Cultural Exchange and Colonization:

Considering Roman-Italian Relations within the Context of Contemporary Postcolonial

Literature and Theory

by

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Through this work I intend to consider ancient Roman history through a modern postcolonial lens in order to better understand the particular nature of Roman Italian colonial frameworks and power dynamics. By placing ancient history in conversation with modern perspectives on postcolonial theory and subversive colonial dynamics, I intend to develop a refined conception of Romanization and reinforce the human aspect involved in this ancient process of colonization and Roman expansion. In particular, I consider Roman relations with Italian communities during the second and first centuries BCE, through a variety of case studies in order to contextualize the specific nature of this cultural contact and exchange. Then, as a point of comparison, I consider postcolonial theory and perspectives. Specifically, I will analyze a work by Gloria Anzaldúa in order to understand the human experience involved in processes of subversive colonization and wars of cultural hegemony. It is my goal to develop a refined understanding of the experiences of Italian individuals in this period as informed by contemporary perspectives of postcolonial theory.

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Preface

I would like to thank Dr. Marcie Persyn for her unwavering support of this project and for her steadfast guidance. I would also like to thank the University of Pittsburgh Classics department, as well as the University Honors College for providing me with this opportunity and offering such a supportive community.

1.0 Introduction

The ancient world, though separated from contemporary society by thousands of years, offers humanity a unique opportunity for reflection and consideration. Gazing into the fractured mirror of the past reveals an array of commonalities between the human experience both ancient and modern. By considering ancient manifestations of themes such as identity, citizenship, and migration one can arrive at profound conclusions regarding humanity's dynamic relationship with such fundamental aspects of the human experience.

Examining ancient Roman legislation through the lens of citizenship and social identity allows one to better understand the evolution of the Roman identity as it engaged with other provincial identities. By studying the legal frameworks that enabled the acquisition of Roman citizenship, one is able to examine the underlying normative beliefs towards the Roman identity, which were then codified into the formal laws of Roman citizenship. While much traditional scholarship maintains that Roman ideology on citizenship and identity aligned with these legal frameworks and reflected great allegiance to the *patria*, closer analysis reveals that this fails to appropriately capture the diversity and fluidity of the Roman experience.

Ideas of *Romanitas* and the Roman identity are often taken to correspond to a Latin-speaking, male citizen residing in Rome.[1] However, in actuality, the Roman identity included countless individuals of a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, linguistic groups, and political

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[1] Romanitas is a Latin concept referring to the collection of political and social practices the Romans considered to be defining aspects of their identities. See *Adams, J. N. "'Romanitas' and the Latin Language."*

statuses. Prior to the expansion of the Roman Republic, the Italian peninsula consisted of a wide

variety of societies with distinct languages and cultural traditions. It is estimated that by 343,

Italian allies, non-Roman individuals, outnumbered Roman citizens by three to one.[2] Members of

these non-Roman Italian provinces had differing levels of engagement and diplomacy with

Rome. Some, the *socii*, were official allies of Rome through formal treaties, while others, the

Latins, were less formally affiliated with Rome, but shared connections through a common

language and cultural tradition.[3] However, the Second Punic War of 218 – 202 B.C.E.

demonstrated where many of the allies' circumstantial allegiances lay, as many sided against

Rome with Hannibal and suffered severe consequences following their defeat.[4] Now untrusting

of their neighbors, the Roman elite began to aggressively claim nearby allied land as *ager

publicus*.[5] While these claims were often contested in Roman courts, the magistrates heavily

favored Roman citizens in these conflicts and perpetuated this mistreatment of the allies.

Stretching far beyond the limits of the seven hills, Rome continued to expand significantly

throughout the later Republican period and grew to incorporate the vast majority of the Italian

peninsula.

    The idea of Romanization is a complex concept representing the gradual expansion of

Roman influence in the form of linguistic, political, and cultural hegemony. Roman and Allied

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[2] Mark Howard, "Rebel Motivations during the Social War and Reasons for Their Actions after Its End" (Master's Thesis, Wright State University, 2019), 3.

[3] Howard, "Rebel Motivations," 4.

[4] Antony Augoustakis and Neil W. Bernstein, *Silius Italicus' Punica: Rome's War with Hannibal* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 3.

[5] Howard, "Rebel Motivations," 14.

relations throughout ancient history constitute a complex system of relationships that evade easy

classification under contemporary frameworks of mercantilist colonizer-colonized power

structures.[6] Rather, Romanization is a nuanced and mutualistic process of assimilation, cultural

exchange, and expansion resulting in the explicit influence of Roman institutions on indigenous

Italian structures. Romanization occurred through passive cultural exchange as well as through

deliberate attempts at Roman expansion. Evidence of Romanization and its effects date back to

the third century BCE as a result of increased engagement between Italian allies and Rome.

Studying this period of colonization and enfranchisement allows one to consider how

non-Roman individuals navigated the legal process of acquiring a new citizenship, within such a

political context. Therefore, I intend to consider the existing Roman legislative frameworks on

citizenship in order to identify the legal context surrounding the Roman national identity. In

particular, I seek to examine such concepts through legal, socio-cultural, and linguistic lenses to

comprehensively evaluate ancient attitudes towards concepts such as: the idea of national

identity, xenophobic ideology, language barriers, migration. I also aim to consider the role that

multilingualism and language barriers played in the acquisition of citizenship and the conception

of a Roman national-identity. Specifically, I intend to explore ancient texts that provide

normative perspectives on national identity and citizenship and understand the ways in which

Roman residents, both citizens and non-citizens, considered such themes. My project considers a

variety of primary sources in the form of historical records written by authors such as Livy, as

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[6] More recent motivations behind colonialism are grounded in mercantilism and the idea of establishing settler colonies for economic benefit and imperial financial growth. For instance, the Spanish colonization of Northern and Southern America arose out of explicit desires for the extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of indigenous labor. See *Mahoney, James. "Mercantilist Colonialism." In Colonialism and Postcolonial Development, 50–119, 2010. 54.*

well as the remnants of an Oscan statute from the second century BC, the *lex Osca Bantina.*

Through the thorough analysis of these primary works, in tandem with the theory of

contemporary postcolonial scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, I intend to develop an informed

understanding of the lived experience of Italian provincial individuals in the ancient

Mediterranean in order to better conceptualize the colonial process of Romanization.

2.0 A Fractured Peninsula

In order to thoroughly analyze the Social War and its lasting effects on the Roman identity, one must first assess the context of the Italian Peninsula in the years prior. Pre-Social War Roman-Italian relations were neither entirely colonial frameworks nor egalitarian alliances, but rather an assortment of nuanced associations due to an imbalance of power and a shared geopolitical context. The particular circumstances contributing to the outbreak of the Social War stretch back to the second century BCE. Within this time period, various Italian provinces began to engage more explicitly and consistently with Rome through a variety of means.

Italy, at this time, was composed of a variety of disparate communities all with differing levels of engagement with Rome, whether formalized or not. While these provinces were dispersed throughout the Italian peninsula, they should not be thought of as separate states of a singular peninsula as they possessed greatly distinct languages, ethnicities, and cultural traditions. They represented individualistic societies inhabiting the same peninsular region, rather than disjointed members of the sociopolitical idea of Italy as a nation.[7] In contrast, the Greeks of the same era had more explicit manifestations of a shared identity, panhellenism. However, more similarly to the Romans, in spite of their shared languages and cultural associations, the Greeks also had distinct conflicts between regional identities, such as Athens and Corinth. Due to the

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[7] While Italy would eventually be "unified" under Rome throughout the course of the next several centuries, the idea of Italian Unification as a political and sociocultural movement is a more modern concept which would arise during the 19th century and result in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. See: Riall, Lucy. *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society, and National Unification*. London: Routledge, 1994.

great variety of languages found on the Italian peninsula, the provinces there experienced greater

cultural competition amongst each other and lacked a common identity based on a shared

geopolitical context.

Although there were many communities commonly located on the Italian peninsula, at

this time there was not a common Italian identity shared amongst residents, in contrast to the

Greek's ideals of Hellenism. However, Rome was one unifying factor for many communities.

One of the greatest distinguishing factors of the various provinces was whether they had been

formally established by Rome or not. Those with official Roman affiliation were known as the

socii nominis Latini (allies of the Latin name). This title referred to a grouping of the various

Latin-speaking peoples of Latium.[8] Though not innately Roman citizens, they were granted

various rights which were also held by Roman citizens, such as *ius commercium*, the right to

conduct business deals. They were also provided with a direct pathway to acquiring Roman

citizenship through *ius migrationis*, the right to become a Roman citizen through migration.[9] Due

to their settlement through formal Roman means and their allowance to various Roman

privileges, their relationship defies various aspects of contemporary colonial frameworks.[10] More

recent Western conceptions of colonialism maintain economic value as a key aspect of nation

building, emphasizing mercantilist theory as a core component of colonialist ideology.

Furthermore, individuals of the *socii nominis Latini* enjoyed various privileges typically not

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[8] Livy, *History of Rome* 1.41.6

[9] Edward Bispham, *Asculum to Actium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74.

endowed upon residents of more modern settlement colonies, namely such an accessible pathway to full citizenship.

In contrast, the other provinces, known as the *socii,* had not been established by Rome and did not enjoy any rights typically held by Roman citizens.[11] Rather, these allies were previously completely independent communities outside of Latium which gradually became associated with Rome due to wartime alliances initiated, often under situations of extreme duress, by Rome.[12] Throughout the course of the Second Punic War, Rome, facing the threat of various invasions, had enlisted the help of their allies to provide soldiers to prevent the common threat of total Italian peninsular destruction and conquest.[13] According to Polybius, the allies in total had mustered 250,000 soldiers to match the 250,000 soldiers provided by the Romans.[14] Troops were enlisted by the allied communities of: Latins, Samnites, Iapygians and Messapians, Lucanians, Marsi, Marrucini, Frentani, and Vestini, as well as others not initially recorded by Polybius, such the Paeligni and the Asculani.[15] This period in Italian peninsular history demonstrated increasing interactions between Rome and allies and set the foundations for more explicit processes of Romanization.

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[11] These societies would be later replaced by the *foederati*, any group of peoples bound by a treaty, a *foedus*, with Rome.

[12] Bispham, *Asculum to Actium*, 74.

[13] Brunt, P. A. *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.-A.D. 14*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) 46.

[14] Polybius, *The Histories,* 6.24

[15] Brunt, *Italian Manpower,* 47.

Figure 1: A map of the Italian Peninsula in 218 BCE depicting Rome and the years in which the outside communities became allied with Rome. *Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome, Nick Constable & Penguin Atlas of Ancient Rome*

3.0 Second and First Century BCE Case Studies

This chapter presents a moment within ancient Italian history prior to the Social War period: the Bacchanalian Crisis. The Bacchanalian Crisis of 186 BCE represents a unique interaction between Rome and allied Italian provinces which set the stage for increased Roman involvement in Italian affairs and a more nuanced relationship between the groups.

These case studies allow one to consider ancient Roman relations with a critical lens to understand the particular colonial structures and power dynamics. In particular, Roman authority over Italian communities often manifested gradually through subversive colonial dynamics, such as cultural commodification and linguistic assimilation, rather than through conquest and subjugation as in more contemporary manifestations of imperialist colonialism. Studying these ancient relations allows for more nuanced considerations of modern occurrences of colonialism which defy the traditional frameworks of mercantilism and imperialism.

4.0 The Bacchanalian Crisis

The Bacchanalian Crisis of 186 B.C. presents an excellent case study for considering Roman and allied relations in the years following the Punic War. A complex political situation, the Bacchanalian Crisis allows modern historians the opportunity to critically assess Rome's interactions with allied communities under tense circumstances due to a variety of external forces. Such a situation provides great insight into how the Romans viewed their nearby "allies", as revealed through their communications with them, as well as their own internal strategizing and discussion of the conspiracy. Furthermore, considering the Roman approach to resolving the situation through their foreign and domestic policy reveals underlying beliefs regarding the legitimacy of their autonomy, as well as their own concealed desires for expansion.

Much of the current understanding of the Bacchanalian Crisis derives from Livy's account of the entire affair. Across twelve chapters, Livy provides a thorough narrative describing the conspiracy from its inception until political events in the years following, such as the censorship of Cato the Elder in 184 BCE.[16] Livy's account also contains an inscription of the *senatus consultum de Bacchanilbus* (senatorial decree concerning the Bacchanalia), the formal senate policy taken in response to the conspiracy. While Livy does present the inscription in its historical and political context, contemporary scholars dispute the underlying circumstances which led to the decree. Specifically, they disagree on whether the motivations behind the senate's actions were a concealed conspiracy to exert further Roman influence throughout the

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[16] Sarah Limoges, "Expansionism or Fear: The Underlying Reasons for the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 B.C." *Hirundo Journal* Vol. II (2008-2009): 78.

peninsula, or whether they were motivated by genuine fear of a threat to their own established authority.[17] Regardless, when considered critically alongside other materials and evidence from the time, Livy's account and the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* itself reveal a great deal about increasing Roman expansion and further expression of unquestionable authority.

The *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* presents a primary perspective on Roman political strategy within the Italian peninsula geopolitical sphere. The text states:

> Neiquis eorum [B]acanal habuise velet. seiques esent, quei sibei deicerent necesus ese Bacanal habere, eeis utei ad pr(aitorem) urbanum Romam venirent, deque eeis rebus, ubei eorum v[e]r[b]a audita esent, utei senatus noster decerneret, dum ne minus senator[i]bus C adesent, [quom e]a res cosoleretur. Bacas vir nequis adiese velet ceivis Romanus neve nominus Latini neve socium quisquam, nisei pr(aitorem) urbanum adiesent, isque [d]e senatuos sententiad, dum ne minus senatoribus C adesent, quom ea res cosoleretur, iousisent.[18]
>
> Let none of them be minded to have a shrine of Bacchus. If there are any who say that they must needs have a shrine of Bacchus, they must come to the Urban Praetor at Rome and, when their case has been heard, our senate must make a decision on this, provided that not fewer than one hundred senators were present when the matter was discussed. Let no man, whether Roman citizen or Latin ally or other ally, be minded to go to a meeting of Bacchantes, unless they have gone to the Urban Praetor and he has authorised it in accordance with a decision of the senate, provided that not fewer than one hundred senators were present when the matter was discussed.[19]

The section of the text makes explicit acknowledgements of the Bacchanalian Crisis' significance for both Romans as well as allies, and thus demonstrates Rome exerting political agency throughout the Italian peninsula. Under the guise of extinguishing the threat of the

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[17] Limoges, "Expansionism or Fear," 77.

[18] Incerti auctoris, Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus, 3.

[19] Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus, trans. William F. Richardson 3.

Bacchic Cult, Rome presents itself as an authority to which all residents of the Italian peninsula, whether Roman citizen, Latin ally, or other ally, must obey. In this way, Rome utilized the context of the Bacchanalian Crisis to establish further political control and solidify the power of Roman hegemony.

4.1 Conspiracy Context

Livy begins his account with a detailed description of the state of affairs in the Italian peninsula in 187 BCE. He lists many of the communities scattered throughout the peninsula and also describes the intricacies of the relations between the allied cities, Latin colonies, and Rome. In particular, he relates an instance in which a confederation of various Latin allies assembled before the senate to make formal complaints of excessive allied migration to Rome. They complained that migration in such large quantities had placed undue burdens upon the remaining individuals. Though the migrants had not been granted Roman citizenship, the allies went to the senate because they had been included in the census under Gaius Claudius and Marcus Livius.[20] Therefore, Quintus Terentius Culleo, as *praetor*, instructed the senate to seek out these individuals and force them to return to their previous settlements. As a result of this investigation, twelve thousand Latin individuals were deported from Rome to their original cities.[21]

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[20] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.4.1.

[21] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.5.1

Thus, the political context in the years immediately preceding the emergence of the Bacchanalian crisis represented increasingly complex interactions between Rome and various other Italian communities. Specifically, this engagement highlights the legitimacy Rome had established throughout the second century as the seemingly sole arbiter of disputes throughout the Italian peninsula. Furthermore, the mass emmigration of Latin individuals represents the superiority Rome had achieved in the eyes of Italian residents. Whether motivated by a desire to engage in Roman culture or encounter potential economic prospects, the more than 12,000 immigrants who left their Latin cities exemplify the elevated status Rome had achieved within the Mediterranean sphere. While Rome did not maintain a formal imperialist framework over the various Italian allies at this time, the presence of such distinct cultural hegemony indicates the existence of a particular power structure. Increased contact between Rome and allies throughout the second century resulted in increased cultural exchange and the subsequent commodification, through both active and passive means, of Roman culture at the expense of local indigenous traditions.[22]

Following this interaction, by 186 BCE, Rome had bested Carthage and cemented its status as the strongest civilization of the Italian peninsula and Sicily; however, the sudden growth of the Bacchic cult presented the potential for a disruption of the Roman regime. The Bacchic cult had entered Rome by way of the Etruscans as early as the sixth century; however, it did not achieve widespread recognition and more notorious fervor until the second century.[23] Largely derived from

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[22] The Lex Osca Bantina, considered in the next chapter, demonstrates one instance of the unique texts which arise out of cultural contact and exchange.

[23] Limoges, "Expansionism or Fear," 89.

a myriad of Greek and Etruscan practices of mysticism, the Bacchanalia were the chaotic festivals held by the Bacchic cult for the god Bacchus, a Roman derivative of the Greek Dionysus.[24] In the Roman manifestation of the cult, Bacchus was merged with the local fertility deity Liber. Therefore, this branch of the Bacchic cult emphasized sexuality and often incorporated intense initiation rituals for its members. In his account written approximately a century later, Livy summarizes the tumultuous emergence of the Bacchic cult:

> Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum, quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens inuexit, sacrificulus et uates; nec is qui aperta religione, propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo, animos errore imbueret, sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum. Initia erant, quae primo paucis tradita sunt, deinde uulgari coepta sunt per viros mulieresque. Additae uoluptates religioni vini et epularum, quo plurium animi illicerentur. Cum vinum animos, et nox et mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae maioribus, discrimen omne pudoris exstinxissent, corruptelae primum omnis generis fieri coeptae, cum ad id quisque, quo natura pronioris libidinis esset, paratam uoluptatem haberet.

> A nameless Greek came first to Etruria, possessed of none of those many arts which the Greek people, supreme as it is in learning, brought to us in numbers for the cultivation of mind and body, but a dabbler in sacrifices and a fortune-teller…There were initiatory rites which at first were imparted to a few, then began to be generally known among men and women. To the religious element in them were added the delights of wine and feasts, that the minds of a larger number might be attracted. When wine had inflamed their minds, and night and the mingling of males with females, youth with age, had destroyed every sentiment of modesty, all varieties of corruption first began to be practised, since each one had at hand the pleasure answering to that to which his nature was more inclined.[25]

Livy's description highlights the disruptive nature of the cult and the frenetic customs they practiced. Furthermore, he also highlights its foreign origin through Greece and Etruria and underscores the inherent moral inferiority of these practices. In a later instance, he compares the

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[24] Paul Halsall, "Roman Religiones Licitae and Illicitae, c. 204 BCE - 112 CE." Ancient History Sourcebook. (New York: Fordham University, 1998).

[25] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.8.1

rapid spread of the Bacchanalia to a "contagion of a pestilence with the destructive power of evil."[26]

Following this interlude, Livy details the actions taken by various Romans to alert officials of the Bacchanalians' heinous practices and the threat they presented as a corruptive force. In the description of the strategies initially adopted by the senators to investigate the Bacchanalians, Livy places particular emphasis on the decision to inquire into communities outside of Rome:

> Censuit autem senatus gratias consuli agendas, quod eam rem et cum singulari cura et sine ullo tumultu inuestigasset. Quaestionem deinde de Bacchanalibus sacrisque nocturnis extra ordinem consulibus mandant; indicibus Aebutio ac Faeceniae ne fraudi ea res sit curare et alios indices praemiis inuitare iubent; sacerdotes eorum sacrorum, seu viri seu feminae essent, non Romae modo sed per omnia fora et conciliabula conquiri, ut in consulum potestate essent; edici praeterea in urbe Roma et per totam Italiam edicta mitti, ne quis, qui Bacchis initiatus esset, coisse aut conuenisse sacrorum causa velit, neu quid talis rei divinae fecisse

> The senate, moreover, decreed that the consul should be thanked because he had investigated the affair both with great industry and without creating any confusion. Then the investigation of the Bacchanals and their nocturnal orgies they referred to the consuls, not as a part of their regular duties; they directed the consuls to see to it that the witnesses Aebutius and Faecenia did not suffer harm and to attract other informers by rewards; the priests of these rites, whether men or women, should be sought out, not only at Rome but through all the villages and communities, that they might be at the disposal of the consuls; that it should be proclaimed in addition in the city of Rome and that edicts should be sent through all Italy, that no one who had been initiated in the Bacchic rites should presume to assemble or come together for the purpose of celebrating those rites or to perform any such ritual.[27]

Specifically, Livy details how the senate immediately assumed the authority to not only initiate a thorough investigation into all of Italy, but also to institute a preliminary moratorium on

[26] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.9.1. trans. William Heinnemann.

[27] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.14.1.

group practice of any Bacchanalian customs. Livy later adds that magistrates had been dispatched to execute these statutes throughout Italy. This piece of information sheds further light on the specifics of the senate's investigation. The decision to send magistrates conclusively reveals that the senate intended from the onset to investigate communities not already in possession of Roman magistrates and judicial systems, such as the *fora* and *concilabula*, unlike the Latin colonies. The Latin terms *fora* and *conciliabula* translate into English as "forums" or "gathering places," and they referred to various small communities located beyond the tenth milestone of Rome. Small rural communities such as these, which lacked a formal colonial or municipal structure, were considered by Rome to be part of the *ager romanus.*[28] Though these communities typically lacked formal Roman structures and authorities, such as a magistrate, their frequent involvement in Roman affairs, often under circumstances such as these, led to their status as quasi-Roman entities.

Following the decision to investigate the neighboring regions, individuals accused of being associated with the Bacchic cult were brought back to Rome for trial. Livy writes how capital punishment was more frequently used than imprisonment to punish those who had been found guilty in the eyes of the senate. In the case of any women extradited by the senate, they were turned over to relatives in order to be punished privately. The text frames the punishment positively and reinforces the notion that the senate acted appropriately in this 'administration of justice.' After discussion of the types of punishment inflicted upon the individuals implicated in the conspiracy, Livy details the more long-term concerns regarding the ongoing presence of the Bacchic cult in

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[28] Bispham, *Asculum to Actium*, 88.

the Italian peninsula. The senatorial decree banned any form of Bacchic worship, unless an individual was granted special permission by the senate. As Livy writes:

> Datum deinde consulibus negotium est, ut omnia Bacchanalia Romae primum, deinde per totam Italiam diruerent, extra quam si qua ibi vetusta ara aut signum consecratum esset. In reliquum deinde senatus consulto cautum est, ne qua Bacchanalia Romae neue in Italia essent. Si quis tale sacrum sollemne et necessarium duceret, nec sine religione et piaculo se id omittere posse, apud praetorem urbanum profiteretur, praetor senatum consuleret. Si ei permissum esset, cum in senatu centum non minus essent, ita id sacrum faceret, dum ne plus quinque sacrificio interessent, neu qua pecunia communis neu quis magister sacrorum aut sacerdos esse

> Then the task was entrusted to the consuls of destroying all forms of Bacchic worship, first at Rome and then throughout Italy, except in cases where an ancient altar or image had been consecrated.[4] For the future it was then provided by decree of the senate that there should be no Bacchanalia in Rome or Italy. [7] If any person considered such worship to be ordained by tradition or to be necessary, and believed that he could not omit it without sin and atonement, he was to make a declaration before the city praetor, and the latter would consult the senate.[29]

The Roman approach to intervening in the Bacchanalian crisis through the *senatus consultum de bacchanalibus* presents one example of active cultural supplementation through explicit means in the form of religious persecution and iconoclasm. Through this conspiracy, the senate was able to combat Hellenism's influence throughout the Italian peninsula and highlight Rome's status as an authoritative figure of morality and order. Furthermore, the situation presented the opportunity for increased Roman involvement in the politics of Italy and the demonstration of Rome's swift agency in "resolving the crisis."[30]

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[29] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.18.1 trans. William Heinnemann

[30] Though it's easier to say that the Bacchic Cult presented no grave, immediate threat to the established security of Roman democracy, it is more difficult to determine whether the senate's fear of the Bacchanalian crisis was actually warranted based upon a Roman hive-mind fear of the cult or whether it was strategically fabricated to facilitate an entry into the Italian geopolitical sphere. Therefore, I avoid conclusively siding with either option and instead focus on the results of the situation: Rome's increased involvement in the affairs of Italian communities.

4.2 Livy's Presentation of the Affair

Critically considering ancient depictions of the Bacchanalian affair, such as Livy's,

provides the opportunity to understand Rome's actions as they were understood by Roman

individuals within the time period. Livy's description of the Bacchanalian affair lacks some

historical integrity in its presentation of the events. The text frequently utilizes vivid,

inflammatory language and seems to rely more so on alleged accounts than explicitly cited

sources. In particular, the text indulges in baseless, xenophobic claims regarding the cult's

emergence into Italy due to a "wandering, nameless Greek" and neglects the lengthy history the

cult had in Italy for centuries prior.[31] In this way, the text mirrors the events of the affair itself, in

utilizing the Bacchanalian cult as a scapegoat to combat Hellenism and idolize Rome. Presenting

the Greeks and Roman women as the villains of the affair and highlighting the heroic aspects of

the Roman government provides a favorable narrative to a Roman audience and establishes

legitimacy and popular appeal for the author.[32]

Livy's narrative highlights the urgent, threatening nature of the situation and emphasizes

the potential for a disaster on a grand scale. The xenophobic undertones of Livy's description

highlight the socio-political understanding of the event within Roman society when it happened,

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[31] The statements made regarding the inherent inferiority of this Greek practice of drunken rituals ("Cum vinum animos , et nox et mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae maioribus, discrimen omne pudoris exstinxissent", Livy 39.8.) are especially reflective of a xenophobic bias given that Rome had its own traditions not dissimilar from the Bacchic rituals. The annual Lupercalia festival, which was observed during Livy's own lifetime, was a chaotic, sexually-charged fertility ritual honoring Rome's association with the she-wolf Lupa.

[32] The audience considerations of Livy's account are especially relevant given the time context of the situation. Livy wrote his text more than a century after the conspiracy, so anyone who would be alive to read the account would have inherently lacked a first-hand perspective and would have been more susceptible to a more malleable, Roman-centered presentation of the affair.

but also in the Roman climate decades later when he wrote it. One of the relevant themes

expressed within this section, is a distinct loyalty towards Roman authority, and a more subtle

disdain for hellenism's influence within the Italian peninsula, as revealed through the reference to

a "nameless Greek possessed of none of those arts in which the Greek people reign supreme."[33]

In addition to the xenophobic narrative presented surrounding the cult's origins, Livy also

incorporates misogynistic ideology behind the reasoning for the cult's sudden emergence. As he

highlights the growing urgency of the affair, Livy reveals distinct patriarchal and homophobic

undertones. In his speech he states:

> Quod ad multitudinem eorum attinet, si dixero multa milia hominum esse, ilico necesse
> est exterreamini, nisi adiunxero qui qualesque sint. primum igitur mulierum magna pars
> est, et is fons mali huiusce fuit; deinde simillimi feminis mares, stuprati et constupratores,
> fanatici, uigiliis, uino, strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis attoniti. nullas adhuc uires
> coniuratio, ceterum incrementum ingens uirium habet, quod in dies plures fiunt

> As regards their number, if I shall say that there are many thousands of them, it cannot
> but be that you are terrified, unless I shall at once add to that who and of what sort they
> are. [9] First, then, a great part of them are women, and they are the source of this
> mischief; then there are men very like the women, debauched and debauchers, fanatical,
> with senses dulled by wakefulness, wine, noise and shouts at night. [10] The conspiracy
> thus far has no strength, but it has an immense source of strength in that they grow more
> numerous day by day.[34]

Livy places the blame for the affair upon the women and the effeminate men, highlighting how

they represent a threat to Roman authority. In order to prevent these groups from achieving

greater innocence and sympathy within the narrative, Livy villainizes them within the context of

socially-accepted norms of misogyny and heteronormativity. Therefore, this instance highlights

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[33] "Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum" Livy 39.8.1

[34] Livy, *History of Rome:* 39.15.1 trans. William Heinnemann.

how colonialism and xenophobia often correlate with other manifestations of oppression and discrimination. When considering colonialist structures and power dynamics, it is often necessary to incorporate an intersectional approach to analyze the various perspectives represented. In this instance, the Bacchanalian affair demonstrates a convergence of systemic xenophobia, misogyny, and heteronormativity, all with the end result of further oppressing minorities and marginalized voices. Therefore, through a interdisciplinary, intersectional lens which incorporates aspects of feminism and queer studies, one is better able to understand the specific processes through which oppression occurs. Though this paper focuses primarily xenophobic and nationalist aspects of this event, colonialism and oppression rarely occur within a vacuum devoid of other forms of discrimination, and I pointed out this instance in order to recognize and highlight this

Furthermore, the text frequently prioritizes the interpersonal conflicts the conspiracy brought about, rather than the broader issues of geopolitical power struggles in the Italian peninsula. In this way, the text reads more so as Roman nationalist propaganda that seeks to emphasize the heroic role Rome, and the senate in particular, played in stopping the further spread of the cult and preventing the chaotic ruin of civil society in the Italian peninsula, a potential consequence which also lacks founding. Therefore, the text subvertly seeks to legitimize the involvement of Rome in engaging with the situation and exerting such explicit authority over the other Italian communities.

The Bacchanalia Crisis presents the opportunity to consider how a single event presented with inflammatory, xenophobic rhetoric has the potential to bring about aggressive policy directed towards individuals without deep connections to the original situation. Even though the neighboring communities were not conspiring on how to delegitimize Roman authority through

the Bacchanalian cult, they were the victims of a xenophobic, expansionist decree which framed them as untrustworthy. Analysis of historical records such as Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair and the *senatus consultum de Bacchanilbus* through a critical, post-colonial lens allows scholars to peer through the film of revisionist history and understand how the (mis)representation of a colonialist event has the dualfold potential to further oppress the victims and glorify the actions of a colonial power. Thorough consideration of these events reveals that Pre-Social-War Roman-Italian relations were neither entirely colonial frameworks nor egalitarian alliances, but rather an assortment of nuanced associations due to an imbalance of power and a shared geopolitical context.

5.0 The Lex Osca Bantina

The Lex Osca Bantina, Latin for the Oscan Law of Bantia, was recovered in fragments in separate archaeological digs across the 18th and 20th centuries in modern-day Potenza, Italy. The assembled fragments constitute a tablet with inscriptions on both sides. One side contains a law written for the local commune of Bantia. Bantia was a small Oscan-speaking community within the ancient region of Lucania at the southeastern tip of the Italian peninsula, which is now the administrative zone of Basilicata.[35] Oscan was a language indigenous to the region, but over time it experienced significant evolution due to frequent contact with neighboring languages.[36] Consequently, while Oscan was traditionally written using the native Oscan script, it became commonplace for Oscan texts to be written using either the Latin or Greek alphabets. Eventually, Oscan went extinct around 100 CE, and this inscription presents one of the early indicators of Oscan's displacement by Latin.[37]

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[35] McDonald, Katherine, and Nicholas Zair. "Changing Script in a Threatened Language: Reactions to Romanization at Bantia in the First Century BC." Chapter. *In Creating Orthographies for Endangered Languages*, 291–304. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[36] Oscan was an Italic language spoken by groups within southern and central Italy. The Samnites were one of the largest communities which spoke this language. It was originally written with a script adopted from the Etruscans and later written using the Latin alphabet before being displaced by Latin entirely and going extinct. See Nishimura, Kanehiro. "Oscan And Other Languages In Contact - K. McDonald Oscan in Southern Italy and Sicily. Evaluating Language Contact in a Fragmentary Corpus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

[37] Adams, J. N. (James Noel). Social Variation and the Latin Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 850.

The tablet is estimated to have originated in either the late second century or early first

century BCE, between approximately 110 - 90 BCE. Though the exact date is unknown, this

range most likely places the date of origination prior to the Social War period of 91 - 87 BCE.[38]

Therefore, this tablet demonstrates increasing Romanization and Latin influence on indigenous

legal customs and language in the era immediately leading into the Social War. One side of the

tablet contains an inscription of a Roman plebiscite. The other side of the tablet contains a local

Bantian law. The municipal law on the tablet is written in the language of Oscan, but with Latin

characters, and demonstrates significant influence of Roman legal custom.

Particularly, the text contains a description of a local law regarding the meeting of a

legislative body. The text describes the various procedures which may either enable or prevent

the meeting of the body. In English, it states:

> If anyone, according to the opinion of the larger part of the senate, provided that [not less
> than] 40 be present when that matter shall have been raised, shall have prohibited (an
> assembly), before [---,] he is to swear before the light of day in the comitium without
> wrongful deceit that he is prohibiting that assembly in the interest of the res [publica]
> rather than because of anyone's influence or enmity and that he is prohibiting it according
> to the opinion of the larger part of the senate. (3) For whomsoever he shall thus prohibit
> an assembly, he may not that day hold (any other) assembly. (II) (4) Whatever magistrate
> shall hereafter hold an assembly (for trial) concerning a caput or property.[39]

A few of the characterizing features of the document which indicate Roman influence include a

reference to the senate, "*senateis"* as it is written in Oscan, as well as the inclusion of Roman

numerals, "XL." Furthermore, the structure of the text being written in the Latin alphabet

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38 Galsterer, Hartmut (Bonn), "Tabula Bantina", 2006.

39 Crawford, M.H. et al., "Roman Statutes", London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996.

contributes to further Romanization of the language and the loss of uniquely Oscan linguistic figures. The inclusion of the letter *Q* in the Oscan inscription, for instance, represents significant influence of Latin literature on this Oscan community.[40] The Oscan language does not have an equivalent letter to *Q* and often represented Latin loan words featuring a *Q* sound with a *P* (ie: *quid* transliterated as *pid*).[41] However, here Oscan words are written using the letter Q.[42] Furthermore, the usage of the letter *Z* represents an interesting interaction between Oscan and the Latin alphabet. While Latin did not innately have the letter *Z*, increased influence from Greek led to its gradual inclusion in Latin texts around approximately 100 BCE. Therefore, the usage of a non-native Latin letter within the Latin script here indicates the frequency with which Oscan individuals engaged with the Latin language on a continuous basis. Such a phenomenon highlights the increasing regularity of contact between Italian communities and Roman literature and legal structures in the period immediately preceding the Social War, as well as the particular methods of cultural exchange which contributed to the displacement of the Oscan script with the Latin alphabet.

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[40] Bispham, *Asculum to Actium*, 143.

[41] Crawford, M.H. et al., "Roman Statutes", London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996

[42] Bispham, *Asculum to Actium*, 144.

5.1 Oscan and Latin Language Interaction and Cultural Exchange

The unique hybrid of the Oscan and Latin languages within the Lex Osca Bantina raises a variety of questions regarding the cultural exchange and linguistic processes which gave way to these inscriptions. Was the text written in Latin script due to the gradual displacement of the Oscan written language for the Latin script? Alternatively, was the text written in Oscan, albeit in the Latin script, in an attempt to preserve the Oscan culture and language in the midst of increasing Romanization? Does the text depict the fading existence of the indigenous Oscan language, or does it represent a deliberate, political choice to declare the Oscan identity in spite of increased Roman cultural presence?

Due to the existence of only a handful of preserved Oscan texts aside from the Lex Osca Bantina, the exact answers to these questions lay somewhat outside the bounds of contemporary classical scholarship.[43] However, from a theoretical perspective, they represent important considerations within the field of postcolonial studies, and they underscore the nuanced ambiguity colonization through gradual cultural exchange and language displacement often conveys. The existence of the Lex Osca Bantina and its unique hybridization of the Oscan and Latin language emphasizes the transitory nature of colonization and serves as a reminder that colonization need not be an immediate, violent process marked by sudden conquest. Rather, the process of Romanization throughout the Italian peninsula represents the gradual expansion of Roman cultural hegemony and linguistic supremacy at the expense of local Italian indigenous

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[43] The *Cipus Abellanus* is another preserved Oscan inscription from which modern scholars have driven much of their understanding of the Oscan language.

customs and languages. Such systems of subversive, gradual colonization are frequently depicted within more contemporary works of postcolonial literature and theory. Modern works of Latin American border literature frequently discuss such themes of alienation and systemic cultural displacement.

6.0 Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature and Theory

This chapter seeks to consider works of contemporary Hispanic literature in order to represent modern examples of post-colonial literature and theory which illuminate the human experiences within subversive, gradual colonization, akin to the gradual Romanization of Italy. Through the incorporation of a variety of works which consider such themes, I intend to develop an interdisciplinary framework which uplifts and prioritizes authentic post-colonial perspectives in order to inform an approach to analyzing ancient colonial frameworks. and power dynamics.

In particular, I have selected a work which considers the realities of the subversive colonial experience. This work depicts the many aspects that characterize environments experiencing cultural exchange and non-violent, subversive colonization: language barriers, xenophobia, and cultural erasure. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa, is an innovative work of postcolonial theory which incorporates a variety of lenses: feminism, queer theory, and Chicano studies to present her life and experiences as a Mexican-American woman living in a unique space between multiple cultures. Through a mixture of poetry, prose, and theory, Anzaldúa presents an insightful, authentic glimpse into the realities of the modern postcolonial experience.

This work is a contemporary piece which has gained great recognition and praise for its innovative, critical considerations of the modern post-colonial experience. Through examination of this work, I intend to place it in conversation with ancient history and consider the realities they reveal about the subversively colonial landscape and the oppressive systems it perpetuates. In selecting this work, I thought critically about works which would lend a meaningful comparison to the unique framework of colonization and cultural hegemony present

in the ancient Italian peninsula. The contemporary canon of Hispanic literature offers a rich

literary tradition which considers an endless array of topics, themes, and experience, and this

work is far from a monolith of this canon, yet it represents the profound critical potential present

in one particular type of this literature: post-colonial studies. By incorporating these works of

postcolonial theory, I hope to bring traditionally underrepresented perspectives and theories into

the field of classics and to demonstrate the benefits of an interdisciplinary and diverse lens of

analysis.

7.0 Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza by Gloria Anzaldúa is an innovative work of theoretical essays, epic poetry, and autobiographical prose which presents the harsh reality of the modern Chicana experience. A renowned writer and scholar of Chicana cultural studies, feminist theory, and queer studies, Anzaldúa discusses Mexico's rich history from precolonial times to the creation of the contemporary Mexican-American identity, the Chicano identity.[44] The novel is uniquely characterized by its multilingual text. Anzaldúa writes mainly in English, but freely incorporates Spanish and indigenous words whenever most fitting, in order to most accurately and authentically reflect the language of the Chicana experience. The words are typically presented without translation and represent a powerful political proclamation of unabashed authenticity to oneself and one's heritage.

Through her unique style of writing and her insightful ideas regarding the systems oppressing Chicano individuals, Anzaldúa pioneered a genre of contemporary literature known as Border writing. This genre of literature considers the Mexican-American immigrant experience and reflects upon the historical, political, and social aspects of border culture. Within this work, Anzaldúa developed the idea of interstitial space with relation to the Chicano identity, the idea of existing in a figurative, cultural No-Man's-Land between Mexico and the United

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[44] Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

States. In this chapter, I intend to assess Anzaldúa's development of this theory in order to understand what it reveals about the realities of subversive colonization and cultural hegemony. Anzaldúa's work is divided into a series of chapters considering the entirety of the Chicana experience, in somewhat chronological fashion, from the history of the Aztecs and the indigenous societies of ancient Mexico, to the contemporary clashes over immigration and border control. Through it all, she remains fiercely authentic and honest with regards to the often harsh reality of the oppression she and her peers experience. She paints a vivid picture of the process of Mexico's conquest and the wounds that remain. She writes, "The Gringo, locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized complete political power, stripping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feet were still rooted in it."[45] In this way, Anzaldúa presents an evocative narrative of the violent process of conquest and colonization, and this serves as an important historical context for later considerations of the contemporary Mexican-American identity.

Having provided this basis of Mexican-American history, Anzaldúa transitions to discussion of the residual effects of colonialism within the modern day. She introduces the concept of the Borderlands as a framework for understanding the unique cultural locale of the Chicano identity. In one section, she writes:

> The U.S.-Mexican border es *una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifebloods of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture… A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary…The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.[46]

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[45] Anzaldúa,. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 1999, 25.

[46] Anzaldúa,. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 1999, 29.

The idea of the Borderlands simultaneously refers to the physical region straddling Mexico and the United States, where a large plurality of Chicano communities are located, as well as the theoretical cultural space between the Anglophone, predominantly-White cultural sphere of the United States and the Spanish-speaking, Mexican sphere. Through this framework, Anzaldúa critically considers the isolation inherent to the Chicano identity. Although being Chicano is being both Mexican and American, this dual identity in fact brings about feelings of seclusion from being alienated from both the English-speaking mainstream environment of the United States, as well as the geographically distant Spanish-speaking culture of Mexico.

Having identified and explained the unique Chicano social status within the post-colonial age, Anzaldúa builds upon this framework in order to present the oppressive systems which continue to contribute to the expansion of White, Anglophone cultural hegemony, and the subsequent erasure of Chicano culture. In one chapter, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," she discusses the experience of growing up bilingually within an environment that exclusively encouraged English-monolingualism, and actively discriminated against individuals who failed to conform to this narrow mold. She narrates the painful experience of learning to modify her own speech and limit her usage of Spanish. Specifically, Anzaldúa relates:

> I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess – that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for "talking back" to the Anglo teacher when all I wanted was trying to do was teach her how to pronounce my name. "If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong.[47]

Here, Anzaldúa underscores the intense personal pain she experienced as a young child at school. Although centuries after the conquest of the New World, the violence and pain involved in the

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[47]   Anzaldúa,. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 1999, 75.

processes of colonization has not disappeared, rather it has merely shifted forms. Whereas previously colonization manifested in the form of sudden warfare and enslavement, now it appears under the guise of subversive language discrimination and subsequent erasure. In order to combat these very sentiments of xenophobia against her native languages, Anzaldúa wrote this very book in order to proudly and authentically present herself and her indigenous, Spanish-speaking heritage.

7.1 In Conversation with Ancient Italy

Similar to how this book presents a unique mixing and hybridization of English, Spanish, and Nahuatal, among other languages, perhaps too the Lex Osca Bantina was intended as a powerful act of resistance amidst the increasing threat of Oscan language extinction. The tablet's proof of Oscan words written in the Latin alphabet bears a similarity to Anzaldúa's transliteration of indigenous words and phrases from Mexican folklore through the modern English alphabet. Similarly, the unique status of the work in representing both the Oscan and Latin language, resonates with Anzaldúa's description of the Chicana identity as being both Mexican and American, while also being neither. In representing the Oscan language through the Latin alphabet, the text gains closer proximity to Latin, while still not being exclusively Latin, and simultaneously distances itself from native Oscan. Therefore, Anzaldúa's work serves as a reminder that the forging of new identities within a fiercely politicized landscape is a fluid, gradual process of isolation and alienation. In this way, it closely greatly resonantes with the

process of Romanization as it is currently understood, and encourages scholars to consider the human perspective beneath such processes.

Similarly, Anzaldua's discussion of the existence of the Borderlands as a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" resonates greatly with the experiences of Italian peninsula residents during the Bacchanalian crisis. Although many allies were not previously subject to Roman political relations or interference, they suddenly found themselves under investigation by Roman magistrates, though they lacked formal Roman citizenship and the related privileges. Considering this situation through Anzaldúa's lens encourages scholars to critically reassess situations which may appear benign. In her writing, Anzaldúa emphasizes the emotionally detrimental nature of this situation in the centuries after its creation. A close reading of Anzaldúa's text reminds readers of the interpersonal trauma and xenophobia present even within non-violent forms of colonization. Though the gradual expression of increasing monocultural hegemony may appear a "peaceful" process, it too invokes the creation of rigid power dynamics and systems of oppression which in fact may perpetuate even more violence at an individual, micro-level. As seen in the interlude above, the interaction between Anzaldúa and her teacher represents an incredibly traumatic microaggression committed on an interpersonal level which in many situations would feed further into the culture of aggressive monolingualism which initially provoked this interaction. In this way, it encourages scholars to potentially reframe understandings of "non-violent" colonization and expansion and better assess the variety of interpersonal factors which contributed to the supplantation of Oscan and other indigenous Italian languages by Latin.

In considering the work of Anzaldúa alongside the Lex Osca Bantina, it begs the question of whether the Lex Osca Bantina was an intentional work of linguistic protest. Alternatively, was

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the text a stage in the gradual linguistic death of the Oscan language at the hands of increasing Latin? Although analysis of works of postcolonial theory such as Anzaldúa's unfortunately does not provide the capability to conclusively determine the answer to questions such as these, it does provide the potential to illuminate the lived experiences of these Italian individuals in experiencing a rapidly changing cultural landscape due to Romanization. Reinforcing contemporary postcolonial perspectives written by those experiencing the consequences of colonization emphasizes the human nature within these situations and provides modern scholars with more tools to understand ancient history and a craft a nuanced understanding of past events. Much in the way that learning about ancient history can enable us to glean insight into contemporary events, so too can the analysis of modern perspectives and literature allow us to learn more about the past.

8.0 Conclusion

Though individuals involved in the Bacchanalian Crisis and those who wrote the *Lex Osca Bantina* are long gone, their stories serve as a reminder of humanity's enduring relationship with themes of nuanced colonization and cultural exchange. While modern scholars lack access to many first-hand accounts of Romanization and processes of language death, modern works of postcolonial literature and theory offer the opportunity to reconsider historical perspectives on such events. Engaging in interdisciplinary dialogues across fields and time periods presents the opportunity to critically consider past events and reframe contemporary understandings of them. Furthermore, diversifying the variety of perspectives and works used within historical studies presents even more opportunities to gain insight into world events and also helps cultivate a culture of diversity and inclusivity within historically exclusive fields.

Through consideration of the complex political relations within the ancient Italian peninsula from a postcolonial perspective, one becomes increasingly aware of the presence of such nuanced colonial frameworks. Though gradual, the process of Romanization represented a subversive form of cultural exchange and colonization which resulted in the ultimate supplantion of indigenous legal structures and languages by Latin forms. Contemporary scholars such as Anzaldúa demonstrate the applicability of modern postcolonial theory to the wealth of colonial frameworks within ancient history and underscore the need for informed approaches to such historical analysis.

Within an increasingly globalized society, cross-cultural communication and issues related to migration, xenophobia, and language barriers are now more present than ever. Contemporary conflicts over border patrol, immigration policy and refugee asylum represent just

a handful of ways in which modern society continues to struggle with aspects of human geography and settlement just as in the ancient Mediterranean. In a seemingly post-colonial landscape, critical perspectives on the historical existence of complex cultural relations provide the opportunity as well as the means necessary to more thoroughly assess contemporary representations of oppressive power structures and identity politics and work towards crafting solutions to such systems of inequality. Through the authentic incorporation of a diversity of perspectives into the field of classics, scholars can arrive at greater understandings of the nuanced power dynamics and colonial frameworks which existed within the ancient Mediterranean.

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