

A Greek Poet and Roman Citizenship: Cicero's Pro Archia Poeta and its Reflections on the Roman Attitude towards 'Others'

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Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta* remains as one of the most enduring defenses of the humanities and liberal arts found in classical literature. While defending the poet Archias' right for Roman citizenship, Cicero eulogizes liberal arts and humanities as essential for the wellbeing of the individual and the society. Consequently, the speech had attracted scholarly attention over time, particularly due to its political, cultural and literary significance. However, the present research examines Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta* and its reflection of the Roman attitude towards 'others'; an aspect that is critical to the understanding of the work itself, as well as certain modern sensibilities associated with citizenship, migration and identity. Methodologically, the study involves the close reading of Cicero's speech in the original Latin as the primary source, along with the consideration of modern scholarly views. Upon close analysis, Cicero's appreciation of Greek literature and admittance of Rome's debt to Greece is apparent throughout the speech. For him Greece is indeed the center of cultural refinement and intellectual vigour. Yet, it is noteworthy that Cicero celebrates Archias more as a poet than a Greek poet. Thereby, he strips off Archias' 'Greekness' to make him appear more 'Roman,' starting with using Archias' Latin name. The very basis of Cicero's argument claims, firstly, that Archias has established himself among the Roman elite, winning their patronage. Secondly, Cicero argues that Archias, through his works, has immortalized the greatness of Rome, thus making Archias' poetic genius a public good conferred on the Romans. Such views appear self-serving for the Roman audience, and possibly used by Cicero due to his undertaking: arguing for a Greek poet's 'worthiness' for Roman Citizenship. Yet, the very fact that Cicero believes such arguments would affect his audience itself is symptomatic of certain racial bias existing in his contemporary Roman society.

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