonizer culture is superior to the new blended culture (which results to be subpar to the 'original').
- d) Métissage (proposed by P. Le Roux²⁵): a sort of cross-breeding. Two *pure* parents generate a brand new blended culture – the Roman Empire becomes a "middle ground" in which influences came from everywhere and flowed to everywhere.

²¹ Idem, p. 23-24.

²² Millet, M.: *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990.

²³ See the aforementioned passage of Horace's *Epistles* (note 1)..

²⁴ Webster, J.: *Creolizing the Roman Provinces*. In: *American Journal of Archaeology* 105 (2) (2001), pp. 209-225.

²⁵ Le Roux, P.: *Le Romanisation en question*. In: *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociale* 59 (2) (2004), pp. 287-311.

All these models, despite their intrinsic value, are to be considered fallacious because they do not take into account the plurality of the cultures and propose a fusion *tout-court* between the Greeks and the Romans.

However, we must recognize that the Greeks and Romans, even with all the reciprocal influence, always tried to maintain their own cultural identity.

Thus, in my opinion, the most fitting model, is the *Bilingualism* model proposed by A. Wallace Hadrill, which acknowledges the dialogue between these populations but not the fusion between them.

Taking the use of the Greek and Latin language as a meter to evaluate the interaction between these populations, Wallace Hadrill recognizes that the Greeks and the Romans were able to sustain simultaneously diverse culture systems in full awareness of their differences and code-switch between them.²⁶ The code switching is always an improvisation by players who understand the component language as distinct. The Romans wanted to enable the coexistence of Roman and native (in this case Greek) elements with code-switching as an improvisation. Each speaker of this dialogue remains conscious of his identity and recognizes the other part of the self. A valid example of this coexistence of multiple but separated cultural identities can be drawn from the bilingual tombstone of the African doctor Boncar Claudius (*CIL* VIII, 15 = *IRT*, 654). Found in Leptis Magna and dated in the late first century CE, this epigraphic text is the witness of the awareness of the coexistence of several cultural identities. The born African, Greek speaking, Roman citizen Boncar felt the urge to display his triple identity in his funerary inscription, inscribed in Greek, Latin and Punic.

Thus, while the Romans, in their dominant position, wanted to hellenize without identifying themselves as Greeks, it could be interesting to hear the voice of the second speaker of this dialogue, the Greeks.

The reaction of the Greeks to the roman dominance can be observed by two different perspectives: the political and the cultural one.

On the political side, we need to talk about the Greek elites of the province of Achaia. The Greek elites, during the roman rule, were extremely powerful, since they had the opportunity to mediate between their oppressors and their oppressed. They were both ruled and rulers. They obtained the roman citizenship and had the possibility to spend their careers into the roman administration in spite of their political freedom. They were heirs of the classical culture but highly involved in the imperial system.²⁷

This not negligible political gain of the elites led, on a cultural level, to a crisis of the Greek cultural identity since the Greeks felt themselves as both Romans and Greeks²⁸ or, at least, the most Romanized among the imperial local elites.

The so called *pepaideumanoi*, the holders of the Greek *paideia*, the distinctive trait to be identified as a Greek, were now committed to the Roman imperial duties despite being, at the same time, the guardians of the Athenian heritage.

²⁶ Hadrill: Rome's Cultural Revolution (note 5), p. 14.

²⁷ Preston: Roman Questions Greek Answers (note 13), p. 91.

²⁸ Idem.

Therefore, the Romanization of the Greeks consisted basically of an empowerment of the elites and a progressive weakening of the Greek cultural identity.

How did the Greeks react to this apparent loss of identity?

The main concern of the Greeks living under the Roman dominance was to conciliate the glories of the past with the loss of freedom and greatness they were experiencing in the present.

Two reactions were possible: flattery or ideological resistance.

After having acknowledged the munificence of the Romans towards their cities and people, since the Caesarian age and then in the Augustan and Imperial age, the Greeks began to be compliant with the Roman dominance and to announce festivals and decrees in honor of the proconsul or the emperor. Even the Greek artists started to celebrate the Roman deeds with carving statues of important men and low-reliefs of their victories.

Many Greeks started even to use their Roman name, which they received with their Roman citizenship.²⁹

The birthday of the emperor Augustus on the 23rd of September began to be celebrated in 9 CE throughout Greece and in the province of Asia as a national holiday.

In 29 BCE, being the emperor Augustus still alive, we witness a deification of his figure following a typical use of the Greeks, and the beginning, in Greece and elsewhere in the empire, of a real cult of Augustus' persona and his family. Many festivals and sportive challenges were held in honor of Augustus and to celebrate the important facts of his reign. The cult of Augustus, Caesar and the following emperors was flanked by the cult of the *dea Roma*, the personification of the city of Rome as a goddess.

An important witness of this cult among the Greek literature is represented by Melinno's *Hymn to Rome*. This hymn, consisting of five stanzas, has been written in the 2nd century CE and presents Rome as the daughter of the god Ares, it celebrates the magnificence and the extraordinary power of the city. Just to give an example of the tone of this poem I report the first stanza as presented by Bowra:

Χαῖρέ μοι Ῥώμα θυγάτηρ Ἄρηος
χρυσεομίτρα δαίφρων ἄνασσα
σεμνὸν ἅ νάεις ἐπὶ γᾶς Ὀλυμπον
αἰὲν ἄθραυστον.³⁰

I greet you, Rome, daughter of Ares,
gold crowned, wise queen,

²⁹ On this topic see McMullen, R.: *Romanization in the time of Augustus*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press 2000, pp. 1-29.

³⁰ Bowra, C. M.: *Melinno's Hymn to Rome*. In: *The Journal of Roman Studies* 47 (1957), pp. 21-28, here p. 21.

you who dwell the holy and eternally
unbreakable Olympus on earth.³¹

Although the Greek literature seems to have never taken into account the existence of the Latin literature, this poem could hint at the fact that Melinno could have taken Statius as a model. In fact, it was at least unusual that in a long poem like this each stanza was self-concluded and independent from the other stanzas. The only other witness of this stylistic feature in the 2nd century CE is the Latin poet Statius with his fourteen stanzas poem in *Silvae* 4.7. It is far from certain that Melinno was looking at Statius' poetry when writing her hymn but the analogy between the two pieces in the metrical construction has aroused several suspects of a possible Latin influence in the metric construction of the poem. These suspects could be corroborated by Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, a hymn similar to Melinno's one, written in the same verse, the Sapphic strophe, and both recited in religious ceremonies.³²

However, despite it might be fascinating to conclude that Melinno could represent a case of influence of the Latin literature on the Greek one, the evidence to draw this conclusion are too scarce to be more than a mere hypothesis.

As for Melinno's poetry, the Greek literature acknowledged the importance of Rome in other literary genres, the most important one being the historiography.

A certain school of historiographers took Rome as the center of their narration. They narrated the Universal history from a roman point of view, because they clearly recognized how the ascent of Rome had changed the course of history. This is the case of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Appianus and Cassius Dio. These two, one must say, even held prominent positions in the roman administrative system being the perfect representation of those cultural and social elite that we discussed before.³³

But the on the other side, we must acknowledge the existence of voices of resistance among the Greeks. If not resistance, we should talk at least about reluctance in even mentioning Rome.

While some Greek historians of the imperial age recognized the Roman Empire as the acme of the ancient civilization, so that all their histories revolved around Rome and its deeds, some others show no mercy in ignoring the recent and contemporary events.

This applies to the historian Cephalion, who wrote a Universal history from the myth of Ninus to Alexander the Great.

During the early imperial age, we witness a boost even in the writing of local histories and tour guides of the Greek cities, a phenomenon which has been seen as a reaction to the roman rule which aimed to underline the glory of a single region showing a deep antiquarian interest.

The most famous tour-guide written in the 2nd century CE is the *Periegesis of Greece* of Pausanias who memorizes the glorious past by analyzing the monuments and the

³¹ Translation by V. Petrucci.

³² Bowra: Melinno's Hymn to Rome (note 30), p. 22.

³³ Bowie. E. L.: The Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic. In: Past & Present 46 (1970), pp. 3-41, here pp. 10-12.

myths of the classical Greece. It is striking that Pausanias never mentions monuments and dedications later than 150 BCE, neglecting completely the buildings of the Roman epoch.³⁴

This tendency of looking back at the glorious past of the Greece while ignoring the present is evident in the 2nd century CE with the so called Second Sophistic.

The rhetoricians of this school always took their topics from the myth, the classical antiquity and the glorious past of the Athenians. They imitated Pericles and Demosthenes – as unsurpassed models of rhetoric – in language and style.

This archaizing fashion in the pure Atticism of Pausanias or in the models adopted by the orators of the Second Sophistic “seem to be an attempt to pretend that the past is still present”.³⁵

The question is: Why did they lock themselves into the past?

We could try to give a psychological interpretation to explain this kind of behavior as it has been proposed by E.L. Bowie.³⁶

They struggled to conciliate the present situation with their glorious past, but since this was impossible, they pretended that the present did not exist. They recognized that they had lost their freedom and their glory so, in order to construct and maintain their own identity, they preferred to lock themselves into their past glories and cultural achievements.

In conclusion, I can infer that the interaction between the Romans and the Greeks can be seen as a dialogue, a profitable and continuous interchange of ideas and people. The mean of this dialogue is the bilingualism in which each population could sustain diverse cultural systems in full awareness of their difference and code-switch between them.

None the less, it must be recognized that the dialogue was imperfect, since there was an unequal power relation between the speakers. The Romans wanted to take everything they could from the Greeks, while the Greek elites took advantage of the new rule to give a significant boost to their career into the dominant imperial system. Thus, while the Hellenization is a cultural process, we can see the Romanization as the political and social outcome of this process.

They are interdependent phenomena: everything under Roman control could be taken as ‘Roman’ whereas within this control ‘Greek’ remains culturally distinctive.³⁷

Certainly, we have seen how the Greeks struggled to maintain their own cultural identity and how, in many cases they preferred to remember the glorious past instead of dealing with the present.

On the other hand, the Romans helped to spread the Greek culture throughout all the empire, so that we can see Hellenization and Romanization as complementary processes: the first cultural and the latter political.

³⁴ Idem, pp. 22-23.

³⁵ Idem, p. 36.

³⁶ Idem, p. 37-41.

³⁷ Hadrill: Rome’s Cultural Revolution (note 5), p. 27.

In the very conclusion of the paper I would like to quote here a vivid metaphor by Andrew Wallace Hadrill:

It is as if Hellenization and Romanization represented the two phases of the circulation of the blood. If Hellenization is the diastolic phase, by which the blood is drawn in to the center, Romanization is the systolic phase, that pumps the oxygenated blood back to the extremities. It is not enough to have one single, prolonged phase of the one, followed by a similar, single, long phase of the other, because the two need to alternate constantly, to keep the system alive.³⁸

³⁸ Idem.