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Foreign Tyrants: Greco-Roman Jewish Epideictic Rhetoric in Mark 10:42-43a

Aaron Ricker, January 22, 2009

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Abstract

The bitter mention of foreign tyrants in Mark 10:42–43a has long been interpreted as an accurate description of "pagan" life that contrasted with life in ideal Christian community. More recently, it has been read as a piece of rhetoric aimed at imperial Rome. These explanations are too simple, since they do not take into account the fact that contrasting ideal authority with stereotyped foreign tyranny was an established habit within imperial Roman rhetorical culture itself. I argue that the passage is best understood as Jewish participation in this Greco-Roman tradition. This study traces the evolution of the stereotyped image of foreign tyranny in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Greco-Roman Jewish rhetoric, and suggests that the rhetorical strategy of Mark 10:42–43a parallels the selective and strategic use of the image in the Greco-Roman Jewish work of Josephus, and represents a similar simultaneous resistance and accommodation in the face of Roman imperial culture.

Résumé

La référence amère aux tyrans étrangers dans Marc 10:42–43a a longtemps été interprétée comme une description fidèle de la vie païenne, laquelle contrastait avec celle de la communauté chrétienne idéale. Plus récemment, le passage a été lu comme une attaque rhétorique contre l'empire romain. Ces explications sont trop simples, car la rhétorique romaine elle-même avait l'habitude de faire ressortir le contraste entre l'autorité légitime et la tyrannie étrangère. Cette étude soutient que Marc 10:42-43a est mieux compris comme participation juive aux habitudes rhétoriques gréco-romaines. J'expose brièvement l'évolution de l'image de la tyrannie étrangère dans la tradition rhétorique grecque, romaine, juive, et juive gréco-romaine. Je suggère que la stratégie de Marc 10:42–43a est analogue à l'usage sélectif et stratégique de cette image dans l'ouvrage juif greco-romain de Josèphe, et réprésente, comme lui, à la fois la résistance et l'adaptation face à la culture romaine impériale.

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1. Foreign Tyranny in Mark 10:42-43a

The teaching on greatness and authority in Mark 10:42–43a is framed with heavy irony. The Markan Jesus has just insisted that those who wish to inherit the kingdom of God must become like the little children the disciples wanted to send away (10:13–16). He has just instructed a rich and respectable seeker to become perfect by becoming poor on purpose (10:17–22). He has just listed "persecutions" as a reward for following him (10:29–30), and informed his disciples that "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (10:31). Even the Son of Man is destined for this paradoxical kind of greatness, since he will be abused and killed once they reach Jerusalem (10:32–34). This narrative setup makes the disciples look particularly bad when, in the very next verse, they immediately begin to scheme and fight over their own relative greatness and authority. Their stubborn misunderstanding necessitates yet another paradoxical speech:

> James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward
> to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do
> for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to
> them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And
> they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right
> hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus
> said to them, "You do not know what you are
> asking" . . . When the ten heard this, they began to
> be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them

and said to them, "You know that among the
Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers
lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants
over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever
wishes to become great among you must be your
servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you
must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to
be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom
for many" (Mark 10:35–45).[1]

The narrative moves on from this scene with typical Markan brevity. The
next sentence simply says, "They came to Jericho" (10:46), and begins a new
pericope. For readers privileged with the time to stop and reflect, though, the
words of the Markan Jesus can be arresting. "You know that among the Gentiles
those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones
are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you" (10:42–43a). Should the reader
conclude that early Christian communities were deeply anti-authoritarian, or
merely that some Christians wanted them to be conceived of as such? In other
words, is the phrase "it is not so among you (οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν) a boast
or a wish? How can the Markan Jesus simply assume that the "you" he is
addressing will simply "know" that authoritarianism and tyranny are typically
Gentile problems? Was the gospel of Mark not written for Gentiles too, and does
its narrative not include Jewish authorities among Jesus' enemies? Who is really
being disciplined by comparison to whom here? Why frame the question of
legitimate authority in terms of foreignness at all?

This study will help lay a foundation for addressing such questions, by
boiling them down to one basic question: How would the saying have been
understood by its first audiences, given the dominant rhetorical habits and
expectations of the Roman Empire? It will become clear that its simultaneously
self-congratulatory and disciplinary construction of illegitimate authority as a
foreign problem makes sense within the context of these Roman rhetorical habits.
I will argue that acknowledging this fact can address a critical lacuna in the study
of Mark 10:42–43, by bringing together an awareness of the Gospel's

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[1] All biblical quotations in English are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

relationships with Roman imperial power and an awareness of its relationships with imperial Roman rhetoric.

"Rome" and "rhetoric" have both been moving closer to the centre of New Testament criticism in the past few decades, but their spheres of influence have not yet fully overlapped in scholarly understandings of Mark 10:42. Liberation theologians and postcolonial biblical critics have read the saying on foreign tyrants through a lens called "Rome" (i.e. through its location within Roman imperial power and culture), and literary and Socio-Rhetorical critics have read it through a lens called "Rhetoric" (i.e. through its location within theories and practices of representation and persuasion). No one, though, has incorporated these useful lenses into a single set of interpretive glasses. That is, no one has read the anti-tyrannical/anti-foreign rhetoric of Mark 10:42 in the context of the anti-tyrannical/anti-foreign rhetoric of the dominant Greco-Roman rhetorical culture of the first-century Roman Empire. This is the approach I will take here. The saying on foreign tyrants is best understood, I will argue, as a piece of Greco-Roman Jewish rhetoric that works partly by appropriating the power of the image of the "tyrant" as developed in imperial Greco-Roman rhetoric. In order to avoid confusion, I will first review the shape and function of the interpretive lenses of "Rhetoric" and "Rome," and define what I mean when I use them here.

1.2. "Rhetoric" and the New Testament

"Rhetorical criticism of the New Testament has been steadily gaining acceptance and momentum in the last few decades," according to Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser.[2] Their 1994 annotated bibliography on the topic turned out to be 206 pages long. Carl Joachim Classen's *Rhetorical Criticism in New Testament*

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[2] Duane Watson and Alan Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (New York: Brill, 1994), 101. See also D. Watson, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliography," *JETS* 31/4 (1988): 465–472; and D. Watson, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliographical Update," *JETS* 33/4 (1990): 513–524.

Criticism revealed in 2002 that scholarly interest in the question was still widespread, and still increasing.[3]

As most such studies of this trend rightly note, though, "rhetoric" is a wide category with varying emphases. It was normal, for example, in the first centuries of Christian history, for classically educated leaders to read the New Testament with the rules and patterns of classical rhetoric held loosely in mind:[4] "The application of rhetorical criticism to the New Testament has a long history. It extends back to the early Church Fathers who, trained in rhetoric, read many New Testament texts in order to analyze the persuasive style of the New Testament."[5] As Dennis L. Stamps noted in the *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, this classics-minded kind of rhetorical criticism enjoyed something of a "'revival' . . . in the late twentieth century."[6] Amos Wilder and E. A. Judge argued powerfully for it in the 1960s, for example,[7] as did H. D. Betz in the late 70s and early 80s.[8]

The "revival" of rhetorical criticism of the New Testament also included an interest in "rhetoric" more generally. W. Wuellner, and others who did this kind of rhetorical criticism, wanted the focus to include patterns of persuasion not necessarily related to classical forms.[9] This wide-focus rhetorical criticism is still alive and well today, in the work of people like Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins.[10] This variety of approach within the rhetorical critical approach means that, as Stamps concludes, "there is no single overarching methodology that can be found in the current practice of rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. Critical practice depends on whether one understands rhetoric as a purely historical phenomenon identified with ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical

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[3] Carl J. Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 2 n. 3.

[4] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 101–104.

[5] Dennis L. Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; New York: Brill, 1997), 221.

[6] Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 221–222.

[7] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 107.

[8] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 107–108.

[9] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 107–108; Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism,"222–223.

[10] See, for example, Burton T. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1989).

convention, as a universal communicative perspective identified with modern analyses of argumentation, or as some combination of the two."[11]

From my point of view, though, analyses of New Testament rhetoric generally are most convincing when they take into account Greco-Roman rhetoric specifically. I agree therefore with the general approach of G. A. Kennedy, who tried to give this critical point of view a more concrete method in the 1980s.[12] I do not agree with his insistence upon the identification of discrete rhetorical units,[13] since (then as now) principles and habits of rhetoric can work without any such clear-cut lines. Kennedy himself admits, after all, that "[i]n general, identification of genre is not a crucial factor in understanding how rhetoric actually works in units of the New Testament."[14] I am much more interested in his general insistence upon taking classical rhetoric seriously in studying New Testament rhetoric: "What we need to do is try to hear [New Testament] words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them, and that involves some understanding of classical rhetoric."[15] I appreciate, for this reason, Hauser and Watson's proposed focus upon Greco-Roman "rhetorical convention": "Knowledge of ancient rhetorical convention helps us place the New Testament amidst its Greco-Roman oral and written culture, and to appreciate the role this placement can play in interpretation."[16] This kind of reading is preferable, in my eyes, because it does not need to quit in the event of a complete failure to find a place for a given passage within some precise rhetorical taxonomy. It does not even necessitate a clear match between a given text and any official (i.e. written) ancient rhetorical theory, which seems a very sensible approach, considering that (as I outline below) written evidence of Greco-Roman rhetorical theory predating the New Testament is very scarce, and considering that ancient rhetorical habit and ancient rhetorical theory may often have differed anyway.

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[11] Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 223.
[12] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 109.
[13] George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33–38.
[14] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 33.
[15] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 10.
[16] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 109–110.

I take, then, in this study, the point of view summarized by Watson and Hauser as situated somewhere between Wuellner's and Kennedy's. I assume that rhetorical criticism of the New Testament should include the consideration of Greco-Roman rhetoric specifically, but not limit itself to considering ancient rhetorical theory *per se*: "This approach assumes that the writers of the New Testament were familiar with rhetoric either from formal education, or interaction with oral and written hellenistic culture which was permeated with rhetorical practice. This rhetoric is encapsulated in ancient rhetorical handbooks, school exercises, written speeches, and letters."[17]

This approach makes sense to me. If the goal is to understand New Testament rhetoric, other examples of ancient rhetoric will be every bit as useful as records of ancient rhetorical theory. Paying close attention to both theory and practice—as well as their interactions—is the best way to avoid developing simplistic or one-sided impressions of the ways in which rhetoric worked and/or was thought to work. I would in fact *add* to the list of sources above, in order to include for consideration *any* examples of distinctively Greco-Roman patterns of persuasion to be found in the Roman Empire's literature, historiography, epigraphy, coins, theatre, etc. Of course, this wide a focus on Greco-Roman patterns of persuasion necessitates an interest in the culture (political, religious, oral, and written) of the Roman Empire generally. This is, therefore, the second interpretive lens in my interpretive goggles—the interpretive lens of "Rome."

1.3. "Rome" and the New Testament

Scholarly interest in the role of the Roman Empire in New Testament meaning-making has undergone its own explosion within the last century. At the most general level, studies with names like *The New Testament in its First Century*

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[17] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 110.

Setting,[18] *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context*,[19] and *Early Christianity and Classical Culture*[20] are increasingly common. This growing interest in the Greco-Roman "background" of the New Testament includes the growing interest noted above in Greco-Roman rhetoric, but also a related interest in "politics" *per se*. Books with titles like *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*,[21] *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins*,[22] *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonial Studies and New Testament Studies*,[23] or *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: an Essential Guide*[24] are even more increasingly common than the rhetorical studies just mentioned.[25] I think here, too, of Richard Horsley's *Paul and Empire* (1997) and *Jesus and Empire* (2003), Warren Carter's *Matthew and Empire* (2002), Peter Oakes' *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (2002), and others.

I have placed "background" and "politics" in scare-quotes in the above paragraph to highlight the importance of approaching the New Testament itself as a source of examples of first-century religio-political and rhetorical culture, not as a timeless textual island that can sometimes be elucidated by reference to first-

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[18] P. J. Williams, A. D. Clarke, P. M. Head, and D. Instone-Brewer, eds., *The New Testament in its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B.W. Winter on His 65th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[19] John Fotopoulos, ed., *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (NovTSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[20] John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbricht, and L. Michael White, eds., *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[21] James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999).

[22] C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

[23] Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonial Studies and New Testament Studies* (BMW 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007).

[24] Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: an Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).

[25] See also Richard Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg,: Trinity, 1997); Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001); Peter Oakes, *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), etc.

century political and rhetorical culture. The error of this latter reading has been summed up by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (among others):

> New Testament writings, especially the Gospels, are defined as products of doctrinal, especially Christological, controversy rather than as missionary literature written in order to promote the Christian movement and to proclaim Jesus Christ in the propagandistic language and pattern of the time . . . This public-societal dimension of the New Testament problems and writings could be regained, however, if the religious-cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world would no longer be considered solely as 'background material' for the New Testament writings. Instead the early Christian movement should be viewed as rooted in the attempt to attract and convince persons of the Hellenistic world, be they already Christians, Jews, or pagans.[26]

Schüssler Fiorenza's summary here underlines the assumptions that function as my point of departure: I assume that understanding New Testament documents includes understanding their "political" and "rhetorical" origins in competitive cultural production and community propaganda. I further assume that the New Testament will, as rhetoric aimed at attracting and convincing the "Jews" and "pagans" of "the Hellenistic world," naturally employ traditional Hellenistic and Jewish habits of persuasion, usually without differentiating between them in anything like a modern way. I refer again to Watson and Hauser: "The rhetoric of the New Testament derives from at least three broad and interconnected sources: 1) its Jewish heritage, 2) that heritage independent and dependent upon Greco-Roman rhetoric, and 3) more directly upon Greco-Roman rhetoric itself."[27]

With these categories in mind, I will argue that the image of the tyrant came to Rome from Hellenistic rhetoric with a built-in xenophobic connotation, and that the rhetoricians (in the widest sense of the word) of the Empire—specifically, in this case, its Greco-Roman Jews—made the most of that

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[26] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 1–2.

[27] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 109.

xenophobic connotation in their own use of the image, as they defined themselves in contradistinction to outsiders and unwanted insiders. It is in this sense that I call the image of the foreign tyrant in the New Testament a Greco-Roman Jewish rhetorical image.

I will begin by outlining the historical development and function of the image of the tyrant in Greek, and then Roman, rhetorical culture. I will then analyze Mark 10:42 and its parallels as attempts to join this evolving, polemical conversation about "foreignness" and "tyranny." This approach to Mark 10:42 is, as far as I know, entirely new, so I will not offer a "History of the Problem" here. As far as existing scholarship is concerned, there is no problem! The saying against foreign tyrants is explained, again and again, as a simple prohibition against the exercise of abusive power within the Christian community, with a simple image of Gentile political excess—usually Roman imperial excess—used as a foil. This study will counter, or at the very least complicate, this easy reading by highlighting the way in which the saying's alignment with Greco-Roman anti-tyrannical rhetoric entails a tacit, tensely negotiated acceptance of certain key Roman imperial values and assumptions—a kind of negotiated rhetorical alignment with Hellenized Rome that paints a rather convenient implicit picture of "good" Christians as the best Jews and Romans, and "bad" Christians, Jews, and Romans as unenlightened barbarians. The outline of this argument runs as shown below. The general categories listed (Hellenistic/Roman/Jewish) are, of course, not meant to be imagined as either monolithic or airtight. They will often overlap, co-evolve, and bleed one into another, since (as will become clear below) the texts and traditions they represent often did.

Section 1. Greek Images of Foreign Tyranny

This section will trace the development in Greek rhetorical culture (especially Athenian tragedy) of the image of tyranny as a foreign problem. It will be argued that the rhetorical construction of "barbarian" and "tyrannical" enemies to be resisted at home and abroad was integral to the emerging self-understanding, self-justification, and self-policing of "Greek democracy."

Section 2. Roman Images of Foreign Tyranny

This section will trace the evolution of the Greek image of the foreign tyrant within the rhetorical culture of Republican and Imperial Rome. It will be argued that the image was merged with Roman tradition in a way that adopted and adapted Greek tradition creatively, in order to serve the same purposes of self-definition and self-justification for the dominant Roman "anti-tyrannical" culture.

Section 3. Jewish Images of Foreign Tyranny

This section gives an overview of the peculiarly "Jewish" rhetorical traditions (for example, the traditions represented within the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint) to which first-century Jewish and Christian writers had access when it came to thinking about foreigners and tyranny. It will be argued that these traditions were conveniently similar to the Greco-Roman traditions available in the first century's dominant imperial culture.

Section 4. Greco-Roman Jewish Images of Foreign Tyranny

This section traces the intersection of identifiably Greco-Roman and Jewish rhetorical traditions about foreign tyranny, primarily in the work of Josephus. It will be argued that this rhetorical alloy provided the same opportunities for self-definition and self-defence seen in Roman culture, through the same process of creative adoption and adaptation. Special attention is given to the way Josephus draws on Roman rhetoric in treating the "tyranny" of Herod and Palestinian "banditry."

Section 5. Markan Images of Foreign Tyranny

This section analyzes the anti-tyrannical/anti-foreign rhetoric of Mark as another example of the Greco-Roman Jewish rhetoric described in Section 4. It will be argued that the gospel of Mark uses the rhetoric of foreign tyranny in self-definition and self-defence as creatively as Josephus did, and to the same net

rhetorical effect, as for example in its own treatment of Herod's "tyranny" and Palestinian "banditry."

Section 6. Notes on Implications and the Future of the Problem

This section sketches out my overall conception of the phenomenon described in this study, and suggests some implications. The study of Mark looks quite different if one accepts that the gospel is simultaneously accommodating and resisting Rome through a selective and creative participation in Roman political rhetoric. The function of the saying and of the Roman rhetoric in which it engages will also look different again in Matthew and Luke, as they build their own rhetorical paths of accommodation and self-assertion.

Section 2. Greek Images of Foreign Tyranny

2.1. The Development of Greek Images of Foreign Tyranny

The first thing one needs to know about the ancestry of the Greek image of the tyrant is the fact that it is a politically interested and historically contingent image, and therefore a complex and disputed image. As Sian Lewis noted in introducing his volume *Ancient Tyranny*, the historians of the ancient world decided who was and who was not a "tyrant."[1] The terms "tyrant" and "tyranny" are, from their earliest uses onward, contested, relative, clear only in the eye of the beholder, and evolving.[2] The focus of Lewis's volume is quite different from mine here. *Ancient Tyranny* casts a wide, loose net, with essayists addressing any question they like concerning "tyranny" in the Greco-Roman world. My focus is much narrower, since I want to trace 1) the development of the Greek image of the foreign tyrant in the literary culture of fifth-century BCE Athens, 2) its importation and adaptation within the literary culture of second-century BCE Rome, and 3) its first appropriation by Greco-Roman Jews in the first centuries BCE and CE. Lewis and his contributors do, however, offer invaluable introductory information on the general contours of the question in *Ancient Tyranny*, and I will depend upon Lewis heavily in painting the first broad strokes here.

"Tyranny," writes Lewis, "was a malleable concept, and could be divorced from or assimilated with kingship, and conceptualized as either the opposite of

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[1] Sian Lewis, "Introduction," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 2.

[2] Lewis, "Introduction," 4–5.

democracy or an extreme form of democratic expression, according to the needs of the time."[3] "[T]here can," Lewis concludes, "be no textbook definition of tyranny," because historians—and rulers themselves—were continually using it to define themselves in relation to power, and in defining the very idea of power.[4] Lewis hammers the point home again and again: "It should be obvious that in antiquity tyranny was not a monolithic idea, but an idea created and constantly adapted by historians, with multivalent meaning and application."[5]

The rhetorical situation is complicated, Lewis suggests, by the fact that many modern historians misconstrue tyranny as a sad but necessary stage on the way from Greek monarchy to Greek democracy,[6] and finally by the fact that if one attempts to isolate the actual historical moment of the origin of Greek tyranny out of monarchy, it is "tyrants all the way down"; there does not seem to be any way to gain a Greek monarchy other than seizing it as a "good" tyrant from a cruel and undeserving "bad" tyrant.[7] An ancient tyrant is, for all of these reasons, hard to distinguish clearly from an ancient Greek monarch.[8] To add to the confusion, the word "tyrant" (τύραννος) was not even always necessarily negative. Gods and the great kings they were said to have chosen could be good (or at the very least ambivalent) incarnations of "tyranny."[9] It should also be noted that as "tyrant" became an insult (in ways outlined below), calling an extremely powerful but questionable ruler a tyrant in so many words became a rather dangerous practice. It became much easier (again, as will become clear below) to accuse one's opponents of tyranny through insinuation. Drawing attention to real or alleged details in a political leaders' lives that associated them with the tyrants of literature or the stage (a foreign bodyguard here, an ill-controlled physical appetite there, a domineering mother, a purple robe, etc.) became a favourite way to accuse such leaders of being tyrants themselves. All of these words and

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[3] Lewis, "Introduction," 6.
[4] Lewis, "Introduction," 11.
[5] Lewis, "Introduction," 13.
[6] Lewis, "Introduction," 6.
[7] Lewis, "Introduction," 8.
[8] Lewis, "Introduction," 4–9.
[9] Maurice Pope, "The Democratic Character of Aeschylus' Agamemnon," in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy* (ed. Martin Cropp et al; Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986), 13–15.

images—not just the actual word τύραννος—are therefore relevant to the development of stereotypical accusations of tyranny.

I mentioned that the Greek image of the tyrant eventually took on a clearer—and more clearly negative—form. This took place in the context of the debates attending the birth of Athenian "democracy" in the fifth century BCE. Ironically, it seems to have been the very ambiguity and rhetorical plasticity of the idea that contributed to its own partial definition and codification, if scholars like James McGlew and Linette Mitchell are right. Their analyses of the idea's development suggest that "it was because the idea of tyranny could be constantly reshaped and reinterpreted in relation to democracy and oligarchy that it remained central to Athenian discourse."[10] Put to this particular use, the terms "tyrant" and "tyranny" could maintain and even sharpen their polemical edge, but they could not remain perfectly plastic for long, since they were indeed apparently central in the discourse of Athens, which had its own pressing and specific needs that shaped the word accordingly: In fifth-century Athenian culture, everything from theatre to vase-painting was brought to bear in working out the idea that tyranny—especially Persian tyranny—was the dark "opposite" of Athenian democracy.[11]

The Persian connection is especially interesting for our purposes here, since it marks the earliest documentable stage of a longstanding set of political and artistic (i.e., in the broadest sense, "rhetorical") associations between the "foreign" or "barbaric" on one hand and the "tyrannical" on the other—an association that persists into imperial Roman rhetoric and thus looks highly relevant in building any clear understanding of the rhetoric against foreign tyrants in Mark 10:42 and its Synoptic parallels.

The development of the very idea of "the barbarian" seems, in fact, intimately related to the development of "the tyrant," as both images were worked into shape simultaneously as part of the idea of a negative—*Persian*—alternative to Athenian democracy. Edith Hall, in *The Invention of the Barbarian* (a careful

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[10] Lewis, "Introduction," 12.

[11] Lynette Mitchell, "Tyrannical Oligarchs at Athens," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 179.

and interesting work to which I am very much indebted in this section) traced the progress of this development in the fifth century's pro-Athenian tragedies, concluding: "The opposite of barbarian despotism is not a vague model of the generalized Greek city-state, but quite specifically democracy, and rhetoric in praise of democracy was an Athenian invention."[12] This generally anti-*tyrannical* "rhetoric" that first found its voice in Greek tragedy was, it should be remembered, also specifically anti-*Persian*: "The invention of the barbarian in the early years of the fifth century was a response to the need for an alliance against Persian expansionism and the imposition of pro-Persian tyrants."[13] The fact that Persia supported and sometimes set up autocratic tyrants in the Greek world and elsewhere, along with the fact that Persia's own autocratic system could be rhetorically associated with such tyranny, meant that as Athenian democracy spread, tyrants and tyranny became associated with Persia and supporters of Persia.[14]

The evolution of this association of foreigners—especially Persians—with tyranny is first noticeable, as noted already by Hall above, in the theatre, and it should be stressed that it was an evolution, not a clear image created *ex nihilo*. There is considerable overlap in the plays' ideas of good and bad "tyranny," and the word itself could go either way as the Athenians worked out their ways to separate "the hereditary *basileus* (who might be good) from the self-made *tyrannos* (who was probably bad)."[15] Ideas of barbarism were factored into these tricky equations as well. As Hall writes:

> It must be conceded . . . that *turannos* and its
> cognates can in tragedy be used of an almost benign
> rule, as can *anax* and *basileus*, but they frequently
> bear pejorative overtones. The implications must be
> judged in each case according to context. Where a
> barbarian leader is called *basileus* in contrast with
> Greek generals it can hardly be coincidental, and
> where the word *turannos* is used in conjunction

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[12] Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Self-definition through Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 16.
[13] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 16.
[14] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 58–59.
[15] Pope, "The Democratic Character of Aeschylus' Agamemnon," 13–15, 19.

> with other items from the "vocabulary of
> barbarism" the implication is that the ruler, whether
> or not he is himself a barbarian, is a tyrant after the
> model of the oriental despot.[16]

This strategy of associating "bad" insiders with the stereotyped "bad" ways of outsiders is easily understandable in a world where petty tyrants actually were adopted or installed by Persia. Collaboration with autocratic Persia, rewarded/maintained by autocratic rule, could easily be seen in such a world as "acting like a Persian." As Hall points out, though, this image of "acting like a Persian" could also be used to condemn non-Greeks:

> Had he lived, Hector would have inherited, like
> Xerxes, a "tyranny like that of a god" (*isotheos
> turannis, Tro.* 1168–9), in contrast with
> Agamemnon who, it is stressed in Orestes, was
> "deemed worthy to rule Hellas and was no
> *turannos*" (1167–8). In *IT* Agamemnon ruled the
> army, but Thoas is a *turannos* (17, 1020). This
> contrast, apparent in many plays, is most fully
> developed in *Rhesus*, where the Greek kings are
> designated either by their names alone (Menelaus,
> 174; Achilles, 182) or collectively as "generals"
> (*stratelatai*, 173, 495). In contrast, Hector and
> Rhesus are always *anax* or *basileus*. When Greece
> is described it is merely "Hellas" or "Argos and
> Hellas" (477), but Rhesus and Hector each rule a
> *turannis* (406, 484, see also 388). The Greeks' epic
> kings have become fifth- or fourth-century generals,
> while the barbarian kings have turned into oriental
> despots.[17]

The Athenian theatre's association of Athens with democracy and barbarians with tyranny was not always connotative and subtle, or even particularly artful. Mitchell notes that "for Euripides, tyranny was a 'barbarian' constitution (Heracleid. 423)," plain and simple.[18] Hall's review includes the example of a tragedy in which a character begins his speech with the words, "O Tyranny, beloved of barbarian men!"[19] Barbarians in the Greek plays call their

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[16] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 155.
[17] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 154.
[18] Mitchell, "Tyrannical Oligarchs at Athens," 178.
[19] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 192.

leaders "tyrants" without shame, and prostrate themselves ostentatiously before them. In *Phoenissae* and *Orestes*, they even take the time to remind the audience with little speeches that this is what they as barbarians do.[20] A play did not even have to involve barbarians in order to feature this kind of reminder: "Barbarian tyranny became a rhetorical *topos* in the repertoire of the tragic poets, and is often discussed in general terms or in plays with no barbarian characters."[21] Hall offers the example of Demophon in illustrating this rhetorical tendency: "The cultural importance of defining democracy by comparison with barbarian monarchy or tyranny is further demonstrated by the numerous occasions on which it occurs in tragic rhetoric, even in plays with no barbarians in sight. In *Heraclidae* the significantly-named Demophon, 'voice of the people' [insists:] 'I do not hold a tyranny like the barbarians.'"[22] In short, Athenian Greek tragedy gave a very public stage and voice to the grand project of imagining democracy as non-barbarian, and therefore laudably, distinctively Greek.[23] As Hall notes, this rhetorical project was insistent and far-reaching: "The breathtaking anachronism of the democratic procedures imported into the heroic Greek cities of tragedy (the voting at the Argive assembly in Aeschylus' *Supplices*, Theseus' exposition of democratic theory in Euripedes' play by the same name, the apparently kingless city of Athens of Eumenides, the process of debate and voting reported in Euripides' *Orestes*) found its counterpart in denunciation of the tyrannical regimes of the barbarians."[24]

It seems reasonably, clear then, that Athenian tragedy set the stage for Greek rhetoric about tyrants and tyranny, but there no lack of voices in the chorus. James McGlew has pointed out, for example, "the part that Attic comedy played in this political and cultural effort to keep the idea and image of tyranny alive and

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[20] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 156.
[21] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 154.
[22] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 193; see also 154.
[23] For more on this rhetorical tragic antithesis, see Pope, "The Democratic Character of Aeschylus' Agamemnon," 19. See also Simon Goldhill, "Modern Critical Approaches to Greek Tragedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (ed. P. E. Easterling; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 344.
[24] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 192.

to use it as a political tool."[25] Greek writers and philosophers adopted the image as well, as Susan Mattern notes when she reviews the development of imperial Roman ideas of foreigners in *Rome and the Enemy*: "Herodotus and other fifth-century authors portray them [the Persians] as enslaved to a despotic tyrant, while the Greeks are proud of the "liberty" associated with their own civic institutions of the polis. The author of the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*, for example, agrees: Asians are likely to be more cowardly and less warlike than Europeans, because of their political structure."[26] Claude Mossé has written about the way Plato used this image of the tyrant from Herodotus and Greek tragedy.[27] "From Plato onwards," writes classicist Ingo Gildenhard, "philosophers drew on tragic imagery to endow their argument with special vividness. Suffice it to mention *Republic* 577b1 where the tyrant appears as the theatrical man par excellence [and] *Letter* 1, 309d2–310a, where the author enhances the plausibility of his diatribe against Dionysius with choice quotations from tragic scripts."[28]

The association of the alien and the barbaric with tyranny also caught on in Greek literary culture of all kinds, with the help of these tragic images. For example, the originally anti-Persian idea found in the tragedies that tyranny and support for tyrants come from outside contributed to the convention of making a tyrant's bodyguards foreigners (*Hieron* 2.7–11, 5.3, 6.5). Hall notes that "when Thucydides describes how Pausanias succumbed to oriental luxury and despotism he attaches particular significance to the way he isolated himself and flaunted his Median and Egyptian bodyguards."[29] I note that Aristotle later simply accepts this image as fact (*Politics* 1311a). Aristotle's acceptance of this stereotype looks like an acceptance of the wider Greek stereotyped association of tyranny with

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[25] James McGlew, "The Comic Pericles," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 164.

[26] Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 73.

[27] Claude Mossé, "Plutarch and the Sicilian Tyrants," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 189.

[28] Ingo Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny: Greek thoughts on Caesar in Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* in early 49," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 199.

[29] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 156.

barbarism generally, as when he contrasts (foreign) tyrannical forms of authority with benign (Greek) shepherding forms of authority (*Ethics* 8.10–11).

In discussing this intimate relationship between elite philosophical ideas of tyranny and rhetorical or artistic images of tyranny, I think we should also note that even when warning *against* democracy, Plato and Aristotle use the frightening image of the tyrant, who represents monarchy minus law (*Politics* 1285a2–8) and who is known, Plato writes, for the rabble-rousing practices of "hinting at the wiping out of debt and the dividing up of land" (*Republic* 8.565e–566a). This perceived threat of a populist, pandering brand of tyranny will move to the centre of the discussion in the aristocratic worries of Roman rhetoric, and will in fact be seen to merge (in Cicero) with the xenophobic thrust of the Greek rhetoric. Interestingly, though, the xenophobia will be directed toward Greece itself!

The main point to be made here is two-fold. First, I want to stress the fact that the anti-Persian origins of Athenian rhetoric about tyranny helped give the rhetoric a strong and lasting anti-foreign flavour, and that over time "tyrants" and "tyrannies" in Greek rhetoric "become exclusively identified with the non-Greek."[30] Secondly, I want to stress that in practice the association of foreigners with tyranny meant that Greek rhetoric condemning tyrannical outsiders could be used by Greek insiders to critique other Greek insiders, by accusing them (explicitly or implicitly) of "acting like foreigners." I will outline my remaining evidence and argument for these points quickly.

2.2 Greek versus Barbarian, Democrat versus Tyrant

I have already given a few examples of the ways in which Athenian dread and contempt concerning tyrants could go hand-in-hand with dread and contempt concerning foreigners. I want now to underline the systemic nature of this association. I am very indebted in this section, therefore, to the work of Hall. As

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[30] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 13.

she points out, the Athenian theatre's "rhetoric around the antithesis of Greek and barbarian, democrat and despot"[31] succeeded in tying developing Greek xenophobia and tyrannophobia[32] up together in a tight ideological and artistic knot. Hall notes, for example, that Plato assumed barbarian tyrants to be inherently incapable of friendship (Gorgias 510b–c),[33] a prejudice that takes for granted a "natural" barbarian inclination toward tyranny and away from meaningful reconciliation with anti-tyrannical Greeks. "Closely related to the concept of barbarian tyranny was the idea that the Greeks' antipathy towards the rest of the world was irresoluble, a fact of nature."[34]

Hall offers numerous examples of these ideas about foreigners and tyranny working together. The example of Helen in Athenian tragedy is a good one: "One of the reasons Hecuba gives for Helen's elopement in *Troades* is that she wanted to receive *proskynesis* from the barbarians,"[35] Hall notes. This "natural" and "normal" tendency of barbarians toward slavish political systems did not necessarily work for her, though: "Helen, stranded in Egypt, finds her status as good as servile, since 'amongst barbarians all are slaves except a single man' (*Eur. Hel.* 276)."[36] Hall concludes, based upon these types of literary assumptions (both explicit and implicit), that "it is in the contrast between democracy and despotism that the most conscious and powerful contrasts between Hellene and barbarian are drawn in tragedy as elsewhere."[37] I give her the last word here on this xenophobic/tyrannophobic co-development in Greek rhetorical culture: "By far the most important area in which Greek and barbarian are polarized in classical Greek rhetoric is political. In the works of the tragedians, historians, and orators, the democratic Athenian ideal is insistently defined and applauded by comparison with the tyranny thought to characterize most barbarian societies."[38]

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[31] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 17.
[32] This is A. M. Duff's term for the elite Greco-Roman mood (or pose) of borderline-paranoid vigilance against encroaching tyranny. It will be discussed in the section on Roman images of foreign tyranny.
[33] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 194.
[34] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 195.
[35] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 156.
[36] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 193.
[37] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 192.
[38] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 13.

As mentioned already, though, this comparison with images of barbarian tyrants—imagined as quintessentially un-Greek—served not only as a kind of elite Greek self-congratulation, but also a kind of elite Greek self-policing, and I turn now to this slightly subtler function of the rhetoric.

2.3. Insiders Condemned by Rhetorical Association with Barbaric and Tyrannical Outsiders

One good early example of Greek rhetoric about foreign tyranny serving to criticize the "barbaric" and "tyrannical" behaviour of people much closer to home is found in Herodotus.[39] As Gregory Nagy notes in his book *Pindar's Homer*, Herodotus' story is very hard on Persia, painting them as a clear example of foreign tyranny, and yet in his story "the way in which the Asians were wrong corresponds to the way in which the Athenian Empire was wrong."[40] Herodotus manages to criticize Athens implicitly by demonizing Persia explicitly.

> When the Athenians had at first renounced sole hegemony of the Hellenic states allied against Persia, Herodotus says, they avoided *stasis emphulos* "intrasocietal conflict" that would have destroyed all Hellas (8.3.2). Herodotus is at least implying, then, that the Athenians then caused precisely such a disaster by seizing sole hegemony later, with the emergence of the Athenian Empire. In this light the final action of the Histories, an implicitly barbaric deed committed by the father of Pericles . . . signals for the Athenians the threat of hubris from within, not without. In this light even the initial guilty act of the Histories, the aggression of the Lydian "tyrant" Croesus against Hellenic

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[39] I am indebted here to Ellen Aitken, who directed me to the work of Gregory Nagy.
[40] Gregory Nagy, *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 273.

cities, figures as an implicit warning to the Athenians.[41]

According to Herodotus, Croesus the "tyrant" (1.6.1) and "barbarian" (1.6.2) had wrongly reduced Greek cities to paying tribute (1.6.2). As Nagy notes, though, the later Athenian Empire also did exactly this.[42] Thus Herodotus' critique of Croesus here could very easily be seen as an implied critique of Athenian "tyranny" as well. Herodotus is, we should remember, on Athens' side. He calls the Athenians *sōtēres* (7.139.5) because they resisted Persia. But this very support on his part only highlights "the ambiguity that is being set up by his *historiā*: the city that once freed the Greeks from tyranny now threatens to enslave them. The city that became great by overthrowing the tyranny of the *Peisistradidai* (Herodotus 5.78) stand to lose all by imposing tyranny on other Hellenes. The contrast is made all the more effective in that the continuous narrative of the *Histories* stops at 479 B.C.—just before the Athenian Empire begins to take shape."[43]

Greek rhetoric about foreign tyrants in faraway places thus became a way to construct and police elite behaviour closer to home, and Herodotus' account was indeed understood at times in this way. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, Oedipus recycles the images of Persian tyranny found in Herodotus' account in order to criticize another local Greek "threat"—i.e. what he calls the "turannis" of Creon of Thebes.[44] This ability of the Greek image of the foreign tyrant to associate unwanted outsiders with unwanted insiders, and thus criticize both at once, is important for my purposes because it continued in the Roman imperial rhetoric and Greco-Roman Jewish rhetoric (including early Christian rhetoric) that inherited the image. Before proceeding to the Greco-Roman Jewish examples, though, I will now describe the Roman (Republican and Imperial) image of the foreign tyrant.

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[41] Nagy, *Pindar's Homer*, 308.
[42] Nagy, *Pindar's Homer*, 309.
[43] Nagy, *Pindar's Homer*, 310.
[44] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 194.

Section 3. Roman Images of Foreign Tyranny

3.1. The Development of Roman Images of Foreign Tyranny

Roman rhetorical images of tyrants and tyranny are, like the Greek rhetorical images they are built upon, evolving and contested. It is possible, though, to trace distinct patterns in the development of the idea of the tyrant in Roman rhetoric. It should be noted right away that elite Roman culture and Greek culture were not hermetically sealed units, one of which eventually borrowed this image full-formed and ready-made from the other. Although the rhetorical image of the tyrant in question here has deep Greek roots, the fact that Roman and Greek elites had long been involved in an evolving cultural conversation about "tyranny" and "tyrants"[1] means that the Greco-Roman image of the foreign tyrant should not be viewed simply as a sudden or rootless Greek import. Ideas about "bad tyranny" informed Roman ideas of "good" government throughout their republican and imperial developments, for example in the way that "Roman writers [of both republican and imperial sympathies used] the term '*tyrannos*' to describe the Tarquins,"[2] as elite Romans defined their developing political ideals in opposition to their developing cultural memory of ancient Roman monarchy.

The mere fact, though, that Romans used the Greek word *tyrannos* in describing "bad" government (whether alien or local) indicates a debt to Greek

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[1] Lewis, "Introduction," 10.
[2] Lewis, "Introduction," 10.

ideas, and as we have already seen, tyrannophobia and xenophobia work together in Greek rhetoric. As Mattern writes, for example, "Herodotus and other fifth-century authors portray them [the Persians] as enslaved to a despotic tyrant, while the Greeks are proud of the 'liberty' associated with their own civic institutions of the *polis*. The author of the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*, for example, agrees: Asians are likely to be more cowardly and less warlike than Europeans, because of their political structure." Lewis further notes that "[s]imilar rhetoric survives in the Roman period,"[3] and I want now to trace the development of that Roman rhetoric, in its republican and imperial incarnations, in order to illustrate the survival and the evolution of this rhetorical association.

Briefly put, the image of the tyrant that Roman rhetorical culture inherited from the rhetoric of Greek drama, and later from Greek higher learning— including Greek rhetoric *per se*—was reworked by Roman elite culture, in order to define and oppose the perceived "threats" of monarchy from above and/or mob rule from below. The foreign, "barbarian" character of the image of the tyrant was reworked in the process, replacing the image of civilized Greece with the image of a civilized Rome. This process worked hand-in-hand with the Roman elite love-hate relationship with Greek culture generally,[4] and interestingly ended by associating Greek culture with the very kinds of tyranny and barbarism it had constructed with the help of the Greek image of the foreign tyrant. In the following sections, I will trace these developments in detail. Because the media modes involved in this cultural construction (political speeches, popular and public philosophy and education, the theatre, etc.) all shared the same public space, and because they all borrowed from each other as they evolved, I will have to paint a somewhat impressionistic picture. There does not seem to be any strict temporal or logical development here to be traced from instance to instance, only a preponderance of examples that give—once collected and compared—a strong

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[3] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 73.
[4] For more on this love-hate rhetorical relationship, see Peter Jones and Keith Sidwell's *The World of Rome: an Introduction to Roman Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24, and M. L. Clarke's *Rhetoric at Rome* (London: Cohen & West, 1953), 11.

overall impression that the rhetoric of foreign tyranny was very much "in the air" in Roman public culture.

3.2. Roman Republican Images of Foreign Tyranny

In his 1967 article on "The Greek Tyrant and Roman Political Invective of the Late Republic," Roger J. Dunkle notes: "Distinguished commentators on the history of the late Republic . . . have discussed the problem of the charges of *regnum, dominatio,* and *tyrannis* as used in first century BC Roman political invective."[5] According to Dunkle's summary, accusations of "tyranny"— especially Greek tyranny—had become, by the last century before the common era, a "commonplace" of political rhetoric:[6] "Roman orators employed these terms of invective to portray their political enemies as tyrants . . . based on the stereotype of the Greek tyrant."[7] Elsewhere, Dunkle underlines the fact that this rhetorical move was exceedingly popular and clearly, even consciously, "rhetorical":

> In first century B.C. Roman oratory one of the most
> frequently used political commonplaces was the
> charge of *rex, dominus,* or *tyrannus* made against
> one's political enemies in order to discredit them . .
> . All of the most distinguished commentators on the
> history of the late Republic such as L.R. Taylor, R.
> Syme, C. Wirszubski, D.C. Earl, and K. Buchner
> have rightly explained that this accusation was
> purely political . . . Calling someone a *rex* did not
> imply that he possessed a monarchy but that he had
> stepped out of bounds politically.[8]

This "political commonplace" of Roman rhetoric did not, however, put its first roots down in the work of rhetoricians *per se*. Dunkle notes that the image did indeed take deep root there, and did indeed bear fruit there later: "It is a well-

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[5] Roger J. Dunkle, "The Greek Tyrant and Roman Political Invective of the Late Republic," *TAPA* 98 (1967): 151.

[6] Dunkle, "The Greek Tyrant," 151, 156, 158.

[7] Dunkle, "The Greek Tyrant," 151–152.

[8] Roger J. Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant in Rome of the First Century B.C." (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1965), *ix*.

known fact that the stock tyrant of the declamations lies in the background of many a portrait of a Roman tyrant in Roman historiography of the late Republic and early Empire, e.g. Tacitus' Tiberius."[9] As Dunkle specifies elsewhere, though, the earliest evidence of the Roman rhetorical tyrant takes the form of Greek influence in the form of borrowed Greek tragedies:[10] "The tyrant as a stock character first became well-known at Rome through the agency, not of the rhetorical schools but of the theater."[11] This dramatic image was, however, later complemented by the more strictly "rhetorical" images found in the anti-tyrannical forms of public persuasion that Greek tragedy had helped to shape. In Dunkle's words: "Adaptations of Greek tragedies had been presented at Rome from 240 B.C. on . . . but the rhetorical exercises with a Greek setting required by the stock type of the tyrant, a creation of the Hellenistic schools of rhetoric, seem to have been introduced at Rome no earlier than the beginning of the second decade of the first century B.C."[12]

I am not suggesting that the introduction of Greek tragedy politicized Roman theatre. As Richard C. Beacham notes in *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, public speech and performance in Republican Rome were never apolitical, even when they aimed to entertain. Public, popular performances were the mass media of the Republic, and politicians were forced to cast themselves as supporters of such performances, in order to pre-empt bad press, and seek propaganda and public relations support:

> By the early second century, there were probably 2–300,000 adult male voters in the citizen body. Because however, many of these were widely dispersed throughout central Italy, the residents of Rome itself (those who could actually be mustered to vote) had a disproportionate influence on public affairs, and were the object in turn of intensive electoral manipulation. Public gatherings where argument and oratory could be used to impress and win support were crucially important, as was any

[9] Roger J. Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant in Roman Historiography: Sallust, Livy and Tacitus," *CW* 65 (1971): 12.
[10] Dunkle, "The Greek Tyrant," 156, 158.
[11] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 12.
[12] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 13.

gesture or deed which might win favourable
publicity for a candidate. Thus, regardless of their
level of personal taste or refinement, and indeed
despite whatever moral reservations or antipathy
they might have felt towards the theatre, ambitious
members of the aristocracy had strong pragmatic
reasons for supporting it. These same practical
concerns, however, and the way they were
expressed, both limited and to a degree determined
the type of theatre likely to be officially encouraged
or to find popular favour. For politicians the theatre
was a means to an end.[13]

This meant that the implicitly and explicitly "political" modes and
material of Greek tragedy were not terribly foreign to the Roman theatrical
system. They—including their tyrannophobic flavour—could be grafted into
Republican's culture of public performance with a political purpose, and
supplement it. J. Wight Duff has examined this development of Roman political
rhetoric from Greek theatrical sources. Centuries after the introduction into Rome
of Greek drama, in the Republican period, he writes, "tragedy lived on,
encouraged chiefly by the Roman aristocracy. They found something congenial to
the existing order of things in such political thought as tragedy admitted—for the
Greek 'tyrannophobia' was shared by the optimates of Rome. They could draw
from its grave rhetoric hints for the practical needs of public speaking."[14]

Duff has touched on a crucial point here, by linking the Roman elite mood
or pose of "tyrannophobia" with "the practical needs of public speaking." Roman
politicians were not only working with the theatrical expression of
"tyrannophobia," and trying to stay on its good side. They were also working with
its images of tyranny in staging their own public performances as politicians.
Within the Republican system, oratory was the main path to power, and
audiences—popular and elite alike—were used in this system by able speakers, in
"silencing the opposition,"[15] and thereby setting up one elite person or position

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[13] Richard C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16.
[14] J. Wight Duff, A *Literary History of Rome: From the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age* (ed. A. M. Duff; London: Ernest Benn, 1960), 168.
[15] Robert Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 280.

over another as the "will of the people."[16] On the one, hand, a politician whose success depended upon popular appeal (for example a popular tribune) could win the support of large audiences by associating his opponents with images of tyranny.[17] This strategy associated the opponents not only with barbarian despots, but also with the evils of the Roman monarchs as Republican rhetoric remembered them—as "tyrants" who did not care about the needs of "the people." "Popular politicians" could gain power in this system by propaganda wars that played mobs off against each other in what might be called competing Astroturf grassroots movements—loudly popular demonstrations that were actually carefully choreographed from above.[18] On the other hand, Roman Republican elites could also attack competitors who used popular rhetoric a little too well, and thereby got a little too popular, as being candidates for "tyranny" themselves. Livy recounts the story, for example, of the popular politician Maelius who distributed corn from his own stock during an agricultural emergency, and therefore had to be brutally killed in order to "save" the Republic from his "ambition."[19] The Republican Senate was known, in fact, for its brutality toward popular champions who tried to lead the lower classes in rebellions,[20] a policy that included perfectly legal "popular politicians" if they engaged in a "revolutionary" kind of pandering to the masses—the Gracchi probably being the most famous example.[21] Tiberius Gracchus and his brother Gaius famously became, like Maelius, public personalities through conspicuous agitations for popular benefit and reform, and faced a similar bloody fate for what their enemies termed their "ambition."[22]

These developments in Republican Rome are good illustrations of the continuing competitive and plastic nature of the "tyrant" insult in its Roman form. As Dunkle notes, after all, Tiberius Gracchus was called a "tyrant" and a "king"

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[16] Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory,* 279–283.
[17] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 17–18.
[18] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome,* 43.
[19] *Ab Urbe Condita* 4.13–14.
[20] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome,* 36.
[21] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome,* 26–29.
[22] Michael Crawford, *The Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 107–122, 131.
[22] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 9–10.

by those who considered him to be a dangerously ambitious popular tribune, but when they moved to eliminate him they were themselves immediately labelled ambitious "tyrants" by his remaining supporters.[23] These Republican examples thus help us to remember that Roman rhetoric continued the Greek tradition of using the image of the tyrant in a political and polemical, rather than a strictly descriptive, sense. This is presumably partly due to the fact that Greek culture and Greek rhetoricians were a formative influence, as the Roman rhetoricians (for example, Cicero) themselves acknowledged.[24] M. L. Clarke notes the probable accuracy of this report, in his history of *Rhetoric at Rome*: "Cato was the first to write on oratory, but he did not become the founder of a tradition. The Greeks were to conquer here as elsewhere, and Roman rhetoric was to become little more than an adaptation of Greek rhetoric."[25] It is not necessary to accept Clarke's rather strong statement of the relationship of Roman and Greek rhetoric in order to see that Greek rhetoric—including its image of the foreign tyrant—was instrumental in the development of Roman rhetoric. As Lewis points out in his introduction to *Ancient Tyranny*, "Mossé shows how Plutarch drew his descriptions of tyrants . . . from Plato's *Letters*,"[26] and "Gildenhard traces how Cicero used the formulations of Plato's *Republic*."[27] Mossé has also traced the way in which Plutarch's *Lives* (of Dion and Timoleon) uses images of tyrants borrowed from Herodotus and Greek drama by Plato.[28]

The most likely principal reason, though, for the survival of the polemical and xenophobic rhetorical tyrant in Rome does not seem to me to be traditionalism. The most likely principal reason for the Roman adaptation of the image seems to be the simple fact (mentioned already) that Roman rhetoric was, like Greek Athenian democratic rhetoric before it, a politically interested art. From the very beginning, near the end of the fourth century B.C.E., Roman rhetoricians based their technical and hypothetical exercises around pragmatic and

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[23] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 9–10.
[24] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 10.
[25] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome,* 11.
[26] Lewis, "Introduction," 12.
[27] Lewis, "Introduction," 12.
[28] Mossé, "Plutarch and the Sicilian Tyrants," 189.

political realities, and "the practice of debating invented themes on the lines of those likely to arise in the courts and assemblies, a practice which under the name of declamation was to play so important a part in Roman education."[29] Roman rhetoric's images therefore needed to serve the very practical rhetorical needs of Rome's elite politicians. One of these needs was their continuing project of self-definition and self-promotion as "good Romans." The image of the foreign tyrant offered a way for elite Romans to promote themselves as politically and culturally superior to distasteful outsiders and any unwanted insiders who could be successfully painted with the same brush in public relations campaigns. In order to show that the Greek rhetorical association of tyrant and barbarian was clearly one element that carried over into the Roman Republican period, and in order to introduce the shift to the Roman Imperial period, I will offer a brief overview of the image of the foreign tyrant in the works of the politician and rhetorician Cicero, whose political rhetoric is consciously rhetorical, and whose career spans the transition from Republican to Imperial Rome.

Cicero's use of the image of the foreign tyrant clearly continues the patterns described above. First of all, he and his elite enemies were tireless in their mutual accusations of "tyranny." Dunkle, in his doctoral work, patiently collected dozens of examples of these mutual accusations from Cicero's exchanges with his political rivals, such as Clodius and Verres.[30] Ingo Gildengard, in reviewing some of the same material, writes that, of all the Roman Republican rhetoricians, "Cicero in particular deemed the tyrant good to think with. In his literary oeuvre this Greek figure is a constant point of reference, from the *De Republica* to the *Tusculan Disputations* to the *De Oficiis*."[31] None of this is particularly surprising given the fact that Cicero, as a good elite Roman, began his treatise on rhetoric by asserting that rhetoric *is* politics (*De Inventione* 1.1.1), and given the fact that "tyranny" was already, in his time, a central theme in Roman rhetoric:

> The tyrant first appears as the subject of an extant
> rhetorical exercise in Cicero's *De Inventione* in the
> person of Alexander of Pherae (2.144). Although no

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[29] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 7.
[30] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 25–26, 65, etc.
[31] Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny," 206.

exercise involving the tyrant appears in the slightly later *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (86–82 B.C.), the stock type of the tyrant is not unknown to the author of this treatise. He recommends the adjectives *tyrannicus* and *crudelis*, as commonplaces of political invective (2.49; cf. Cic. *Inv Rhet*. 1.102). *Crudelitas* is a vice most closely associated with the tyrant in Roman oratory . . . The tyrant became more and more popular as a villain of the *controversia*, not in the form of an actual historical tyrant . . . but as a nameless evil ruler whose cruel decrees and death at the hands of a tyrannicide caused complicated legal entanglements which had to be unraveled by students of rhetoric. One typical theme involving a tyrant from the compilation of *controversiae* made by the elder Seneca is as follows: an adulterer caught in the act by the tyrant husband kills him and then claims a public reward as a tyrannicide. The two laws in conflict here are the law against adultery and the law providing a prize for the tyrannicide (4.7). In this collection there are six other *controversiae* involving the tyrant (1.7; 2.5; 3.6; 5.8; 7.6; 9.4).[32]

For my purposes here, though, it is particularly significant that Cicero often plays up the "foreign" and "barbarian" connotation of the rhetorical tyrant, based upon the previously mentioned stereotypes found in Greek rhetoric and tragedy.[33] When Cicero attacks Antony in his *Philippics* (13.18), for example, this strategy seems reasonably clear, as he asks his fellow elite Romans: "For in what country of barbarians was there ever so foul and cruel a tyrant (*crudelis tyrannus*) as Antonius, escorted by the arms of barbarians, has proved in this city? [U]nder this arch-pirate, (for why should I say tyrant?) these benches were occupied by Itureans." The pairing here of cruelty and tyranny, and the jump—strange to modern eyes—from tyranny to piracy, will be important later in discussing Greco-Roman Jewish candidates for the title of "tyrant." For now it is enough to note that the pirate was, like the tyrant, a favourite villain in the Roman rhetorical

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[32] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 13.
[33] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 25–26.

exercises known as the *controversiae*,[34] and to remember that (as mentioned above) Greek literature had long associated tyrants and bodyguards—especially foreign bodyguards.[35] Cicero therefore seems to be playing very deliberately upon established rhetorical associations and stereotypes in his condemnation of Antony's barbaric habits and associates.

In arguing that the image of the foreign tyrant was strategically deployed by elite politicians and rhetoricians, I do not mean to imply that this strategy and its xenophobia were always fully conscious and deliberate. The image's xenophobia was—while both useful and traditional—most likely often real. Roman writers and rhetoricians had little opportunity or reason, after all, to think about foreign political systems in a way that we today might call fair or careful, or even disinterested. As Susan P. Mattern notes in her study *Rome and the Enemy,* the socio-political and technological situation of late Republican and early imperial Rome simply did not allow for research on foreign nations and peoples for the sake of research. The only technologically and economically feasible way for Romans to know a foreign place was to have a military presence in the area, either planning or executing an attack.[36] As a result, the prevailing Roman idea of the foreigner tended to be composed of literary constructs put to political use.[37] This places the idea of the foreigner squarely in the arena of rhetoric, of course, which partly accounts for the fact that in discussing foreigners, as elsewhere, "we do not see a sharp distinction in the Roman mind between rhetoric and 'fact.'"[38] This political and rhetorical situation also offers a perfect environment for the growth and popularity of negative portrayals of foreigners and foreign governments, which partly accounts for the fact that—as Mattern also notes in her study—the Greek rhetorical association of barbarians with tyrants was carried over into Roman rhetoric.[39]

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[34] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 13–14.
[35] See above. For more on this, see Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 13, 17.
[36] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 26–27, 31, 37–38, 40–41.
[37] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 66–80, etc.
[38] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 33.
[39] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 73.

There was, however, clearly more at work in this Roman carry-over than simple cultural ignorance or a simple regard for the Greek tradition. Associating tyranny with barbarism also clearly served the continuing elite Roman project of self-definition and self-justification. The Republican Roman system defined and defended its vision of Roman "freedom," after all, as a freedom from real and remembered monarchs.[40] The name of the last line of Roman kings—the Tarquins—had already become a political slur hurled by Roman aristocrats at overly "ambitious" competitors, to the point where (according to Livy and Cicero) people could be banished merely for having the name.[41]

Again, this was not necessarily pure political posturing and scare-mongering. A genuine fear of abusive or excessive forms of monarchy was most likely also at work. As Lewis notes, "the last two [Roman] kings, Servius Tullius and Tarquinius Superbus, despite their very different reputations, were irregular rulers, defined by their accession as tyrants and comparable to those in contemporary Italy. Hence the Roman anti-monarchical tradition is better understood as an anti-tyrannical tradition."[42]

Lewis is certainly right in associating "anti-monarchical tradition" with "anti-tyrannical tradition." One should not, however, simply equate one with the other, or assume that there was one unified Roman opinion on the matter. Cicero testifies, for example, that the very word "king" was widely hated in Rome after the age of the kings (*Republic* 1.62, 64; 2.52; cf. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.17.6–9). As Fay Glinister and others have noted, though, Rome's kings were often remembered fondly in Republican Rome,[43] and so "it could be argued that the Roman aristocracy feared not so much kingly, as popular and anti-aristocratic, rule."[44] Glinister's precision offers a welcome corrective to the summary of Lewis, and better incorporates the data when it comes to the perceived threat of the "popular" tyrant. The Greco-Roman rhetorical tyrant is, after all, typically

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[40] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 8–9.

[41] Fay Glinister, "Kingship and Tyranny in Archaic Rome," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 25.

[42] Lewis, "Introduction," 10–11. See also Glinister, "Kingship and Tyranny in Archaic Rome," 20–21.

[43] Glinister, "Kingship and Tyranny in Archaic Rome," 24.

[44] Glinister, "Kingship and Tyranny in Archaic Rome," 24.

associated with a populism that panders to the poor.[45] Roman rhetoric's "tyrants" are, for example, dependably associated with land and grain redistribution,[46] as was seen in the case of Maelius and others above. The Roman Republican "anti-tyrannical tradition," then, whether it opposes monarchy categorically or not, functions above all *to justify the Republican system* with its kingless "freedom," and to defend that aristocratic *status quo* by demonizing the image of monopolizing usurpers, and *particularly* those thrown up by mobs. Part of this process of demonization involved the depiction of monarchy and its highly concentrated system of power as a dangerous, barbarous system that Rome had successfully thrown off. It is not always clear exactly how the association of barbarism and tyranny worked. Was it considered significant, for example, that the last tyrannical king before the Republic was thought to have come from a non-Roman family?[47] Was it considered significant that the tyrannical Roman monarch Tarquinius Priscus was not originally from Rome?[48] If these associations were significant, how were they significant, and for whom? Which element in the equation of cultural memory came first, and for whom? In any case, it is clear that inherited Greek forms were involved in the Roman construction of their past tyrants and new freedoms, sometimes very directly. "The picture of the Tarquins was elaborated from the stories told of Periander and Peisistratos, the archetypal tyrants of sixth-century Greece,"[49] for example, according to Peter Jones and Keith Sidwell. It is also clear that the association of tyranny and barbarism was—as seen above—often very strong in Republican rhetoric like Cicero's, and the Imperial development of the image continued, as we will see, to construct "tyrants" as un-Roman usurpers imposed from above and/or thrown up by mobs.

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[45] Lewis, "Introduction," 3.

[46] See Christopher Smith, "*Adfectatio regni* in the Roman Republic," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 49–50, 52, 54, 57–58.

[47] See Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Roman Religions, Volume 1: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.

[48] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 7.

[49] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 6.

3.3. Roman Imperial Images of Foreign Tyranny

The foreign tyrant did not die out with the Republic. If anything, the political development of the principate made talk of foreign tyrants even more central to Roman rhetoric. Continuing with the example of Cicero, Ingo Gildenhard has analyzed the way that he dependably drew upon Greek literature and rhetoric about tyranny in order to think through his evolving relationship to Caesar's new power.[50] Cicero says at one point, for example, that he fears Caesar will arrive back in Rome promising to erase debts as part of his obsession with sole rule—a clear reference to the Greek prejudice (noted above) that tyrants use wealth redistribution to win the rabble—and then he further underlines the Greek pedigree of this rhetorical fear by capping the passage with a quote from Euripides.[51] The implication is, of course, that the power-mad and rabble-rousing new Caesar is no longer a good Roman, but has now become a foreign tyrant—"a political criminal made in Greece."[52] The centrality of rhetorical tradition and its power for identity construction (i.e. of the real and good Roman) are particularly apparent here, as Cicero formulates this criticism by association with tyrannical and un-Roman foreigners, despite the fact that he is keenly aware of how "wanton and outrageous" Romans can themselves be in oppressing foreigners within their sphere of influence,[53] not to mention the fact that he himself is not from Rome![54]

This point about the flexible and interested use of Greek tradition is underlined by the fact that—as Gildenhard also points out—while Cicero waits to see how the situation with Caesar will develop, he practices debating, and does so in a way that focuses significantly upon the stereotyped Greek rhetoric dealing with tyrants and tyranny: "In order to distract himself, he uses the current state of affairs to debate with himself in both Greek and Latin. His language of choice, however, for setting out his theses for Atticus is Greek, and each of his theses

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[50] Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny," 197–207.
[51] Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny," 198–199.
[52] Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny," 199.
[53] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 25.
[54] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 31.

contains the t-word."[55] Further underlining this point, Cicero changes his tune after receiving Caesar's pardon, and specifically argues *against* the idea that his rule is anything like that of foreign tyrants.[56] Interestingly, the very "mildness," "generosity," and "clemency" that Caesar extended to grateful converts like Cicero looked tyrannical to some. "To forgive was the prerogative of the king or tyrant," as Jones and Sidwell put it, and so many elite Romans quietly resented, and some publicly rejected, Caesar's clemency.[57] Caesar, for his part, claimed predictably that he had only acted at all in order to defend Rome's tribunes against *Pompey's* "tyranny."[58]

These themes of aristocratic rights, tradition, and political manoeuvring are not unique to Cicero's life and works. As noted above, they are typical of the Roman rhetorical use of the image of the tyrant under the emerging imperial system. Alexander Thein has traced, for example, the way in which the very "ambitious" Republican leader Sulla slowly became more and more of a "tyrant" in Roman elite eyes, as his remembered story came to be associated with Caesar's perceived excesses.[59] Contested levels and modes of authority being claimed by Caesar at the time were then criticized implicitly, by being read back into the story of "Sulla the tyrant."[60]

The early emperors, for their part, felt free (being, in their own eyes at least, highly democratic "first citizens," as opposed to autocratic "kings")[61] to use the insult for their own purposes too. The emperor Claudius, for example, in his speech to the Senate calling for tighter restrictions on prosecutors, repeatedly calls the practice of letting prosecutors take their time in collecting evidence "tyranny." The freedom to accuse and then travel freely is, according to his repeated accusation, "unrestrained tyranny."[62] Ramsay MacMullen's study of "The Roman

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[55] Gildenhard, "Reckoning with Tyranny," 203.
[56] Dunkle, "Study of the Rhetorical Tyrant," 33–34.
[57] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 44.
[58] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 44.
[59] Alexander Thein, "Sulla the Weak Tyrant," in *Ancient Tyranny* (ed. Sian Lewis; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 238.
[60] Thein, "Sulla the Weak Tyrant," 238–247.
[61] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 44.
[62] David C. Braund, *Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History 31 BC–AD 68* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 197.

Concept 'Robber/Pretender'" in 1965 found that (as we saw with Cicero and his political enemies, in both Republican and Imperial Rome) the Roman emperors of the first few centuries and their political enemies consistently called each other by the same name—"tyrant"—regardless of the specific issues involved.[63]

As mentioned already, the Greek and Republican tendency to associate tyranny with foreigners and/or "bad Romans" also survived in the Imperial version of the rhetorical tyrant. First of all, the convenient prejudice that tyranny was just naturally a "foreign problem" continued into the imperial period. This prejudice was not only convenient in terms of self-congratulation and justification for conquest, but also in terms of justifying different terms of rule for foreigners. Forms and signs of authority relegated to the past in ruling Rome were acceptable in ruling tyrant-loving foreigners: "The Roman state was happy to deal with client kings . . . there are even instances in which the triumphal gear (insignia of the Roman kings) was awarded to foreign rulers as a mark of honour."[64]

This surviving association of foreigners with tyranny also helped maintain the Republican association of tyranny and foreignness with "bad Romans." Among themselves, the Roman imperial elite continued to discuss unruly or overly ambitious politicians as tyrants, even if they were ruling foreigners at the time. Pauli Sivonen has traced this pattern, for example, in internal discussions about imperial Roman rule in Gaul.[65] A similar pattern can be seen in the way that "Tacitus refers to the temple of Claudius in Britain as a stronghold of undying tyranny."[66]

These Greek-cum-Republican-cum-Imperial associations all come together in helping to understand the image of the foreign tyrant as it appears in the rhetoric of the Roman Empire. It appears, in short, as an image with a strong rhetorical consciousness, a strong political association, a strong anti-foreign connotation, and a strong internal-critical direction. It is an image influenced by

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[63] Ramsay MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquite* 10 (1963): 225.

[64] Glinister, "Kingship and Tyranny in Archaic Rome," 26.

[65] Pauli Sivonen, *Being a Roman Magistrate: Office-holding and Roman Identity in Late Antique Gaul* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 93.

[66] Alan Wardman, *Religion and Statecraft among the Romans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 88.

the Greek conventions of the past, integral to the rhetorical exercises and political utility of its transitional imperial present, and positioned to influence the rhetorical culture of the future.

Nigel M. Kennel summed up the situation this way in his 1997 review of the Roman rhetorical tyrant's image for *Classical Philology*: "[T]yranny [and especially stereotyped "Greek tyranny"[67]] provided the orators of the Empire with a fundamental theme. To Philostratus, the typifying of rich and poor, tyrant and hero was one of the Second Sophistic's defining characteristics, while Lucian summed up the abandonment of his rhetorical career as 'flight from the accusation of tyrants and praise of heroes.'"[68]

This image of the tyrant that survived in the declamations and other rhetorical exercises of the Empire also took root in imperial Roman historiography: "It is a well-known fact," Dunkle writes, "that the stock tyrant of the declamations lies in the background of many a portrait of a Roman tyrant in Roman historiography of the late Republic and early Empire, e.g. Tacitus' Tiberius."[69] This development makes sense when we remember that the –thanks to the Greek rhetoricians mentioned earlier—had been basic for centuries to Roman education,[70] and that in the first century CE no clear distinction was made between grammar and rhetoric by Roman educators: "The professions of *grammaticus* and *rhetor* were not at first clearly distinguished at Rome, and the early *grammatici* also taught rhetoric."[71] This meant that the tyrants of the declamations were intimately familiar to the historians of the Empire, and the image understandably informs their own exercises of praise and blame in recording Rome's history.

Dunkle has shown that Roman historians like Livy consistently read the tyrant of Greek literature back into early Roman rulers like Tarquinus Superbus,

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[67] Nigel M. Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," *Classical Philology* 92/4 (1997): 346.
[68] Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," 350–351.
[69] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 12.
[70] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 7.
[71] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 15.

and ahead into recent Roman leaders like Appius Claudius.[72] This Romanized Greek inheritance includes the inherited stereotypes found in the educational *controversiae*: "Livy [portrays] Appius as a man who stands outside the law and has no share in civil or human justice (3.57.1). This bit of abuse is one of the commonplaces used in reference to the stock tyrant of the *controversia*."[73]

The rules changed, however, under the principate, even though the stereotyped images survived intact. The formal declamations against tyranny survived, for example, but they needed to be practiced with considerable tact, considering their very practical and political pedigree.[74] "Caligula had a rhetorician, Carrinas Secundus, put to death for a speech he made against tyrants as a rhetorical exercise, as did Domitian in the case of a sophist, Maternus, for a similar offense (Dio Cass. 59.20.6; 67.12.5)."[75] The image of the tyrant as "a man who had suspicious dealings with people outside the traditional body politic"[76] was maintained, though it was refined to mean anyone who threatened the stability of the imperial system: "Roman authorities, to say nothing of the local elites, apparently regarded with suspicion anyone who curried the favor of the masses too assiduously, as such behavior was the mark of a tyrant."[77] This aristocratic thrust of the tyrant image has already been noted above in the context of Rome itself. In foreign places, though, it took on a slightly different colour. Local leaders in the outer Empire were often seen as being too concerned with their popularity with the natives, since this could mark the beginning of a slide into a local secessionist tyranny—especially since (as we have seen) foreigners were thought to be naturally prone to tyranny. Thus, in "the early years of the first century AD"—Kennel reminds his classicist colleagues, in his discussion of the accused foreign "tyrant" Lysias—any leader who wanted to "give rich people's money to the undeserving poor" risked being attacked as a conniving "tyrant."[78]

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[72] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 15–20.
[73] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 16.
[74] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 91–92.
[75] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 14.
[76] Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," 353.
[77] Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," 354.
[78] Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," 354.

This last association of barbarian client-kings with potential tyrants marks yet another Roman elite association of tyranny with foreignness, and as such it serves as the last link in the daisy chain of aristocratic rhetorical "tyrannophobia" described here. It is elucidated, and elucidates, many of the elite Roman associations that we have seen, such as the easy two-pronged identification made by Tacitus of both outsiders (the Parthians) and "bad" insiders (Claudius) as tyrants. In fact, from my point of view, this rhetorical association of barbarism and tyranny seems to pop up everywhere once it has been noticed, like a recently learned word. It sheds light, for example, on Cicero's association of Pompey's suspicious dependence upon popular appeal at home[79] with his distasteful popular appeal among the tyrant-loving barbarians of the East.[80] It also seems to shed new light on the common belief among Roman historians that "Hieronymus' purple clothing and crown were a symbol of despotism to the Romans (cf. Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 14.2; Liv. 27.31.4),"[81] and the similar nasty rumour that the accused tyrant Ti. Gracchus also wore a purple robe (*Ti. Gracch.* 14.2). These beliefs and rumours take on a deeper significance, it seems to me, when we realize that the purple robe was by this time the costume of a well-known stock character: the non-Roman tyrant of rhetorical and theatrical cliché. Livy seems to me to confirm this reading of the robe and crown stories and images, when he criticizes the Roman leader Hieronymus by reporting that he acted like a Greek, specifically by wearing a purple robe and a crown "like Dionysius the tyrant" (Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 24.5.3). The accusation of barbarism and the accusation of tyranny continued, in short, to work together intimately and creatively in the rhetorical habits of the Roman Empire.

Accusations of tyranny were not always as formal and straightforward as Cicero's. As such accusations became more of a sensitive business under the principate, they necessarily became more subtle and creative, often managing to combine high volume and high visibility with very precisely tuned levels of ambiguity and deniability. I am thinking here primarily of examples that are

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[79] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 38–39.
[80] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 39.
[81] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 17.

related, like the purple robe image just mentioned, to formal rhetoric and the theatre. In the next sections, I will review a few of these examples.

3.4. Accusations of Tyranny in Formal Rhetorical Exercises

I have already mentioned examples of consciously "political" accusations of tyranny made by the professional public speakers of imperial politics. More purely formal or educational rhetorical exercises in public speech also continued to deal with the traditional image of the tyrant, though, and they seem to have walked a certain line under the emperors. The "declamations" against tyrants are, after all, manifestly exercises, but it is nevertheless clear that they had very real "political" relevance outside the academic world, and needed to be practiced with considerable tact.[82] "Men who spoke too openly about tyranny in the abstract, under touchy emperors like Tiberius and Domitian, were punished [by exile or execution],"[83] for example, MacMullen notes (citing Dio 59.20.60; 67.12.5). We have already seen that Caligula and Domitian had rhetoricians executed for anti-tyrannical speeches that were ostensibly academic exercises.[84] MacMullen adds to this list the example of Appianus, who went too far, and was hanged for calling Commodus a tyrant directly in a speech.[85]

Interestingly for our purposes, Appianus is said to have also called Commodus a "brigand" in the course of this same story.[86] I have already mentioned that "tyrant" and "brigand/pirate/pretender" are closely associated insults in Roman rhetoric,[87] due to the conception of the tyrant as primarily a rabble-rouser. According to MacMullen's review, the association of "pretender" with "tyrant" took hold in the first century and grew strong enough to persist well

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[82] Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, 91–92.
[83] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 222.
[84] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 14.
[85] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 222.
[86] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 222.
[87] See also MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 223.

into the fourth.[88] The strongest root of the association, he says, lies in the fact that for both the Stoics and the Cynics, a good and true king is effectively the opposite of a tyrant.[89] MacMullen therefore highlights a tradition of an elite, theoretically monarch-friendly rhetoric against the "robbery" of tyranny in consciously philosophical (Stoic and Cynic) terms:

> The thought that surrounds the word 'robbery' in these texts is found once again in a scene [depicting] a trial before an official of Gallus Caesar . . . The defendant is accused; denies the charge; is tortured; calls his torture brigandage . . . and is finally led away to his death, unafraid, railing at the wickedness of the times, and imitating the ancient Stoic Zeno, who, after being tortured . . . tore his tongue from its roots and hurled it . . . into the eyes of the king of Cyprus who was questioning him.[90]

Notice here the construction of the good Roman through a confluence of various Greek (rhetorical/political/philosophical/literary) traditions. Notice, too, that it is the philosopher rhetorician's *tongue* that is thrown in the bad king's face—a vivid concretization of the very traditional (i.e. Athenian) image of rhetoric as the way to oppose illegitimate domination, which presumably offers a welcome self-image for any "tyrannophobic" elite Roman rhetorician and/or politician.[91] This very theatrical piece of rhetorical tradition leads me to my literally theatrical examples. As the Roman rhetorician Quintilian wrote in his *Institutio Oratoria* (1.11.4–14), the stage—particularly the comic stage—can provide inspiration for good oratory. He is, admittedly, most interested in the effects of vocal delivery, but he does recommend practicing selected speeches from the stage, a practice which, for public speakers interested in talking about tyranny, could only have accelerated the kind of theatrical influence discussed above, in the Roman heritage of Greek tragedy with its way of criticizing insiders by criticizing outsiders. It will become

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[88] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 221–225.

[89] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 221–222. See also E. Wistrand, "Stoic Opposition to the Principate," *Studii Classice* 18 (1979): 93–101.

[90] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 224–225.

[91] Note the slightly later tradition (preserved in many ancient handbooks of rhetoric) that rhetoric was literally invented in the context of an anti-tyrannical coup. On this, see Vincent Farenga, "Periphrasis on the Origin of Rhetoric," *Modern Language Notes* 94/5 (1979): 1033–1055.

clear, too, in this next section, that the Roman comedy Quintilian recommends could also comment on these same questions, sometimes in even subtler ways.

3.5. Accusations of Tyranny in the Theatre

I have already noted that the Roman theatre—especially in its adapted Greek tragedies—was often used to express, form, and reinforce political opinion. Emperors like Nero and Caligula picked up on the propaganda and public-relations potential of public entertainment, and took the theatrical patronage and self-aggrandizement of the Republic's politicians to new heights and new lows, according to historians like Tacitus and Suetonius.[92] The popular politics and rhetoric of the theatre could also turn against its powerful patrons, though, in subtle attacks on leaders whose behaviour invited the traditional accusation of tyranny. Ludwig Friedlander, for example, has collected many examples of old or innocent lines in Roman plays that were creatively "read" by Roman performers, audiences, and emperors as negative political comments.[93] Cicero paints this strategy as immensely popular and powerful, reporting on the hero status of playwrights and actors, the mind-boggling size of the crowds, and the mad applause.[94] "According to his testimony [writes W. Y. Sellar], these lively demonstrations of popular approbation were chiefly called out by the moral significance or the political meaning attached to the words."[95] Friedlander's list of examples paints a similar picture of a widely-understood, subtle, and powerful rhetorical tool:

> Actors and public came to an understanding;
> significant passages relating the present were
> accentuated . . . But, generally, the emperors found
> it best to wink at such allusions as far as possible . .

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[92] See Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 146–149.
[93] Ludwig Friedlander, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, Vol. 2 (trans. J. H. Freese and Leonard A. Magnus; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 93–94.
[94] W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 128.
[95] Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic*, 128.

. once a mime was being performed in Augustus'
presence, and the words "Oh the good and gentle
master" were recited; a general burst of applause
broke out to interpret the words as an appreciation
of the emperor; Augustus received the outburst in
stern silence, and on the following day rebuked such
flattery by a sharply worded edict. On another
occasion, the audience interpreted an inoffensive
verse as an allusion to Augustus' effeminacy.
During Tiberius' residence at Capri, a passage in an
atellana, hinting at his debauchery, was received
with wild applause . . . Caligula had one composer
of *atellanae* burnt alive in the arena for a jest that
might have been intended to reflect upon him . . .
Galba was reported harsh and avaricious; when he
entered Rome as Emperor, at the next atellana, a
well-known chorus was sung, in which the family
complained of the return of the old master from the
country; the audience joined in and repeated the
verse several times.[96]

Sly comments like these were apparently widely understood and
appreciated by the general public, as Sellar writes: "[Cicero] says, 'amid a great
variety of opinions uttered, there never was any passage in which anything was
said by the poet might seem to bear on our time, which either escaped the notice
of the people, or to which the actor did not give point...' These and similar
passages testify primarily to the intense political excitement of the time at which
they were written, but also to the meaning which was looked for by the audience
in the words addressed to them on the stage, and which was enforced by the
emphasis given to them by the actor."[97] Suetonius records an example of this kind
of indirect—yet very public—political expression in his history of Nero's reign:
"The comic actor Datus, performing in an Atellan farce, illustrated the opening
line of the song 'Goodbye Father, goodbye Mother' with gestures of drinking and
swimming—Claudius had been poisoned, and Agrippa nearly drowned—and the
last line, 'Hell guides your feet' was directed with a wave of his hand toward the
senators whom Nero intended to murder."[98] Established stereotypes and audience

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[96] Friedlander, *Roman Life and Manners*, 93–94.
[97] Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic*, 129.
[98] Suetonius, *Nero* 39.

expectation thus co-operated in a way that alloyed contemporary political commentary with traditional cultural expression. Philip Whaley Harsh sums the phenomenon up this way:

> The use of drama as more or less subtle criticism had a long tradition in Rome. Extended allegory was not necessary; a single line even of an old play was often interpreted in the light of contemporary events and greeted with applause or hissing. During the time of Seneca, when the tyrannies of the emperors made open criticism of political policies extremely dangerous, all genres of literature were used for covert criticism . . . [O]ne of the men under whom Seneca in his youth mastered rhetoric, Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, is said to have incurred the wrath of the Emperor Tiberius by writing a tragedy, *Atreus*, in which a commonplace from Euripides' *Phoenissae* (393) was included— "One must bear the follies of his rulers." Every play of Seneca has similar lines. It is not inconceivable that Seneca, though no extremist, should write a whole play for one well-placed line of this type. The subject matter of Greek tragedy was ideal for such an application. The more commonplace a theme might be there or in contemporary rhetoric, such as the theme of the tyrant or that of the stepmother, the safer the author would feel in dwelling upon it; and the audience would doubtless be no less keen in applying it where it seemed most apposite in the contemporary situation.[99]

Notice that the rhetorical commonplace of the tyrant is once again mentioned here specifically as an important element in Roman theatre's subtle political commentary, as an image that audiences would have been good at noticing and interpreting locally. This "subtle" political use of drama was also found in the narrated—not acted—"closet-dramas" that were inspired by the tragedies of the stage, and circulated widely in first-century Rome. They were just as slyly "political" as the plays of the big stage, and very popular; popular writers like Seneca the younger and Ovid were in fact more apparently more interested in

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[99] Philip Whaley Harsh, *A Handbook of Classical Drama* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1944), 406–407.

writing these "closet dramas" than in writing stage plays.[100] The plays of Seneca just referred to by Harsh, with their subtly but pointedly politicized traditional material, were mostly "closet dramas" narrated to small audiences.

Popular opinion and popular performance were clearly engaged and listening to each other on the topic of tyranny. In fact, all of the examples that we have seen of treatments of "tyranny" in Roman philosophy, political and basic educational rhetoric, literature, popular theatre, and common gossip—almost the entirety of what one might call the Roman imperial mass media—suggest a lively cultural conversation around tyranny. Public performers and patrons counted on their audiences to hear and react to political comments—including rhetoric about tyrants and tyranny—in all kinds of performances, and at levels of subtlety that ranged from bald propaganda to creative innuendo. The high profile of this cultural conversation and the generous borrowing in all directions shows that Roman culture was actively working with its Greek rhetorical inheritance of the rhetorical tyrant—including the specifically *foreign* tyrant—and that there was impressively wide popular attention and participation involved in this rhetorical work of self-definition. This widespread conversation is an integral part of the rhetorical world that the Jews of the Greco-Roman world inherited, and it will become clear in the next sections that they too worked with and against the rhetorical image of the foreign tyrant in their own cultural conversations of self-definition.

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[100] Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel: A Comparison of the Gospel of Mark and Greek Tragedy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 43–45.

Section 4. Jewish Images of Foreign Tyranny

By "Jewish images" I mean here images found in the Hebrew literature that was
eventually incorporated into the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. I define the word
"Jewish" here in this text-based way in order to avoid setting up a thorny and
irrelevant opposition between Hellenistic and non-Hellenistic Judaism. I want to
be clear that although there was no one "Bible" at the time in question, and
although there is no clear way to distinguish Hellenistic or Greco-Roman Judaism
from any "pure" or "original" Judaism, there are nevertheless clearly textual
traditions at work in the early evolution of Judaism and Christianity that were
unavailable and/or uninteresting to Greco-Roman writers like Herodotus and
Cicero. Generally speaking, these textual traditions are older, are written in
Hebrew, and—however Hellenistic one may decide them to be—do not wear any
of their Hellenism on their sleeves. Texts that cite Hellenistic authors directly, or
that borrow Hellenistic language and/or literary forms frankly, are not, of course,
necessarily less "Jewish." They are, though, more "Greco-Roman" for my
purposes here, since I am interested not in identifying cultural or religious
"Jewishness" *per se*, but rather in tracing the development and borrowing of an
identifiable Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. Sources that do wear Hellenism
much more on their sleeves will also be discussed below, as "Greco-Roman
Jewish traditions." For now, though, I am concerned with early materials that can
be called (in the qualified sense outlined above) part of a tradition distinct from
Greco-Roman literature generally, despite the fact that they are not building that

tradition in a vacuum isolated from the evolution of Greco-Roman culture generally.

The overall picture of foreigners and tyrants found in these traditions that I am calling "Jewish" is again evolving and ambiguous (as in the Greek and Roman traditions outlined above), but again, an image of the foreign tyrant is readily discernible. To begin with, there is a stream of tradition preserved in the interwoven traditions of the Hebrew Bible that is (in Rainer Albertz's words) highly "critical of domination"[1]—especially when it comes to any kind of domination exercised by "the Gentiles." These Gentiles, or "nations" (Hebrew הַגּוֹיִם, Greek τὰ ἔθνη) are, Albertz writes, most often painted as strange and antagonistic others, against whom the god of Israel must defend his people.[2]

Interestingly for our purposes here, this criticism of foreign tyranny extends, as in the Greek and Roman traditions traced above, to any Israelite rulers who are seen as imitators of such Gentiles and/or collaborators with them. Albertz cites as evidence of this tendency the divine threats found in Zechariah 10–11, in which the bad leaders or "shepherds" of Israel are not clearly distinguished from the alien powers they resemble, and/or with whom they co-operate.[3] In my eyes, though, we find a much clearer example of this rhetorical tendency in the story of the Israelites' demand for a king as told in 1 Samuel. The passage is characterized by an insistent, almost phobic rhetorical association of tyranny with "the nations," and Samuel insists that this participation in the "Gentile" monarchical system will inevitably lead to Jews "lording it over" other Jews in the worst "Gentile" style. I will quote it in full:

> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and
> came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "You
> are old and your sons do not follow in your ways;
> appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, *like other
> nations*."But the thing displeased Samuel when they
> said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed

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[1] Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. John Bowden; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 567, 568; trans. of *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1992).

[2] Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, 136–137, 590.

[3] Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, 576.

to the LORD, and the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but *they have rejected me from being king over them*. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, *forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you*. Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: *he will take* your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. *He will take* your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. *He will take* the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. *He will take* one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. *He will take* your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. *He will take* one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day *you will cry out because of your king*, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, "No! but we are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be *like other nations*" (1 Sam 8:4–20, emphasis mine).

The picture of kingship painted here is very dark. The benevolent rule of God and his prophet (in this case Samuel) is contrasted strongly and repeatedly with the kind of kingship practiced by "the other nations" (8:5, 20). The choice of the Israelites to submit to this foreign political system is identified as a rejection of God's good government (8:7) and closely associated with their submission in the past to foreign gods (8:8). The text makes it clear, in fact, that the Israelites are basically choosing to return to slavery under a greedy, grasping despotism. Samuel's speech takes the form of a "solemn warning" about the evils of a

foreign-style king, in which threats about what "he will take" are hammered home five times (8:11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). The Israelites want a king for no good reason, it seems. They just have a perverse desire to be "be like other nations" (8:20). Unfortunately, this perversion will return them to the very kind of slavery they suffered under other nations. As the foreign system takes its toll, they will actually begin to cry out to God for help (8:18) as they did under foreign tyranny in Egypt, and this time they will not be heard (8:18). They will in fact have brought foreign tyranny home, which means that there will be nowhere to go to get away—no exodus from the strange and destructive heathen system of government that they have chosen to import, set up, and serve as they once did the strange and destructive heathen gods mentioned in 8:8. The association of the foreign and the tyrannical is, in short, woven in a tight knot in this passage. Their association is in fact central to the themes of danger, infection, warning, and rejection that power the passage's anti-monarchical rhetoric.

A similar association of monarchy with foreigners and tyranny is also clearly visible in the more conciliatory warnings of Deuteronomy:

> When you have come into the land . . . and you say, "I will set a king over me, *like all the nations* that are around me," you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; *you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you,* who is not of your own community. Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You must never return that way again." And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him . . . so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God . . . neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment (Deut 17:14–20, emphasis mine).

This passage does not insist openly, as the rhetoric of 1 Samuel does, that the desire to participate in this system amounts to an explicit rejection of

legitimate forms of authority and ultimately of Yahweh himself (1 Sam 1 8:7). It is clearly stressed, though, that this is a characteristically foreign office (Deut 17:14), and that it is dangerous, since it carries the temptation of tyrannical behaviour. Specifically, the king must be watched very closely, and not allowed do what 1 Samuel says he always will, collecting horses and women and rights over everyone else (Deut 17:16, 17, 20). Interestingly, this passage not only shares the opinion expressed in 1 Samuel that kingship is essentially a foreign phenomenon, imported by Israel for no particular reason apart from a desire to be "like all the nations" (Deut 17:14). It also warns the Israelites specifically against ever putting an actual foreigner into this dangerous foreign office (17:15). There is even a related fear expressed that this compromise with Gentile modes of life might lead to a literal return into the land of their Gentile captors in Egypt (17:16). The metaphorical return to Egypt imagined in 1 Samuel, in which Israel once more cries out under oppression, is made quite literal here. The foreign office of kingship, then, carries the temptation of domestic (foreign) tyranny and the temptation of dangerous business with actual tyrannical foreigners, and Israel must "never return that way again" (17:16).

It is not clear exactly how this literary thread that associates monarchy with tyranny and foreigners relates to the Hebrew Bible's pro-monarchical stream of tradition. Albertz sees the anti-monarchical tradition as evidence of a literal and lasting "memory" of a distant "egalitarian" Israelite past, preserved in the Hebrew Bible tradition as the expression of the will of a conscious theological/political minority.[4] Richard Horsley builds in his work upon similar ideas of a consciously Jewish and consciously anti-authoritarian tradition. Horsley refers, for example, to Jesus' career as a "renewal" of "the traditional Mosaic covenantal principles of communal mutuality."[5] However these competing streams of tradition relate historically, it is enough for my purposes here to notice the way in which they relate rhetorically. It looks highly significant from my point of view, for example, that the Hebrew Bible's resulting composite tradition offers a compromise, in

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[4] Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion,* 166.
[5] Richard Horsley, "Renewal Movements and Resistance to Empire in Ancient Judea," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 76.

which "good" Israelite kings are those who break the mould of foreign tyranny associated with the office, and "bad" Israelite kings are those who imitate and/or collaborate with tyrannical foreigners. I have already noted that when the Israelites are allowed to adopt the foreign office of king, they are carefully forbidden (in Deuteronomy) ever to put an actual foreigner into this dangerous foreign office. The dangers of the office are further associated with foreign tyranny in the passage, though, by the mention of the risk of returning to Egypt. The risk of the self-aggrandizing royal habit of collecting horses, it seems, carries the additional risk of dealings with Egypt, the land of the oppressive rule to which Israel must never return (Deut 17:16). If, as seems likely, this collection of horses is interesting to a power-mad king partly because it amounts to participation in an ancient arms race involving mounted soldiers and chariots (cf. 1 Sam 8:11–12), the collection of horses from Egypt also implies the dangers of alliance with that nation and participation in its foreign and tyrannical system of influence. Like Zechariah's "worthless shepherds" who do not act like good Israelite kings, and are therefore cut off along with the foreign kings they collaborate with (Zech 9:1–14; 10:3, 11; 11:1, 3, 17), the "bad" king implied in Deuteronomy, who tyrannizes his fellow Israelites and associates himself with Egypt, will not be permitted to reign for long (Deut 17:20).

The association found in these passages—between tyrants and tyranny on one hand and foreigners on the other—is obviously significant for my purposes. It is not necessary to imagine that first-century Jewish writers knew all of the texts mentioned here, in anything like their present form. It is enough, I think, to notice that the association of foreigners with tyranny is multiply attested in the sources cited here, and to notice that these sources represent some of Israel's most ancient traditions. It is not at all clear, for example, that Acts 7:10–36, Romans 9:17, 1 Maccabees 4:9, and 4 Esdras 1:10 are all working from one text when they cite the story of Pharaoh. It is clear, though, that the story was sufficiently well-known to be found in many sources like these, and for the writers to assume that their audiences already knew its general contours—including the fact that Egypt's Pharaoh was an oppressive Gentile. 1 Maccabees 4:9–11 can thus draw upon the

story of God's intervention against Pharaoh as the model for a new Maccabean holy war of liberation waged against "the nations" (τὰ ἔθνη) and "the foreigners" (οἱ ἀλλόφυλοι). Stories about Israel's prophets and kings, of Moses and Pharaoh and deliverance from Egypt, are in this way an essential part of the *ethos* of Greco-Roman Judaism, regardless of the specific forms in which they were inherited and used by various authors and communities, and I will argue in the next section that their dependable association of foreigners with tyranny was folded by Jewish writers into the Greco-Roman "foreign tyrant" rhetorical recipe.

5. Greco-Roman Jewish Images of Foreign Tyranny

5.1. The Phenomenon of Greco-Roman Jewish Images of Foreign Tyranny

It is my thesis that the Gospel writers and other Jews of the Roman Empire made use of the Greco-Roman image of the foreign tyrant. Their rhetoric about tyrants should, in other words, be understood as Hellenistic as well as Jewish. To be specific, it should be seen as an example of Jewish participation in the Hellenistic form that Todd Penner has called "epideictic." In the next sections, I will therefore define what I mean by both "Hellenistic" and "epideictic," and offer examples. I will then focus directly on examples of Jewish rhetoric (other than the Gospels) that use the image of the foreign tyrant, and describe the place of that image within the big picture of Jewish Hellenistic epideictic rhetoric.

5.2. "Hellenism" in First-century Jewish Literary Production

Martin Hengel is probably the most recognizable name in the debates about the influence of Hellenism upon early Judaism, since the publication of his *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period.*[1] Hengel's later book on the first century CE is called,

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[1] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden, London: SCM, 1974); trans. of *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969).

interestingly, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ.* Even before opening his book, then, readers are alerted to a certain unease with the concept of "Hellenization" by the scare-quotes in the title. This unease is not due, though, to a worry that scholars of Judaism and Christianity are overstressing or overthinking Hellenization. In fact, Hengel argues the opposite: The process of Hellenization in the first century was so all-pervasive, he argues, that the word needs to be defined by scholars on a case-by-case basis in order to be useful at all: "Does it simply mean 'Greek in the late period' or 'oriental syncretistic'? Does it refer to technology, art, economics, politics, rhetoric and literature, philosophy or religion?"[2] Part of the need for precision in calling a phenomenon or a group (or in our case a rhetorical habit) "Hellenized," then, comes from simple fact that virtually everybody and everything were *Hellenized* somehow. It was everywhere, Hengel insists.[3] If nobody was *not* Hellenized,[4] scholars need to be precise in talking about groups or habits as Hellenized.

I will define the kind of Hellenization for which I am arguing, but first I should probably offer some evidence for Hengel's broad claims. One major piece of evidence for the claim that the entire "world" was highly Hellenized is the fact that even people like the the the anti-Hellenists of Syria and Palestine were highly Hellenized.[5] "Fragments of Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible have been found both in Qumran and in the Wadi Murabba'at, and in addition Greek legal texts have been found in the Wadi Murabba'at and Nahal Lever," he notes for example.[6] If isolated, isolationist, and/or reactionary Jewish communities were using Greek forms of thinking and writing,[7] we must expect that more "mainstream" and "integrated" Jewish people and communities were usually highly Hellenized as well. Hengel concludes as much, and cites numerous examples, especially in the area of "the influence of Greek education and

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[2] Martin Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (In collaboration with Christoph Markschies. Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989), 54.
[3] Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea,* 1–5.
[4] Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea,* 53.
[5] Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea,* 19, 30, 47–48, etc.
[6] Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea,* 21.
[7] See also Martin Hengel's "Qumran und der Hellenismus," in *Qumran: sa piété, sa théologie, et son milieu* (ed. M. Delcor; Paris: Duculot, 1978), 333–372.

literature," from all across the landscape of Jewish literary culture: "We find it already in late Hebrew and Aramaic literature, for example in Koheleth, Ben Sira, Daniel, or the Enoch writings. The first Palestinian Jewish author known to us who wrote in Greek, the anonymous Samaritan, was writing at the time of Ben Sira. He identifies Enoch, the primal sage of Gen. 5.22, with Atlas, the brother of Prometheus."[8] In support of this stress on the power and prestige of Greek education and literature, Hengel cites the testimonies of Greek training— sometimes formal in nature—for early rabbinical and Pharisaic leaders,[9] and notes the mention in the books of the Maccabees of an actual gymnasium in Judea: "We must expect that already at that time," Hengel concludes, "at the beginning of the second century BCE, there will have been a very effective Greek elementary school in Jerusalem, since Greek 'basic education' was the necessary precondition for a gymnasium and the training of ephebes in accordance with 'Greek custom.'"[10] He notes that Herod the Great was very interested in such Hellenistic learning, and even brought in a Greek tutor Nicolaus of Damascus.[11] Josephus, too, must have been well acquainted with Greek learning early on, he insists, if he was welcomed to write in the imperial court.[12] Elias Bickerman has also written on this footprint left by Greek learning in the heart of ancient Judea and the record of its literary production, citing the book of Tobit as an example: "The publication of the biography of the Tobiads shows that among the contemporaries of Ben Sira there were many in Jerusalem who not only read Greek but appreciated a book, written to the Greek taste."[13]

Education in Hellenistic forms was not limited to formal Greek education. As Mary E. Smallwood has noted, Herod also built theatres in Palestinian cities,[14] including Jerusalem itself.[15] The logical inference is that many Jews went to see such performances. At the very least, Smallwood insists, scholars of Hellenism

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[8] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 21.
[9] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 29, 37, 51–52.
[10] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 22.
[11] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 35.
[12] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 23.
[13] Elias Bickerman, The Jews in the Greek Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 233.
[14] Mary E. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations (Boston: Brill, 2001), 78–79, 84.
[15] Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, 84.

and Judaism should notice that these plays were not directly criticized in any surviving Jewish writings.[16] More positive evidence can be found elsewhere, though, as Smallwood notes concerning a Jewish community outside Judea: "A unique piece of evidence for a Diaspora community and its attitude toward Hellenism comes from Miletus, where the theatre has a series of seating-notices which include on marking the area reserved for practicising Jews . . . Jewish attendance of theatres is known from Philo, who not only went to theatrical performances himself but assumed that his readers would be sufficiently familiar with drama to appreciate allusions to it."[17]

What, then, to return to Hengel's question, does "Hellenization" mean for our purposes here? It means that the Greco-Roman world's most widespread patterns of basic education, its habits of rhetoric—both academic/theoretical and political/applied—and its most common and public forms of literature, philosophy, and performance were available and interesting to most Jewish communities of the first century. We have already seen that the common rhetorical habits and the common audience expectations associated with these widespread and very public forms included a kind of cultural self-definitional rhetoric that commonly and casually made use of the Greek (and then Greco-Roman) image of the foreign tyrant. I suggest (based on the examples offered in the section immediately below) that Jewish writers and communities who were rhetorically Hellenized in this way picked up the Hellenistic image of the foreign tyrant from these forms of public and competitive rhetoric—from the educational, political, and cultural mass media of their time—and used the image in their own rhetorical projects of self-definition and self-defence.

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[16] Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 84.
[17] Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 510.

5.3. "Epideictic" Hellenistic Rhetoric in First-century Jewish Literary Production

Todd Penner, in his book *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*, presents a careful outline of the development of Greco-Roman "Jewish apologetic literature"—a recognizably and self-consciously "Jewish" literature that deliberately uses recognizably Greco-Roman literary forms in its own self-definitional,[18] polemical/apologetic,[19] and missionary work.[20] The books just mentioned (Maccabees and Tobit) offer prime examples of this literary mode, as do Philo and Josephus. Josephus probably offers the best example of the phenomenon for my specific purposes here, in fact, and I will look at his work closely soon. Before zooming in on Josephus, though, I should add a few more details to the wide-angle picture of Jewish self-definition/self-defence using Hellenistic forms.

Penner locates this specifically Jewish literary phenomenon within G. E. Sterling's much wider category of first-century colonial/anti-colonial literature, a "literature of protest against foreign invasion that also adopted Greco-Roman values, assumptions, and modes of argumentation to establish the validity of the suppressed tradition."[21] This literary phenomenon is itself situated, Penner argues, in "a larger ethos of creating identity through competitive literary composition," a rhetorical ethos that he labels "Greco-Roman epideictic,"[22] and which is in *its* turn located within the competitive, rhetorical thrust of "Roman historiography more generally."[23] We have already seen very clearly that Greek and Roman literary traditions were politically interested and agonistic, building Greek and Roman identities by imagining "good" insiders in opposition to "bad" insiders and/or outsiders. The interested and agonistic rhetoric of Greco-Roman Jewish apologetic is, from this point of view, the natural result of participation in an

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[18] Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 238.
[19] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 236, 229.
[20] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 224.
[21] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 227–228.
[22] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 254.
[23] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 229.

interested, agonistic form of communication. Penner calls this competitive mode of self-definition through the vilification of the other "epideictic."

In his discussion, Penner describes "epideictic" (following G. A. Kennedy following Aristotle) as a rhetorical form intrinsically concerned with building group cohesion,[24] and notes that such cohesion is often encouraged through favourable comparison with outsiders. Penner thus writes that "*synkrisis* is an integral element of epideictic,"[25] as part of a mutually informative pairing of honour and shame, praise and blame. "Blame in epideictic composition is an integral part of *synkrisis*, whereby one establishes the superiority of one's own group by contrasting it with a rival. This feature is more muted in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic texts, but becomes more prominent in competitive environments such as that out of which Christianity emerged."[26]

I agree with Penner's analysis, and in my mind it is precisely this developing Hellenistic Jewish habit of appropriating the forms and *ethos* of Greco-Roman rhetoric that best explains the form and function of the rhetorical tyrant in Greco-Roman Jewish texts, including the Gospels. Others, too, have noticed competitive rhetoric in the Greco-Roman style at work within Jewish/biblical rhetoric. Luke T. Johnson, for example, in coming to terms with "anti-Semitic" and/or "anti-Judaic" rhetoric in the Gospels, has written on the remarkable similarities between the harsh and stereotyped mutual insults of the Roman Empire's philosophical schools on the one hand, and the acid insults of Christian and Jewish polemic on the other. Pointing to the extreme name-calling he finds in records of popular philosophical debates in the first century, Johnson argues that such harsh language reflects audience expectation more than any personal enmity between philosophers, and concludes that the intra-Jewish "anti-Semitism" recorded in the New Testament served a similar staged and stereotyped rhetorical purpose: "First-century Jews who disputed with each other used language conventional to their world. These conventions provide the appropriate

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[24] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 231.
[25] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 232.
[26] Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 260.

context for properly assessing the polemic of the NT."[27] It should probably be noted that Johnson does not think this socio-rhetorical analysis in any way excuses the vitriol of the New Testament's rhetoric, let alone the very real anti-Semitism to be found in the subsequent history of Christian interpretation. He does, however, insist that all discussions of the New Testament's insulting rhetoric should involve an understanding of the first-century rhetorical mode of stereotyped insults. If I am right, the insult of foreign tyranny was a similar Greco-Roman stereotype, similarly borrowed by the Jews of the first century (including the Gospel writers), and the story and implications of its Greco-Roman rhetorical pedigree deserve the same kind of attention.

In thinking about this pedigree, we should remember that many first-century Jews were exposed to Greco-Roman rhetoric (like the insult of foreign tyranny) in a general way through the imperial "mass media," including the theatre and other forms of public address. I include another note here on these media outlets (this time from socio-rhetorical critic Burton Mack), as a reminder that they were both highly "rhetorical" and highly visible:

> In Palestine alone there were over thirty Hellenistic cities during the time of Jesus, twelve within a twenty-five-mile radius of Nazareth. Greek cities had *gymnasia* (schools) and theaters. The remains of twenty Greek theaters have been unearthed by archaeologists in Palestine, one at Sepphoris, three miles north of Nazareth. The gymnasium, theater, and market (*agora*) were all traditional and popular places for speech making. Visiting dignitaries, civic leaders, teachers, and performers would be asked to address the people. Hellenistic culture was a culture of rhetoric and rhetoric was clearly a public affair.[28]

We should also keep in mind here the likelihood of exposure to Greco-Roman rhetoric (like the image of the foreign tyrant) through the specific mode of formal education. The Jews who left their writings behind for us were, after all, the relatively educated Jews, and as such had direct (if limited) access to the kinds of rhetorical forms we have been reviewing. Ian H. Henderson has pointed out,

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[27] Luke T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *JBL* 108/3 (1989): 440–441.
[28] Burton Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 29.

for example, that "the Gospels attest a modest, but real technical competence" in the *ethos* and forms of "Graeco-Roman rhetoric,"[29] and that their composers and first performers more than likely had a "smattering" of the rhetorical ABCs or "the basic *progymnasmata*"[30] of Greek education. This assessment makes sense in the light of the imperial educational context outlined above, wherein reading, writing, and rhetoric were interdependent modes of the most basic literary learning, and not even always clearly distinguished from each other by Roman educators. Almost any basic Greco-Roman education, including as it did elements of traditional basic rhetoric, would have offered the opportunity to practice writing and speaking against the figure of the foreign tyrant. I have already referred to Nigel Kennel's analysis of late Republican and early imperial Roman "tyrannophobia," which refers to the standard "anti-tyrannical" model speeches found in basic textbooks,[31] as well as Dunkle's study, which notes: "The tyrant was also a stock villain in the *controversia* which was so popular as a teaching device in the rhetorical schools of the Empire."[32] The Jews of the empire had access to the image of the foreign tyrant not only passively through the popular forms of theatre and public address, then, but also actively through the more privileged forms of basic education, which included repeating and/or composing stereotyped declamations against foreign tyrants. From a wide-angle view, the likelihood of a link between the tyrannophobic rhetoric of elite Greece and Rome and the tyrannophobic rhetoric of Jewish apologetic/epideictic looks relatively strong and simple.

The shapes assumed by the Jewish inheritance of this Greco-Roman image were far from simple, however, due to the fact that the relationships between Greco-Roman Jews and the Roman Empire were far from easy. The Jews of the empire walked a tricky line, as members of aligned and/or subjugated communities, between self-assertion and accommodation. Penner's "Jewish

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[29] Ian H. Henderson, "'Salted with Fire' (Mark 9:42–50): Style, Oracles and (Socio)Rhetorical Gospel Criticism," *JSNT* 80 (2000): 44.

[30] Ian H. Henderson, "Rhetorical Determinacy and the Text," *Semeia* 71 (1995): 163. See also Henderson, "'Salted with Fire,'" 45.

[31] Kennel, "Herodes Atticus and the Rhetoric of Tyranny," 351.

[32] Dunkle, "The Greek Tyrant," 155n.

apologetic literature" is itself, as an appropriation of the discourses of the powerful for the purpose of self-defence and self-definition, a clue as to the nature of this tense tightrope walk. It is a kind of rhetorical jiu-jitsu—an attempt to use the immense power of a dominant culture's images against it. Postcolonial biblical critics like Stephen Moore have noticed this same strategy at work in the New Testament's rhetorical engagements with Roman colonial language. The strategy is, in Moore's words, a "process by which the colonized strategically appropriate and redeploy specific elements of colonial or imperial culture or ideology; as such it is a practice of resistance through an act of usurpation."[33] This kind of "resistance through usurpation" is an important factor to keep in mind when conceptualizing the motivations and processes of Jewish Hellenization. Hengel himself was aware of this. In his *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians*, for example, he considers the highly Hellenized and yet unmistakably and proudly Jewish books of Ecclesiastes and ben Sira,[34] and explains their unique form by describing just such an imitative and competitive process of self-assertion: "Precisely by accepting new ideas and working intensively with them, ancient Judaism acquired the inner strength to pull itself out of the morass of alien and seductive civilization."[35]

Hengel's analysis here needs only the explicit caution of his own later work, which I cited above in introducing this section: We should not imagine that this process of resistance through usurpation involved a monolithic and pure "Judaism" engaging a monolithic alien "Hellenism" across a great divide. Any process of resistance through imitation—any attempt made by the less powerful group to "beat them at their own game"—necessarily implies a continuum of accommodation and opposition. It seems clear to me that the apologetic/epideictic writings of the first century's Hellenized Jews amount to just such an attempt to walk this tricky line. I also think that their use of the image of the foreign tyrant

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[33] Stephen D. Moore, "Mark and Empire," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*. (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 200.

[34] Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the pre-Christian Period* (trans. John Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 120–123; trans. of *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren. Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1976).

[35] Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians*, 125.

offers a clear and revealing example of this epideictic strategy at work, and now that I have sketched out my understanding of the phenomenon in general, I can offer some ancient examples that deal specifically with foreign tyranny.

5.4. Foreign Tyrants in Greco-Roman Jewish Epideictic

I have suggested that the best example of a first-century Roman writer building epideictic rhetoric using the stereotyped image of the foreign tyrant is probably Cicero. He showed us that an educated Roman writer could use stereotyped tyrannophobia to attack his enemies as un-Roman outsiders, even if he was not himself originally from Rome, and even if the traditional stereotypes to which he appealed were unabashedly Greek. He also showed us that the insult "tyrant" was as pliable as the compliment "Roman." Almost anyone could be called a tyrant if circumstances called for it, and if the insult could be made to stick. When it comes to first-century Jewish writers, the best example is, in my opinion, Josephus. Like Cicero, he is balanced in a privileged but insecure position in Rome, trying to show in his work that he measures up and belongs, and that his enemies do not. I will argue that he also makes use of the stereotyped image of foreign tyranny, exploiting its plastic identities and insults as much as Cicero did, but in a slightly subtler, more complicated way.

The first and most crucial complication arose from Josephus's peculiar position. As a former Jewish rebel who had come over to the Roman side and then accepted the position of resident expert on everything Jewish, he had to manage somehow to be both convincingly Roman and convincingly Jewish. In order to maintain his identity, or even just in order to survive and do his job, Josephus had to be Greco-Roman enough to seem trustworthy to elite Romans and Jewish enough to seem useful to them. In writing about Josephus's *Jewish War*, Nicole Kelley has underlined the importance of "his dual relationship to the Jewish community and the Roman imperial establishment," since the tension between them so often determines the content and the rhetorical thrust of his work: "[B]oth

the events in the narrative and the apologetic tone . . . indicate that Josephus was considered a traitor by both Jews and Romans in his own lifetime."[36] This apologetic balancing act is also discernible in his work *Contra Apionem*, in which Josephus insists that Jews can be as classically cultivated and educated as non-Jews,[37] and that nothing in their Jewishness hinders friendly relations with non-Jews.[38] He stresses in particular the story of King Solomon, who was well-disposed toward foreigners, like the queen of Sheba and others, and also well-respected by them, to the point of meriting a special mention for his temple in "the records of the Tyrians"[39] The image of Solomon in Josephus's work provides a good starting point for our purposes here, when it comes to examining Josephus's project of simultaneous (Greco-Roman) accommodation and (Jewish) self-assertion. I suggest that its apologetic balancing act is centred precisely on an epideictic Jewish form of the Greco-Roman rhetoric of foreign tyranny.

5.4.1. Josephus on Solomon: Good Jews are not Foreign Tyrants

Josephus's agenda and his method when it comes to foreign tyrants are illustrated, I think, in the way that he distinguishes a "good ruler" like Solomon from a "bad ruler" like the Pharaoh. His accounts of Solomon involve, as Louis H. Feldman has noticed, significant embellishments: "Josephus praises the character of Solomon by a number of touches not found in the biblical narrative. Thus, whereas Kings 1:52 does not mention Solomon's qualities of mildness and moderation, Josephus does so, knowing that this was one of the four cardinal virtues of the Greeks and that *singularis moderatio* was particularly prominent in the emperor Tiberius, according to Velleius Paterculus (2.122.1)"[40] In order to

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[36] Nicole Kelley, "The Cosmopolitan Expression of Josephus' Prophetic Perspective in the Jewish War," *HTR* 97 (2004): 257.

[37] See Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World: His Portrait of Solomon," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 69.

[38] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 78.

[39] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 77–78.

[40] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 72–73.

make Solomon into a good Roman ruler, a kind of Jewish Tiberius, Josephus strategically adds and subtracts details in his retelling.[41] For example, when Solomon has Joab killed, "Josephus remarks that he sent Beniah 'with orders to remove him and bring him to the judgement hall to make his defense,' contrary to 1 Kings 2:29 where Solomon gives orders to Beniah to 'go fall upon him.'"[42] Josephus also adds, significantly for our purposes, that Joab was a powerful man of "bloodthirsty ambition."[43] We have already seen what Roman elites in the first century thought about powerful individuals of bloodthirsty ambition. They were considered to be tyrants-in-waiting, and threats to good order best nipped in the bud by respectable authority.

From the point of view of an educated elite Roman audience, then, Solomon is not only distanced by Josephus's version of the Joab story from potential charges of tyrannical behaviour. Thanks to Josephus's strategic embellishments, Solomon is actually the story's tyrannicidal hero. Josephus has succeeded in walking a line here between accommodation and self-defence. He has lionized a "good" Jewish ruler, and countered the Roman imperial expectation that any such barbarian king would be just another oriental despot, precisely by making Solomon play the part of a "good" *Roman* ruler.

In discussing Roman opinions and monarchies, I think we should also remember that some imperial Romans thought that kings could be good, as long as they were not tyrants. Philo seems to be taking this assumption for granted and putting it to use from a Greco-Roman Jewish point of view, when he writes that "a king is the opposite of a tyrant" (*Leg All.* 3.79). Josephus, too, confidently lists "king" and "tyrant" as contrasting forms of monarchical rule, in discussing the career of Hyrcanus (*Antiquities* 14.9.1). He is therefore most probably counting on this Roman distinction to some degree in painting his positive portrayal of legitimate Jewish monarchy. He may also be counting on the Roman assumption mentioned above that kings are *especially* acceptable in *foreign* contexts, where the people are not quite cut out for self-rule on the Roman model, but can still

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[41] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 75–76.
[42] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 75.
[43] Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World," 75.

benefit from "good kings" who are acceptable and sympathetic to Rome. (See the discussion of Josephus's Herod below.) This Roman prejudice works subtly in Josephus's favour here, lending "good" Jewish monarchy a degree of dignity, in a way that does not threaten or embarrass Roman authority and propriety. Josephus does not, then, limit his Jewish apologetic use of the foreign tyrant stereotype to complete reversals of Roman expectation. In fact, Josephus can play the foreign tyrant card in a way that is very straightforward, when it suits his own subtle apologetic purposes. Tessa Rajak has written, for example, about the way that Josephus (like Philo and other highly Hellenized Jewish writers) used the stereotype of the angry tyrant, and her findings are very interesting for our purposes here.

5.4.2. Josephus on Pharaoh: Foreign Tyrants are not Good Jews

The stereotyped tyrants of the Greco-Roman imagination were people at the mercy of their own emotions, often especially their own anger,[44] and Rajak has demonstrated that Hellenistic Jewish writers increasingly embraced this stereotype.[45] The Pharaoh of the LXX, for example, is quite faithful to his characterization in the Hebrew Bible, but in Philo and Josephus his part is expanded to stress his unreasonable anger, making sure he "behaves as a Greek tyrant, with his passions grotesquely out of control."[46] King Nebuchadnezzar is similarly characterized as an angry, out-of-control despot in Daniel and Judith,[47] Rajak further notes, as is Ptolemy in 3 Maccabees,[48] and the τύραννος Antiochus in 4 Maccabees.[49] It is interesting and important, I think, to notice that Josephus did not at all defend the Pharaoh against Roman prejudices about foreign tyranny, as he did Solomon. In fact, his account plays up Roman expectations of foreign

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[44] Tessa Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (ed. Tessa Rajak *et al.*; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 110–113.

[45] Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 115–125.

[46] Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 115–116.

[47] Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 117–118.

[48] Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 120–124.

[49] Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 118–120.

tyranny in the Pharaoh's case, in order to underline the Egyptian despot's villainy for his Greco-Roman audience.

I mention this tendency in Josephus (and others) because I think Rajak is right to see these "angry tyrant" embellishments as stereotyped Hellenistic touches generally, but also because I think that the specific Hellenistic stereotype of the foreign tyrant is at work here. The "bad" kings that Rajak has noticed in these Jewish writings are indeed all apparently out-of-control tyrants. I would also note, though, that none of them is a Jew in good standing. They are all out-of-control tyrannical *foreigners*, and enemies of the Jews. This is a very good rhetorical move for a writer in Josephus's position. His picture of the enemies of the Jews not only borrows the power of a dominant Greco-Roman insult, in order to use it against hostile heathen kings, it also implicitly puts all "good Jews" and "good Romans" on the same side, set against all such out-of-control foreign tyrants. Good Jews are good not only because they are like good Romans (as Solomon is like Tiberius), but also because they hate the same people that all good Romans hate (in this case, angry foreign tyrants). The implicit rhetorical logic at work here runs something like this: If "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," then good Jews must be distinct from good Romans, but not at all threateningly or embarrassingly foreign. Josephus has succeeded in pulling off another epideictic balancing act. In his *Life of Moses* (2.4.20), Philo accommodated his Hellenistic heritage by differentiating between "Greeks" and "barbarians," even while lionizing his Jewish heritage, implicitly by excusing Jews from the latter category, and explicitly by insisting that both Greeks and barbarians had been changed for the better by the life of Moses. Josephus performs a similar rhetorical operation of association with, accommodation to, and lionizing differentiation from his Roman cultural heritage, in his life of Solomon.

So far we have seen how the image of the foreign tyrant helped Josephus to define a Jewish identity appropriate to his needs, a picture of good Jews who are (due to their natural and honourable affinities with good Romans) naturally allied with Rome against un-Roman, tyrannical foreigners. The image is also very

useful to Josephus, though, when it comes to defining "bad" Jews. Here, as before, the strategic adoption of the image of the foreign tyrant is convenient. If foreign tyrants are heathen Pharaohs, then good Jewish leaders must be doubly unlike them. They must also, incidentally, be friendly to the Rome that stands against all such foreign tyrants. Bad Jewish leaders, then, must behave like out-of-control foreigners, and good Jews and good Romans must naturally be allied against them. This is the final piece in the rhetorical vision Josephus is building with the traditional tool of the image of the foreign tyrant—his necessary vision of a distinct but conciliatory imperial Greco-Roman Jewish identity.

5.4.3. Josephus on Herod and the Sicarii: Bad Jews are Foreign Tyrants

We have seen that the ambivalence of the image of the foreign tyrant sometimes allowed Josephus to walk a rhetorical tightrope between critique and recovery, and between Jewish and Roman identities. This alternating current in his rhetoric continues in his use of the image in constructing his rhetorical picture of the Judean king Herod, and of the Sicarii and other Judean "bandits" and "rebels."

In his review of Herod's life, in which he drew heavily from Josephus, Samuel Sandmel wrote that "[i]f the life of Herod were fiction, something dreamed up by a novelist, we would be inclined to wonder about some excesses. We would probably say that the novel was filled with too much violence, too much passion, too much cruelty."[50] Sandmel accordingly called his study *Herod: Profile of a Tyrant*. Without disputing the historicity of any particular detail in Herod's career, I think it is important to notice that the tyrannical "profile" that Sandmel has identified *is* in fact a literary construction. Josephus did simply not write a biography of Herod in the modern sense, and end up with the profile of a tyrant. It seems to me at least as accurate to say that he began with the Greco-Roman profile of "the rhetorical foreign tyrant," and incorporated historical details wherever he could, for his own rhetorical purposes.

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[50] Samuel Sandmel, *Herod: Profile of a Tyrant* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1967), 11.

In 2006, Tamar Landau published a book called *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*. "The Herod narratives present us," she wrote, "with an opportunity to examine Josephus' good knowledge of Greco-Roman historiography and command of rhetoric."[51] Landau does not herself make much of this opportunity to examine this use of traditional Greco-Roman rhetoric, since her focus in *Out-Heroding Herod* is narratological. She is more concerned with discovering the rhetoric of his narrative than with his use of "rhetoric" in the Greco-Roman sense. She does, however, note that Josephus "alludes to earlier historians [and] implements rhetorical tools throughout the narratives."[52] She also notes that these stereotyped rhetorical gestures overwhelmingly point toward the stereotyped image of the rhetorical tyrant: "The impression of an unruly tyrant, which Josephus gradually builds into a complex portrait ... alludes to more abstract discussions familiar from Greek historiography, concerning the 'best regime': what are the boundaries between monarchy and tyranny, when does a king transgress those and become a tyrant, and what are the implications of tyranny for society."[53]

I think that Landau's analysis can be expanded usefully for our purposes here. An increased attention to the norms of the Greco-Roman rhetoric that she identifies as basic to Josephus and his ideal audiences can make the rhetorical tyrant behind Josephus's Herod show up even more strongly. Landau notes at one point, for example, that Josephus's depiction of Herod looks modelled upon previous Greco-Roman accounts of tyrants, in its depiction of his suffering despite his immense riches.[54] This is a sensible hunch. Josephus also calls Herod, though, as Landau notes, "a commoner turned into a king,"[55] and from a Roman elite point of view, this is not necessarily a piece of praise that only turns to tragedy when all is lost in Herod's downfall due to excess. As we have seen, any local "commoner" who becomes "king" in a distant province is a potential tyrant.

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[51] Tamar Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 188.

[52] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 188.

[53] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 80–81; see also the reference to Herod's disastrous flirtation with "tyranny" on 193.

[54] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 108.

[55] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 189.

Likewise, from a Roman point of view, the cruelty that Landau notes in Josephus's characterization of Herod[56] is not simply part of a sad morality play on the great dangers of great power, as she seems to think,[57] but suggests instead the kind of *crudelitas* that was (as mentioned above) assumed by imperial Roman society to be *inherent* in the tyrant—especially in the exotic barbarian tyrant.

It should be remembered, though, that Josephus's depiction of Herod for his Roman audience is not simply that of a barbarian or a tyrant, and I think this is where his usual balancing act enters the picture, as Herod's controversial character begins to work to Josephus's rhetorical advantage. Herod was a suspicious character to many, even at home, and Josephus takes the time to remind his audience sourly that "Herod was far more friendly toward the Greeks than toward the Jews" (*Antiquities* 19.329). Josephus also repeats the report that Herod was only half-Jewish (*Antiquities* 14.15.2). Herod is therefore a foreigner in some sense to both Romans and Jews. He is still carefully and consistently contrasted in Josephus's account with out-and-out "barbarians," though (*Antiquities* 14.13.4, 5; 14.15.8, etc). I think Herod's ambiguous status also works to Josephus's rhetorical advantage. One the one hand, this ambiguous Herod can be a legitimate foreign king, set up and even respected as such by Roman authority, in this case by Antony (*Antiquities* 14.15.9). He can fight with almost Roman courage against "barbarian bandits" (which actually makes him anti-tyrannical, in the elite Roman sense discussed above) and thereby reap the reward of Roman friendship:

> Antony sent out his army in all their proper habiliments to meet him, in order to pay Herod this respect, and because of the assistance he had given him; for he had heard what attacks the barbarians had made upon him [in Judea]. He also was very glad to see him there, as having been made acquainted with the great actions he had performed upon the road. So he entertained him very kindly, and could not but admire his courage. Antony also embraced him as soon as he saw him, and saluted him after a most affectionate manner, and gave him

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[56] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 22, etc.
[57] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod,* 193.

the upper hand, as having himself lately made him a king (*Antiquities* 14.15.9)

Notice that in congratulating Herod, the Roman administrator also manages to congratulate himself here for his colonial wisdom, "having himself lately made him a king." Insofar as Herod is a killer of foreign tyrants and/or bandits, he is a good Roman (foreign) king. Judea is also now free, thanks to him, of a lot of foreign bandits, an accomplishment that has earned him the title of "saviour and protector" (*Antiquities* 14.15.8)—a song of local heroism sung in a very Roman key.[58] Notice too that it was Antony who made Herod a king. In Flavian Rome, the Egypt-friendly and non-Augustan Antony would not have been seen as a very good Roman himself. Herod's faults become even more understandable from this point of view, as a natural effect of his imperfect Roman credentials. If the Augustan dynasty had been behind the appointment of the Jewish king, he might never have turned out to be a foreign tyrant at all. Once again, Josephus succeeds in imagining something like an independent and dignified Jewish monarchy that nevertheless fits more or less comfortably into the ideological and administrative systems of the Roman Empire. Once again, the good Jew and the good Roman are reconciled in mutual respect, through their common rhetorical association with opposition to foreign tyranny and barbarism.

These positive images carry within themselves, of course, negative possibilities as well. If good Jews and good Romans just naturally get along, then bad Jews and bad Romans must be to blame for breakdowns in this harmony. This is where the ambiguities of Herod's identity and character, and of the foreign tyrant stereotype itself, work most strongly in Josephus's favour. Everything good about Herod and his legacy is directly attributable to the ways in which he was *not* a foreign tyrant. When he resisted the foreign tyranny of barbarian despots and bandits (*Antiquities* 14.15.3, 9), he was both a good Jewish king and a good Roman administrator. Everything bad about Herod, every way in which he was "a violent and bold man, and very desirous of acting tyrannically" (*Antiquities* 14.9.3) can be attributed to the ways in which he was a foreign tyrant. We have

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[58] These titles were favourites of the Greco-Roman imperial conquerors and their local administrators. (See the section below on Luke.)

already seen that he was only half-Jewish, and that he loved Greeks more than his own people. It is therefore understandable that he often turned out to be more of a foreign tyrant than a good Jew. From the imperial Roman point of view, on the other hand, his failure is almost predictable, as a provincial strongman who began by joining Rome against foreign tyranny, but then succumbed himself to the its temptations in the exotic orient. Those temptations were, as we have seen, assumed to be inherent both in the basic nature of foreigners and in the administrative risks of the office itself.

Landau concluded that Herod the tyrant served a dual symbolic function for Josephus: "Josephus seems to be using the portrait of Herod as an extended metaphor for two issues ... the possible benefits of an alliance with Rome, and the vices of extreme and tyrannical behaviour."[59] I agree, and I think that Landau's insights can be refined by noticing that these two issues are for Josephus one issue; Herod's successes and failures illustrate a struggle between allied good Jews and good Romans on the one hand, and foreign tyranny on the other. His story in Josephus amounts to colonial diplomacy through rhetoric, sketching out a world in which Jews and Romans can share praise and blame, by imagining foreign tyranny as the real enemy, both at home and away. In this negotiated space, the embarrassing historical memories and the continuing colonial problems of both sides can be transformed into meditations on a common struggle against barbarism within and without. Josephus's account of Herod's story attempts to make sense of Jewish identity within the Roman imperial system, then, by laundering a controversial piece of Jewish history through a convenient Greco-Roman rhetorical system. It is a strategy of self-defence through negotiated accommodation, not unlike his earlier diplomatic/military decision to try to save his homeland from harm by allying himself with Rome.

Herod, then, represents both the good Roman/Jew and the bad Roman/Jew. His story is one of understandably imperfect success. Josephus is himself, by implication, a very good Roman/Jew, whose educational and inspirational account reveals him to be allied with good Romans and good Jews

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[59] Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*, 81.

everywhere against the barbarism and foreign tyranny that attacked Herod from within and without. His brand of strategic accommodation with Rome is therefore understood throughout the narratives to be the appropriate choice. Herod's behaviour leaves him sliding around the middle of the spectrum of Jewish/Roman honour and dishonour Josephus is constructing. At the other end are the bad Jews whom both Jews and Romans must oppose. A good example of these bad Jews is found in his rhetorical account of the Jewish rebels, in which the image of foreign tyranny is again an essential ingredient.

Many Jews could or would not choose Josephus's path of strategic accommodation. They are, therefore, predictably identified in his account as bad Jews, using the by now predictable language of foreign tyranny. The Sicarii, for example, are "bandits" (λῃσταί) who are "bent on tyranny" (*Jewish War* 2.254; 2.17.8–9; 7.261; 7.8.1.260–262), and he consistently pairs these insults in his attacks on them. It may seem odd at first glance for him to equate the threat of banditry with the threat of tyranny, but as we have already seen, the association of pirates and tyrants makes perfect sense within the context of the stereotyped insults of Greco-Roman rhetoric.

To begin with, the names "pirate" and "robber" are, in the Roman rhetorical context, a lot like the name "tyrant," in that they are more like shifting insults than settled and descriptive terms.[60] Like "tyrant," the insult "bandit/robber/brigand/pirate" (λῃστής) was a conveniently wide category. Pirates on the sea were distinguishable in theory from bandits on the land,[61] but in actual practice this was rarely done in Greek rhetoric,[62] and in Latin, there was only one word to begin with (*latro*).[63] Philip de Souza sums it up this way in his 2002 study *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*: "Piracy is a term applied in a pejorative manner ... They are men who have been designated as such by other people, regardless of whether or not they consider themselves to be pirates. In the Graeco-

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[60] Philip de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–2.
[61] De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 9–12.
[62] De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 2–9.
[63] De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 13.

Roman world the use of the term pirate as a term for undesirable 'others' is the usual way in which piracy is presented."[64]

The insult of banditry was not only comparable to that of tyranny in terms of its rhetorical, evaluative, and plastic nature, though. As we saw above, the association of banditry with tyranny was itself basic to the ideology of Roman rule. In the case of Herodes Atticus, it was assumed by Roman elites that local leaders in distant parts of the empire sometimes tried to muster popular support in order to set up barbaric "tyrannies," i.e. in order to secede to some degree from the Roman system. This assumption resulted in a rhetorical association of the words "pretender" with the word "tyrant," that took hold in the first century and persisted well into the fourth,[65] and the word "robber" was in its turn dependably associated with the word "pretender."[66] Tyrants, foreign and local, were essentially robbers. Ramsay MacMullen has traced the survival of this rhetorical association, for example, in Aelius Aristides, Marcus Aurelius, and Augustine.[67] We have seen already seen that when the philosopher Appianus defied death by calling Commodus a tyrant,[68] he also made sure to call him a brigand.[69] We have seen that Cicero at first painted Caesar as rabble-rouser, pretender, criminal, and tyrant all at once. The constellation of these insults was not at all odd or coincidental, then, from an educated Roman point of view. It was a logical rhetorical expression of what MacMullen calls "a long and essentially consistent philosophic tradition"[70]:

> The principal matter of interest to be drawn from
> the preceding discussion is the unanimity with
> which men appealed to Stoic-Cynic political
> philosophy, in at least their more public utterances,
> from the first to fourth centuries. No doubt to a
> smaller audience they spoke of the emperor's
> cruelty and greed … or of whatever local grievances
> suggested. The only common word, however, in the

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[64] De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 1–2.
[65] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 221–225.
[66] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 223.
[67] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 224.
[68] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 222. See P.Oxy 33.
[69] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 222.
[70] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 224.

> trial scenes is ... *latro* ... Emperors who are
> attacked appeal only to the same ideals, calling the
> enemy tyrant in turn, or robber.[71]

From this point of view, Josephus's insistent portrayal of the Sicarii as bandits and tyrants is not odd or coincidental, either. It is a logical part of his attempt to distance himself from all of the bad Jews—the Jews who did not choose his path of strategic accommodation. Martin Goodman has written on the way that this "abuse" of some Jews in Josephus's rhetoric serves to justify the Roman and pro-Roman positions: "From the point of view of his apologetic the more abuse ... the better. It would exculpate the Romans from embarrassing responsibility for the destruction of the Temple and indicate at the same time to the gentile audience how different Josephus and his friends were to the scum who had opposed Titus."[72] The Jews who continued to rebel after Josephus stopped are all, from this self-justifying point of view, low-class "revolutionary tyrants whose brutality to their compatriots and self-imposition on an unwilling population are constantly stressed."[73] According to Goodman, Josephus's depiction of bad rebel Jews as a means of self-definition and self-defence for pro-Roman Jews, and the accusation of tyranny is a fundamental element within this rhetorical project:

> Tyranny, says Josephus (*B.J.* 2.275–6), was the aim
> of the politicians who caused chaos by their faction
> fighting when Albinus was procurator ... Tyranny
> was also the motivation of the leaders throughout
> the war, as Josephus could hardly have made clearer
> in his estimation of John, Simon b. Gioras and
> Eleazar b. Simon: they are described as tyrants no
> less than five times in the prologue to *B.J.* (*B.J.*
> 1.10, 11, 24, 27, 28). The nation had throughout the
> war been full of the quarrelsome strife of tyrants,
> according to the speech attributed to Titus by
> Josephus (*B.J.* 6.343); Eleazar b. Simon, disposed to
> tyranny himself even in A.D. 66 (*B.J.* 2.564), could
> not brook a tyrant younger than himself and
> therefore broke away with his Zealot following
> from John (*B.J.* 5.5); Simon b. Gioras had also been

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[71] MacMullen, "The Roman Concept 'Robber/Pretender,'" 225.
[72] Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66–70* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 198–199.
[73] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 199.

> bent on tyranny in A.D. 66 (*B.J.* 2.652) and it was
> this desire which impelled him to collect a force to
> attack John and the Zealots (*B.J.* 4.508); the same
> motivation had impelled John to power (*B.J.* 4.508),
> and, once achieved (*B.J.* 4.389), it was his
> tyrannical monopoly of power which persuaded his
> Idumean allies to desert him in A.D. 68 (*B.J.* 4.566).
> Josephus uses the language of tyranny consistently
> to describe the Zealots (*B.J.* 4.151, 158, 347). This
> is the main term used of John and Simon throughout
> the narrative of the end of the revolt (cf. *B.J.* 4.564;
> 5.439; 6.286, 323, 325, etc.).[74]

Goodman's insight is relevant for our purposes here, especially if it is extended by an increased attention to the stereotyped and rhetorical nature of these accusations, and their central place in Josephus's pro-Roman project of defamation and self-defence. As Goodman notes, the accusation of tyranny is being used as a stereotype, by everyone and against everyone, including Josephus himself:

> *To some extent this language of tyranny may be*
> *employed by Josephus because it was apparently in*
> *current use during the war in abusing political*
> *opponents.* Ananus, addressing the people, called
> the Zealots 'tyrants' (*B.J.* 4.166, 178), as did Jesus
> b. Gamalas speaking to the Idumeans (*B.J.* 4.258).
> In return, the Idumean leader described Ananus'
> coalition as a tyranny (*B.J.* 4.278). Josephus himself
> was accused of the same crime, being denounced by
> his enemies not only for wanting to rule in Galilee
> as a despot (*Vita* 260, 302), but even grander
> designs on a monopoly of power in Jerusalem (*B.J.*
> 2.626).[75]

He also notes that all of these competing leaders seem to have been involved in extended propaganda wars, which included "anti-tyrannical" rhetoric at public assemblies:

> *Popularity with such assemblies was achieved by a*
> *well-developed use of propaganda, as Josephus*
> *attests. Most blatantly, all politicians portrayed*
> *themselves as democrats.* This was the height of
> praise for Josephus' ally Ananus in the eulogy

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[74] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 207–208.
[75] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 207–208 (emphasis mine).

> pronounced on him by the historian in recounting his death. Ananus, despite his high-priestly birth, delighted to treat the very humblest as his equal, loving liberty, democracy and the public welfare. He excelled in rhetorical appeals to the people; he was a true leader of the demos (*B.J.* 4.319–21; cf. 4.210). Gorion b. Joseph is also described as a person of exalted rank and birth who was nonetheless a democrat (*B.J.* 4.358). *Every faction tried to portray itself as the genuine representative of the people opposed to self-seeking tyrants.*[76]

Goodman's analysis needs extending for our purposes here, however, since it ends by taking Josephus at his word on the character and motivations of his enemies. It is reasonable, Goodman says, to "accept the motivation which is consistently ascribed by Josephus to all the Judean leaders before and during the revolt … In Josephus's terminology, they were bent on tyranny (cf. *B.J.* 7.261), that is, sole control unchecked by others."[77] From my point of view, this looks like a mistake. It looks too easy to say that "in Josephus' terminology," tyranny means "sole control unchecked by others," since as we have seen, "tyranny" was in Josephus's imperial Roman parlance not a descriptive "term" at all, but rather a dependable rhetorical arrow in a quiver of insults. It was not a term of political theory, used to identify and describe political ideals or goals. It was a plastic and polemical rhetorical image, used to define and defend one's own position by identifying and vilifying Rome's enemies, within and without. We have also seen that Josephus seems to have been very good at using the image in precisely this way. In reading Josephus's descriptions of the "tyranny" of Jewish rebels, then, I think we need to assume that he is using the image as an insult, not a descriptive term of political theory, and remember that it is a quintessentially Roman insult. Coming from Josephus's pen, it is an expression of the Jewish-Roman accommodation he has embraced, employed against all of the embarrassing rebels who have rejected such accommodation. It uses the elite Roman stereotype of the provincial rabble-rouser's petty tyranny to make foreign tyrants of all such "bad"

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[76] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 218 (emphasis mine).
[77] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 207.

rebel Jews, and to distance himself from them, as he once again implicitly defines good Jews and Romans as united against such barbarism.

Josephus is not, then, simply reporting the widespread polemical use of the accusation of tyranny, and imitating it, as Goodman suggests. He is working with the stereotyped accusation of tyranny strategically, incorporating it into the wider "bandit-tyrant" rhetorical image of Roman ideology, and relying upon it heavily in his construction of a legitimate Roman Jewish identity. The example of Ananus, cited above by Goodman, offers a good illustration. While it is true that Josephus reports an accusation of tyranny made against Ananus by the Idumeans (*B.J.* 4.278), he does not simply let it stand as a matter of historical record. He corrects the accusation against Ananus, and does it in a very Roman way. Goodman himself notes: "This was the height of praise for Josephus' ally Ananus in the eulogy pronounced on him by the historian in recounting his death. Ananus, despite his high-priestly birth, delighted to treat the very humblest as his equal, loving liberty, democracy and the public welfare. He excelled in rhetorical appeals to the people; he was a true leader of the demos (*B.J.* 4.319–21; cf. 4.210)."[78] According to Josephus, then, Ananus was in fact a good Roman Jew—a good anti-Idumean anti-tyrant. The evidence for Ananus' anti-tyranny is also very Roman: He was a person of high birth who nevertheless had a democratic spirit, and he expressed that anti-tyrannical spirit through his great rhetorical skill. This is a very aristocratic sort of anti-tyranny, in which educated rhetoricians guide "the people," and protect them from tyrants imposed from above and/or thrown up by mobs from below.

Josephus's eulogy for Ananus describes, in short, the kind of Romanized Jewish leader Josephus wanted to be: a collaborator for the people, whose Greco-Roman skills and Jewish credibility work to defend the people against tyranny, including the tyranny of local bandits. Richard Horsley has written about "banditry" in first-century Palestine, from rebels who opposed Rome and Herod to those who simply robbed other locals,[79] and has noted Josephus's irritation with

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[78] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea,* 218 (italics mine).
[79] Richard Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (NY: Winston, 1985), 63–69.

such banditry and with the tolerant administrators like Gessius Florus who enabled them in his view: "To Josephus and other well-to-do Jews, Florus' administration seemed a partnership with the brigands. Josephus claims [Antiquities 20.255] that now 'the majority of the people' (*hoi polloi*) practiced banditry."[80] The fact that Josephus associates "rebellion" and "the majority" with banditry—even in exaggeration—means, of course, that what Josephus calls "banditry" probably describes a fluid spectrum that ranged from outright political violence against Rome on the one hand to crimes of resentment and/or necessity against "the Galilean gentry"[81] who collaborated with the Roman administrators. This rhetorical association of rebellion with banditry and tyranny serves Josephus's needs very well as an elite Jew in league with Rome. It also implicitly puts good Jews and good Romans on his side against the foreign tyranny of Judean "bandits" who could or would not take the road of accommodation, and counters the potential accusation (which Josephus may have heard or imagined) that his own accommodation amounted to a surrender to foreign tyranny. We have already seen that some of the prophetic voices preserved in the Hebrew Bible identified Gentile rulers and their local collaborators as foreign tyrants. Josephus does not ask to be seen in this way. In the rhetoric of his account, he insists that he is, along with all good Jews and all good Romans, actually defending Judea from foreign tyranny.

Josephus's brand of defence through accommodation is understandable for a Jew living in the early Empire, and especially one living and writing in early imperial Rome itself, where Jews enjoyed a complicated and uneven welcome.[82] Roman Jews in the first century were tolerated, but urged not to abuse the special rights that Julius Caesar had granted them in return for their support in his rise to power.[83] They were apparently considered quite interesting by some of the Roman elite, but certainly seem to have been treated by the majority with a kind of

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[80] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 69.
[81] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 65.
[82] Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960; repr., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 27–36.
[83] Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 26.

"amused contempt."[84] In such a situation, the value of successful "Greco-Roman Jewish apologetic" becomes very clear. Not only did the form of borrowed rhetoric offer a measure of self-respect to groups of Jews immersed in an imposing and dominant Greco-Roman discourse, it also offered a means of self-definition and self-defence, as they used it to formulate ideas of what made them distinct from the dominant forms of Greco-Roman culture, and from each other.

Religious and political identities are, as R. Scott Appleby and others have observed, imaginary and agonistic by nature.[85] I have argued that in trying to build his version of the religio-political identity of the Greco-Roman Jew, Josephus found the creative and agonistic image of the foreign tyrant invaluable. It should probably be noted in closing this section that non-Jews used similar strategies in their own rhetorical negotiations with Roman power. When Vindex the Gaul, for example, led a rebellion against Nero through Galba, his slogan was "freedom from the tyrant."[86] Galba's coins proclaim "*libertas restituta*" and "*roma renascens.*"[87] In this way, an identifiably foreign attack on Rome was packaged in its war propaganda as a defence of Rome. It seems possible, even likely, that Vindex really was "resisting tyranny in the old Roman tradition," at least in his own mind.[88] In defending himself against the "bad" Rome, in other words, the foreigner Vindex was also defending the "good" Rome. I will argue that the Greco-Roman Jewish rhetoric of the gospels—and their epideictic treatment of the foreign tyrant image in particular—operates, like the work of Josephus, on the same kind of rhetorical continuum of accommodation and resistance.

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[84] Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 38.

[85] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 59–60.

[86] Colin M. Wells, *The Roman Empire* (rev. ed. London: Fontana, 1992), 153.

[87] Wells, *The Roman Empire*, 153.

[88] Wells, *The Roman Empire*, 154.

5.4.4. Stereotyped Images of Foreign Tyranny in the Greco-Roman Jewish Apologetic/Epideictic of the New Testament

"The New Testament documents were written against the background of the Roman Empire," writes David W. J. Gill, and "individuals lived and travelled in a world dominated by Roman culture and institutions."[89] Presumably, then, the Gospels will, like the records of Josephus, often participate in Greco-Roman norms, including rhetorical norms like the image of the foreign tyrant. It is true that the Gospel writers were not as highly educated as Josephus from an elite Roman point of view. As Hengel says, they apparently "either completely lacked real Greek education ... or their knowledge was very fragmentary,"[90] since "access to higher education was confined to a very thin upper stratum."[91] It is nevertheless also true, as we have seen, that the Jews of the first century were exposed to the norms of Greco-Roman rhetoric in many ways. We have seen that they were exposed to its traditions of political and artistic public address, and we have seen that these forms habitually used the image. We have seen that anyone capable of reading and writing had some acquaintance with basic rhetorical forms, and that the image of the foreign tyrant was consistently included in the empire's basic rhetorical and progymnasmatic educational materials and traditions. In the particular case of the Gospels, we have seen that they "attest a modest, but real technical competence" in the *ethos* and forms of "Graeco-Roman rhetoric,"[92] and that their first composers and performers most likely had at least a "smattering" of this basic Greco-Roman education.[93]

It is my assumption that the people who formulated and transmitted the material that became the Gospels must, as members of a society that was educated, politicized, propagandized, and entertained with the image of foreign tyranny, usually have been aware of the image on some level. Many of them must

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[89] David W. J. Gill, "The Roman Empire as a Context for the New Testament," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; New York: Brill, 1997), 389.
[90] Hengel, The *"Hellenization" of Judaea*, 55.
[91] Hengel, The *"Hellenization" of Judaea*, 56.
[92] Henderson, "'Salted with Fire,'" 44.
[93] Henderson, "Rhetorical Determinacy and the Text," 163; see also Henderson, "'Salted with Fire,'" 45.

have been able to work with it, or have it work upon them. Many of them must have been capable of using it in their own rhetoric, as educated Roman children did in their practice speeches, or at least capable of reading it into the rhetoric of others, as the mass audiences of the Roman theatre did. Their facility with the image could have been active or passive, conscious or unconscious, but they could not all have been completely unfamiliar with it.

The ways in which the image worked will also have varied widely depending upon the status of the people using it and the people hearing it. Different cities and people were positioned differently vis-à-vis Roman power, and were affected very differently.[94] Different groups of Christians also had different relationships with imperial Roman culture, and with other Christians and Jews, and their readings of the image must often have varied accordingly. "Any reading of the New Testament background needs," in David Gill's words, "to take account of the local setting as well as the broader issues of empire."[95] In any case, though, the spread of Christianity (in and out of Judea and Judaism) depended heavily upon what Hengel calls "the Greek-speaking Hellenists,"[96] and these people can be assumed to have been—like Josephus—familiar in some way with the image of the foreign tyrant and willing to use it.

We have seen that the Jews of the first century adopted Greco-Roman modes of thinking and writing, as "a matter of political, economic, cultural, and spiritual self-preservation."[97] We have seen that they often did so, like Josephus, in a way that used the image of the foreign tyrant—with its plastic and powerful tools of self-definition and self-defence—to their own advantage, as they defined themselves in accommodation and opposition to the rest of the Greco-Roman world. The following sections will examine the ways in which the Gospel of Mark uses this image in order to build Christian identity within this same Greco-Roman Jewish continuum of accommodation and opposition.

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[94] Gill, "The Roman Empire as a Context for the New Testament," 392.
[95] Gill, "The Roman Empire as a Context for the New Testament," 389.
[96] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 42.
[97] Hengel, The "Hellenization" of Judaea, 30.

6. Markan Images of Foreign Tyranny

6.1. Mark 10:42-43a, Rome, and the Roman Rhetoric of Foreign Tyranny

In this section, I will look at Mark 10:42–43a as another example of the kind of epideictic rhetoric just described in Josephus: a strategic, stereotyped reference to foreign tyranny. This is a new approach to the text. Many interpreters of Mark simply accept the rhetoric of the passage at face value, accepting its equation of ancient Gentile rulers with tyranny as a matter of descriptive fact. As we will see, those who take a more critical and sophisticated approach to this equation, treating it as rhetoric—as an attempt at persuasion, self-defence and self-definition, not mere description—*also* habitually oversimplify it. They see it as first-century rhetoric, but for them it is simply anti-Roman. We will see that this is true both for those who see it as part of a laudable rebellion against a bad Roman system, and those who see it as a failed rebellion against Roman imperialism that ends by re-inscribing its tyrannical values. All of these approaches seem lacking to me, and the basic insight missing is that the image of foreign tyranny is most likely functioning in Mark as epideictic, as it did in Josephus. It therefore conforms to the patterns we have seen in Josephus—what might be called the four Rs of Greco-Roman Jewish epideictic about foreign tyranny: It is a *rhetorical* engagement with *Rome* that walks a tightrope between *resistance* and *rapprochement*. The words "rhetoric" and "Rome" are used here in the broad senses defined in the Introduction, as "culturally available theories and practices

of representation and persuasion" and "Roman imperial power and culture," respectively. From this point of view, Mark 10:42–43a should not be read as bald factual description of first-century non-Jewish authority, or as simple rebellion against Rome, successful or otherwise. Instead, I will argue that the image of foreign tyranny in Mark should be read, as in Josephus, as a strategic and limited kind of rhetorical co-operation with Rome. It is epideictic in the sense outlined above: a co-operation that co-opts, borrowing the thunder of a traditional Roman political insult in order to appropriate its rhetorical power of self-definition and self-defence.

The saying on foreign tyrants (Mark 10:42–43a) appears, as I noted in the Introduction, in the course of Mark's narrative of Jesus' journey toward death in Jerusalem. There are various theories about the saying's origin, the logic of its form, and its inclusion in Mark's gospel. Rudolf Bultmann thought that the whole story (Mark 10:32–45) had grown out of what he assumed to be the "older saying" in verse 43, about the Son of Man coming not to be served but to serve.[1] For Bultmann, this saying recorded the voice of "the Risen Lord" laying out post-Easter "Church rules."[2] The story was later supplied to underline the lesson, and "to that end it was provided with a foil in Mk 10:42."[3] C. S. Mann similarly saw the passage as two traditions – the teaching on authority (10:42–45) and the story of James and John asking for authority (10:35–41) – sewn together after the Passion.[4] Martin Dibelius saw the passage's sayings as formal "caps" to the story unit,[5] which was developed in order to commemorate the martyrdom of the sons of Zebedee.[6] Others (see Horsley and Myers, etc., below) treat the saying as more or less original to Jesus, and source critical questions do not drive their analyses. To me the problem of how and when the saying on foreign tyrants became a part

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[1] Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 144; trans. of *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1921).

[2] Bultmann, The *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 149.

[3] Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 144; see also 143, 146, 149, 330.

[4] C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; Toronto: Doubleday, 1986), 411.

[5] Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 43, 56–57; trans. of *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1919).

[6] Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 51, 60.

of the Gospel of Mark looks all but insoluble. Fortunately, we do not need to answer such questions in order to look into the rhetorical implications of its inclusion in Mark. It seems clear enough that the saying addresses an ideal internal community and offers an ideal norm for its theory and practice of authority. The ironic episodic lead-up to the story in Mark 10 underlines this purpose and increases its rhetorical impact: The children who deserved respect (10:13–16), the seeker who needed only poverty (10:17–22), the promised reward of persecutions (10:29–30), the teaching that "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (10:31), and the prediction of the Son of Man's impending humiliation and death (10:32–34) all sharpen the saying's paradoxical point about the nature of "power" and "greatness" within the ideal community of Jesus' followers.

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς·
οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν
αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι αὐτῶν κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν.
οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ὃς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι
ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος,καὶ ὃς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι
πρῶτος ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος· καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου
οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν
ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that
among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as
their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones
are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you;
but whoever wishes to become great among you
must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be
first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of
Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give
his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42–45).

It seems clear that Christology, community tradition, and community rule are working together here. From my point of view, though, the passage also represents an engagement with the traditional rhetoric of foreign tyranny. I will focus in this section on the work of those scholars who have noticed the rhetorical thrust of this passage, but who do not relate it to the stereotyped Roman rhetoric

of foreign tyranny, treating it either as a bare assertion of fact or as anti-Roman sentiment. I will then suggest that Mark 10:42–43a should instead be read in the context of Roman rhetoric, as an example of Greco-Roman Jewish epideictic.

6.2. Mark 10:42–43a as Naked Assertion of Fact about Gentile Tyranny

In her *Hermeneia* commentary on Mark, Adela Yarbro Collins writes that the saying about Gentile tyrants in Mark 10:42–43 simply "addresses what is commonly known."[7] For Yarbro Collins, its laudable Jewish tyrannophobia "rejects the actual relations of power in the surrounding societies."[8] She accepts the problem of Gentile tyranny as imagined in the rhetoric of the verse. From this point of view, the problem is not one of overlapping, competing groups and perceptions, but with "actual relations of power," and this problem furthermore originates outside the Jewish world, in "the surrounding societies." Yarbro Collins stresses this rather passive reading of the passage by repeating it in her commentary, insisting again that "these verses reject the actual relations of power in the early Roman imperial period."[9]

This passive reading is found even among commentators who are consciously on the lookout for first-century habits of rhetoric in Mark. According to Ben Witherington, for example, "Mark's rhetoric is of the sort one finds in the *progymnasmata*."[10] When Witherington treats Mark 10:42–43a, though, his work makes no reference at all to the basic rhetorical habits of the Greek *progymnasmata* and/or Roman declamations,[11] with their stereotyped speeches against stereotyped foreign tyrants. Instead, like Yarbro Collins he simply concludes that Mark's Jesus is opposed to the actual foreign tyrants of his world: "His example of leadership is diametrically opposed to the examples set by

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[7] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 498.
[8] Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 499.
[9] Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 499.
[10] Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 9.
[11] Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 60, 288–289.

secular authorities."[12] This common reading looks too simple to me, given the prevalence and power that we have seen associated with the image of the foreign tyrant within first-century habits of rhetoric, including those of the *progymnasmata* Witherington mentions.

6.3. Mark 10:42–43a as Naked Rebellion against Rome's Gentile Tyranny

Another frequent and overly simple reading of Mark 10:42–43a begins with the assumption that Mark's Gospel is the anti-tyrannical charter (myth) of a movement defining itself in egalitarian terms against "the Gentiles" of Rome.[13] The passage is therefore recognized as rhetorical and not merely descriptive, but its image of Gentile tyranny is read as a cipher for "Rome," and its rhetoric is therefore reduced to simple anti-Roman propaganda. John R. Donahue, for example, sums up the rhetoric of the Gospel of Mark in this way: "Mark's narrative world provides for his community a way to define its identity in contrast to the *ethos* of the Roman Empire ... Mark rejects the social stratification and abuse of power which shine through the narrative worlds offered us by Roman historians of the early empire.'"[14] This "anti-Roman" reading of Mark is quite popular, and appears especially often in readings of Mark 10:42–43a in particular.[15] Brian J. Incigneri, for example, specifically and repeatedly describes the *logion* as purely and simply anti-Roman.[16] Ched Myers' categorical analysis

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[12] Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 288.

[13] This may, in fact, be exactly the kind of rosy impression the Gospel was built to leave. See Burton L. Mack. *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

[14] John R. Donahue, "Windows and Mirrors: The Setting of Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 23–24; see also 26)

[15] Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 277, 334, 346–348; H. N. Roskam, The *Purpose of Mark in its Historical and Social Context* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 17, 38; Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 17, 197; trans. of *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989); Herman C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Sociopolitical Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989 [no specific comment on Mark 10:42–43]); Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 288.

[16] Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 168, 172, 185, 277–278, 327, 336–337.

of Mark 10:42–43a is atypical only in its simple, straightforward force: "Here Jesus frontally attacks," he writes, "the Roman colonial administrators."[17]

This common critical understanding of the Gentile tyrants of Mark 10:42–43a as Roman is often grounded in an understanding, whether explicit or assumed, of Mark's intended audience as a "Jewish-Christian" demographic set in contradistinction to Gentile tyranny. This assumption is clear, for example, in Donahue's analysis:

> The narratives of the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius,
> and Nero which occupy Tacitus in the Annals and
> Suetonius in the Lives of the Caesars are replete
> with countless stories of intrafamilial betrayal,
> unfolding in a widening spiral of murder and hatred.
> Since the imperial palaces were staffed mainly by
> slaves and freed slaves, and since there is also some
> slight evidence of Jewish presence, and of sympathy
> for Judaism, among the upper classes, it is not
> impossible that Jewish-Christians in Rome heard
> the tales of intrigue and murder by the upper
> classes, whom Mark characterizes as 'those who are
> supposed to rule over the Gentiles,' and who 'lord it
> over them (10:42).'[18]

This understanding of Mark's intended audience as a "(pro-)Jewish" group aware of—and hostile to—a "Gentile" Roman culture of tyranny comes to the fore in Richard Horsley's recent analysis of the Markan Jesus' emphatically "Jewish/Galilean" and "egalitarian" politics: "Jesus had led a prophetic movement to renew Israel among Galilean and other villagers, revitalizing the traditional Mosaic covenantal principles of communal mutuality," he writes, "in resistance to oppressive Roman imperial rule."[19] According to this reading, then, revolutionary "communal mutuality" is Jewish in Mark, and Gentile "oppressive rule" is Roman. It is good that these critics are more open to the rhetorical thrust of the passage than those who simply accept its surface equation of Gentiles with

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[17] Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 278.
[18] Donahue, "Windows and Mirrors," 26.
[19] Horsley, "Renewal Movements and Resistance to Empire in Ancient Judea," 76. See also his *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

tyranny, but their anti-Roman reading is still too simple, and not only because the problems involved with identifying Jesus as "an egalitarian" are so great.[20]

First of all, the Gospel of Mark is traditionally and quite plausibly assigned a Roman provenance.[21] This fact alone should raise questions about any strict and simple pro-Jewish anti-Roman reading. The "anti-Roman" agenda of any book written in or for Rome, or even of any book commonly conceived as written in or for Rome, deserves a specific kind of attention. It is fair to wonder if and how it may be walking Josephus's line of resistance and accommodation. It is true that many members and associates of Jewish communities of the first century—including the people and communities testified to by the writings of the New Testament—had good reasons to fear and loathe imperial Rome.[22] As we have seen with Josephus, though, it was possible for Jews to resist what they hated and feared in Rome by strategically embracing its forms. Even if Mark is an "anti-Roman" book, then, it could still be working within this same Romanized sphere.

Secondly, Mark is indeed a book narrated through and/or for Romanized eyes—eyes apparently quite accustomed to many imperial Roman ways, and apparently unaccustomed to many of the facts of first-century Jewish life in occupied Palestine:

> The gospel explains Aramaic expressions (3:17;
> 5:41; 7:11, etc.) and elementary Jewish customs
> (7:3–5), so that Palestine as place of composition
> may be reasonably excluded. There are more
> Latinisms in the Greek of Mark than in any other
> gospel, and that statistic suggests an environment
> where Latin was frequently spoken. In particular, it
> has been argued that the bronze *kodrantēs* coin of
> Mark 12:42, "two *lepta* which constitute one
> *quadrans*," was not in circulation in the eastern

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[20] See, for example, John H. Elliott, "Jesus was not an Egalitarian: a Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory," *BTB* 32/2 (2002): 75–117. See also the arguments of Liew, Moore, and Carter outlined below in Sections 5 and 6.

[21] Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 196–197. See also Benjamin W. Bacon, "Is Mark a Roman Gospel?" (HTS 7; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919).

[22] Gill, "The Roman Empire as a Context for the New Testament," 391.

sections of the empire, so that Mark would be offering a coinage equivalent for western readers.[23]

It is true that the scholarly arguments for a Roman provenance are inconclusive, and Mark may be, for example, a Romanized Syrian work, from Antioch or elsewhere.[24] Whichever theory one prefers, though, there is an essential recognition that the book is Romanized. Mark assumes some familiarity with the details of life under the Roman system, and very little familiarity with life as a Jew. This uncontroversial fact further complicates a simple pro-Jewish, anti-Roman reading. The book's assumptions of familiarity and unfamiliarity may reflect an immersion in Roman ways and an ignorance of Jewish ways, or they may reflect a conscious attempt to communicate with audiences assumed to be in such a situation. Either way, it must be noticed that the Gospel assumes some familiarity with the culture of the Roman Empire, and this acknowledgement makes it fair to wonder how Mark 10:42–43a may be raising and addressing problems with the Roman imperial system, partly by adopting its traditional rhetorical critique of foreign tyranny.

6.4. Mark 10:42–43a as Roman anti-Roman Jewish Epideictic

Reading Mark 10:42–43a as strategic Jewish participation in the Greco-Roman rhetoric of foreign tyranny is a new idea. I have already mentioned that Ben Witherington III, in his *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, mentions no Greco-Roman rhetorical elements at all in Mark 10:42–43a.[25] Gerd Theissen's *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* does not mention the tradition of the foreign tyant in its discussion of the rhetorical and political force of Mark 10:42–43a.[26] H. N. Roskam's *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context*,[27] and Herman

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[23] Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 196–197.

[24] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27; Toronto: Doubleday, 2000), 30–37.

[25] Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 288.

[26] Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 17, 197.

[27] Roskam. *The Purpose of Mark*, 17, 38.

C. Waetjen's *A Reordering of Power: A Sociopolitical Reading of Mark's Gospel* are similarly uninterested or unaware. Stephen H. Smith's study of Mark, *A Lion With Wings*, discusses many different kinds and levels of possible irony in Mark's Gospel,[28] and is highly interested in the presence and significance of rhetorical cues around Mark 10:42–43a, but does not mention the potential irony of any Roman-style rhetoric used against Rome there.[29] Jerry Camery-Hoggatt argues in his book *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* that irony includes "the use of esoteric language which would have been clear to the reader," usually in order to introduce an "effect of paradox or contrast."[30] Rebuking Roman imperial culture by adopting one of its own favourite clichés would, in my eyes, be a good example of such potential irony, and so Mark 10:42–43a would have effect, paradox, and contrast, if it were understood by Romanized readers as a sly Jewish allusion to the stereotyped Roman image of the foreign tyrant. In Camery-Hoggatt's eyes, though, there is only one irony and one set of "double entendres" in the passage: James and John, he says, "misunderstood" the authority and mission of Jesus as "political," as the readers did not.[31] "Jesus is here winking off-stage at the reader,"[32] he writes, but it has nothing to do with foreign tyrants.

This tendency to ignore the possible presence in Mark 10:42–43a of Roman "anti-tyrannical" rhetoric extends into the studies that aim not only to situate Mark specifically within first-century Greco-Roman political rhetoric, but also to show how Mark's Gospel adopts (Greco-)Roman strategies and values in engaging and opposing them. Werner H. Kelber, for example, has written of "The Gospel of Mark: An Alternative to Roman Power,"[33] and argued that the Markan Jesus has a complex and ironic symbolic relationship to power, especially Rome's.[34] The possible role, though, of ironic engagement with Roman anti-tyrannical rhetoric is never mentioned. Stephen D. Moore's article on "Mark and

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[28] Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion With Wings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) 192–233.
[29] Smith, *A Lion With Wings*, 65, 67, 177.
[30] Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7.
[31] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161.
[32] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161.
[33] Werner H. Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 98–101; see also 110.
[34] See especially Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 101.

Empire," even though it deals specifically with Mark 10:42–43a as anti-tyrannical,[35] and even though it argues that the text is appropriating Roman ideology to the point of "self-subversion"[36] as the text degenerates into an apology for a new Christian "über-Roman Empire,"[37] fails to connect either the strategy or the irony of Mark 10:42–43a to imperial Rome's *own* "anti-tyrannical" rhetoric. Tat-siong Benny Liew's similar descriptions of an ironically imperial form of anti-imperial "Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel"[38] likewise operate within this rhetorical-critical *lacuna*.

According to Liew, "Mark's rhetorical constructions" must be our "focus" as scholars.[39] In reading Mark 10:42–43a, though, Liew does not look for any appropriations of Greco-Roman rhetoric. According to him, the verse simply appropriates Rome's ideology of absolute power. In discussing the verse's construction of legitimate authority through the condemnation of foreign tyranny, Liew begins by noting that "Alan Sinfield, writing about King James's insistence to distinguish 'a lawful good king' from 'a usurping tyrant,' calls such a distinction a 'characteristic of the ideology of absolutism.'"[40] Liew agrees, and concludes that "one may question if Mark is concerned with breaking up the very makeup of authority, or merely wishes to replace one authority by another."[41] Liew's suspicion that the anti-tyrannical rhetoric of Mark[42]—especially Mark 10:42–43a[43]—wants to re-assign rather than destroy Rome's power looks even more likely when we remember what we have seen above: illegitimate tyranny was also defined in opposition to legitimate absolute rule within the traditions of the Hebrew Bible and within the traditional rhetoric of Roman Empire itself, not

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[35] Moore, "Mark and Empire," 199–200, 214.

[36] Moore, "Mark and Empire," 197, 211.

[37] Moore, "Mark and Empire," 202.

[38] Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 206–223; Tat-siong Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia: Reading Mark Inter(con)textually* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 64–108.

[39] Tat-siong Benny Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 105.

[40] Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might," 209.

[41] Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might," 209.

[42] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," 112–117.

[43] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," 114.

just in Jacobean England. I think that Liew's lack of focus upon the rhetorical situation of the first century, though, has confused his reading of the passage's mix of resistance and accommodation. Liew accurately notes that according to Homi Bhabha, colonizers often mimic their subjects in a limited, strategic way that constructs them as rightfully subject. He then argues that the colonized writer of Mark has adopted the Roman colonizers' ideology of power in a way that— "turning Bhabha's term on its head"—could also be called "colonial mimicry."[44] Mark tried to resist the Roman ideology of power by imitating it, Liew asserts, and thereby ended by accepting it implicitly: "While Mark's Gospel may contain critiques of the existing colonial (dis)order, it also contains traces of 'colonial mimicry' that reinscribe colonial domination."[45] This is essentially Moore's position, as noted above: Mark tried to mimic an oppressive Rome subversively, it is asserted, and the project ended in self-subversion.

There are, unfortunately, a number of problems with this position as Liew articulates it. First of all, Liew has not quite turned Bhabha's mimicry on its head. Bhabha did not see mimicry as a simple one-way construction of a colonizer's image. According to him, mimicry involves the images of both colonizer and colonized being constructed in a highly ambivalent process:

> [C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence ... The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power ... The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing.[46]

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[44] Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might," 208.
[45] Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might," 215.
[46] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86. (The odd comma choices are in the original.)

If Mark's rhetoric is imitating Rome here, then, it is not turning the process of colonial mimicry on its head. Mark's rhetoric is instead co-operating intimately with its ambivalent process, since by participating in the rhetoric of foreign tyranny the Markan Jesus is participating in Rome's colonial mimicry of Greek rhetorical tyrannophobia, and also implicitly accepting the role of the highly Romanized yet not-quite-Roman Jew, whose identity is appropriated and reformed by the mimicry of the colonizer into a similar/different Other.

"The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority,"[47] according to Bhabha. This means that the appropriations and self-subversions noted in Mark by Liew are intrinsic parts of the process of colonial mimicry itself, not failed reversals of the process. The Markan Jesus is playing his part as a Romanized Jew, participating in the colonial mimicry that "mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them."[48] For everyone on the totem pole of colonial mimicry, then, mimicry is a balancing act of subversive (including self-subversive) negotiation. The predicament that Moore and Liew describe is therefore entirely predictable from Bhabha's point of view, as (to borrow his words from another of his essays) "the Bible, bearing both the standard of the cross and the standard of empire finds itself strangely dismembered."[49]

These theoretical details are all just the fine flexible edges though, of the clear and solid overall pattern sketched out in the sections above on epideictic and Josephus. The appropriation of a dominant discourse is always both accommodating and oppositional by nature. It always happens on a continuum between cooperation and resistance. It is here that Liew has put his finger on a crucial point, if only by accident. If tyranny is a terrible foreign problem for Mark's Jesus partly because he is, like much of Mark's gospel, Romanized, the question of the possible relationship between Mark's rhetoric and the rhetoric of Roman power takes on a new aspect. Mark 10:42–43a looks less like a piece in

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[47] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," 88.
[48] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," 91.
[49] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," 92. (Again, the odd comma choices here are in the original.)

Moore and Liew's picture of self-subverting mimicry, and more like a piece of epideictic in the style of Josephus. Like the epideictic rhetoric seen above in Josephus, it alloys cooperation and competition, and offers an example of the kind of strategy that Liew and Moore themselves refer to elsewhere as "mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide."[50]

6.5. Sources of Mark's Roman anti-Roman Epideictic

I suggest that the failure of biblical critics to see the possibility of Roman rhetoric being used against Rome in Mark 10:42–43a may be explained as the result of the wrong kind of insistence upon the "Jewish" character of Mark. This insistence can shade into the dangerous assumption that Greco-Roman culture was politically and/or culturally unavailable to a self-respecting Jewish writer. The analysis of Rikki E. Watts offers a good example of this tendency: "The thorough-going Jewishness of Mark's Gospel seems undeniable," she writes. "Mark *never appeals*, for instance, to non-Jewish literature."[51] There is, predictably, no mention at all of Roman anti-tyrannical rhetoric in her reading of the anti-tyrannical rhetoric of Mark 10:42–43a.[52] As we have seen above with Josephus and others, though, a first-century writer could be insistently and proudly Jewish without avoiding Greco-Roman forms of communication. These Hellenistic forms could, in fact, as both propaganda and status symbol, themselves become essential ingredients in a Jewish rhetoric of self-definition and self-defence.

As we have seen, Jewish rhetorical tradition (1 Sam 8:4–20; Deut 17:14–20) associated tyranny with foreign rulers, and this offers a clear precedent for Mark's rhetoric, especially given the specific reference to the rulers of the "Gentiles/nations" (as opposed to, for example, "the barbarians"). Mark's rhetoric would also have benefited, though, from the prevalence and power of Roman

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[50] See Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might," 217.
[51] Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 47 – italics mine.
[52] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark*, 124, 258, 269–270, 273, 282.

rhetoric's conveniently similar stereotype of foreign rulers. At the very least, there is no reason to assume *a priori* that Mark's rhetoric could not be as Roman as it is Jewish here. There is no reason to assume with Moore and Liew that Mark's implicit critique of Rome stems from a picture of Roman power as simply evil. As we have seen in Josephus, it was possible for a Jewish writer to see Roman power as both good and bad, and to want to co-operate with it selectively and strategically. Such selective and strategic borrowing, and the selective political and cultural accommodation that it entails, were evidently not off-limits by definition for a first-century writer interested in addressing Roman power while maintaining a Jewish identity. The example of Josephus shows that such selective political and rhetorical accommodation was not as off-limits in political terms as Liew would have us assume, and the evidence surrounding public rhetoric in the first century shows that borrowing—including the image of the foreign tyrant— was not as off-limits in cultural terms as Watts would have us assume. As we have seen, Jewish writers and audiences had easy access to the image through the Roman mass media.

In the case of Mark specifically, as Gilbert G. Bilezikian points out, the influence by osmosis of Greek tragedy (in Roman form) has often been argued for Mark's gospel.[53] This influence would not be overly surprising in a Romanized gospel, since as we have seen and as Bilezikian notes, Greek tragedy was "a regular institution in Rome" on both stage and page from the second century BCE to the second century CE,[54] usually open to general public free of charge,[55] accordingly well-attended.[56] Bilezikian also notes that, as we have seen, Roman drama's references to tyranny were highly stereotyped, and the stories were usually safely ancient and Greek, in order to escape controversy,[57] but they were nevertheless interpreted locally and closely as serious political commentary.[58]

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[53] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 20–21.
[54] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 38–43.
[55] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 38.
[56] Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic*, 40; Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 38–43.
[57] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 39.
[58] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 42.

Bilezikian conforms, however, to the trend noted above in failing to apply these insights to thinking about tyranny in Mark, especially Mark 10:42–43a's reference to foreign tyranny. If, as we have seen, Roman writers could count on an audience to hear a quick rhetorical commonplace dropped, and to interpret it imaginatively as a comment on their own situation, it seems strange not to assume that the Gospel of Mark could not. It is true that Mark does not seem to be written for a mass audience and a stage, but neither were the closet dramas discussed above, which Bilezikian also knows to have been vehicles of political commentary through the subtle but pointed use of traditional commonplaces.[59] Bilezikian even suggests that these closet dramas may also have been rather interesting to first-century Jews, including those who avoided theatres, offering the work of Nicolaus of Damascus and Ezekiel the Tragedian as possible Greco-Roman Jewish examples of the form.[60] It should be noted that even if Jews were not audience members in Rome, they could also have been exposed to the provincial Roman education that was established as far as Asia Minor in the first century BCE,[61] and which included studying and reciting popular Romanized Greek tragedies.[62] In short, Greek tragic rhetoric was "in the air," so to speak, in the world of the Roman Empire. Donald W. Riddle sums it up this way:

> [The cultural ethos of Greek tragedy] was available in common report. It is no more necessary to suppose that the author of Mark attended Greek plays than to believe that Paul's references to the theater, the gymnasium, and the stadium, imply that he familiarly used these institutions. The writer of Mark had such acquaintance with Greek drama as was the common possession of anyone who was intelligently responsive to the values of Hellenistic civilization.[63]

I want to give just one final example of this pattern of ignoring the Roman rhetoric of foreign tyranny in interpreting Mark 10:42–43a, since I think it

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[59] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 43–45.
[60] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 44.
[61] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 49.
[62] Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 49.
[63] Donald W. Riddle, *The Gospels: Their Origin and Growth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 144 (quoted in Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel*, 49–50).

exemplifies very well both the problem of the critical lacuna that I have been addressing, and the most likely way out of the problem. Brian J. Incigneri knows very well that the Gospel of Mark is both highly rhetorical and highly Romanized.[64] He calls Mark, in fact, "the Gospel to the Romans," and describes his study of Mark as an exercise in "Situating the Rhetoric."[65] He insists that although the standard handbooks of Greco-Roman rhetoric may not have been finished or unified at the time of Mark's composition,[66] its standard modes and images were already in widespread use. He notes that the earliest known textbook-writer, Quintilian, was working "around the period in which the Gospels were composed," and that he refers to other pre-existing "text-books on rhetoric."[67] Quintilian was, as Incigneri notes, out to collect and codify—not to invent—best rhetorical practice, beginning with everything from political and philosophical speeches such as Cicero's to the rhetoric of the stage.[68] Incigneri extends and underlines the claim just made above that the basic modes and images of Greco-Roman rhetoric were available to first-century Jewish writers "in the air" of the empire:

> Mark and his intended readers lived in a rhetorical culture. They did not need to be highly educated to be familiar with rhetorical methods of the day, as they encountered rhetoric in the texts that they examined at their most basic levels of education. More importantly, rhetoric was encountered in the speeches and debates that occurred in marketplaces, theatres and other public venues, as well as in the law courts, widely attended for entertainment.[69]

As we have seen, tyranny—including foreign tyranny—was an essential element in public Greco-Roman rhetoric. It was present in political persuasion and debate, philosophical and educational culture, and in both comic and tragic theatrical tradition. It was present as a widely honoured traditional commonplace

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[64] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 100–103.
[65] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 59–115. (The book's subtitle is *The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*.)
[66] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 39.
[67] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 39n; See also the prologue to Quntilian's *Inst*. (Pr.1, 2, 4). Interestingly enough, he says in 1. Pr.7 that two of these works were attributed to him!
[68] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 39.
[69] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 36–37.

and as a widely understood piece of innuendo. Incigneri never mentions the rhetoric of foreign tyranny, though, as he looks for Greco-Roman rhetoric in the air in Mark. Instead, Mark 10:42–43a is read simply and repeatedly as a direct Jewish attack on Rome.[70] The passage is rhetorical for Incigneri only in the sense of being deliberately persuasive. This, then, is the problem and the solution from my point of view: If Mark's rhetoric was, understandably, intended to be persuasive to people living in the ethos of the Roman Empire, we as readers need to be sensitive to the basic rhetorical commonplaces of that rhetorical culture. The rhetoric of foreign tyranny was, as we have seen, popular and powerful in that culture, and so Markan references to foreign tyranny should be regarded as having been potentially crucial to the gospel's rhetorical program, at least for some ancient audiences. As in the work of Josephus, images of foreign tyranny in Mark—including Mark 10:42–43a—should be seen as an important rhetorical element in a Greco-Roman epideictic work of self-definition and self-defence that alloys accommodation with resistance. The following two sections will therefore look at Mark in this way, focusing on the way that the Roman rhetoric of foreign tyranny may be working in Mark's treatment of the same villains discussed above in the section on Josephus: Herod and the revolutionary brigands.

6.6. Herod and Foreign Tyranny in Mark

I argued above that Josephus relied on the image of the foreign tyrant as he shaped the story of Herod, in order to make it suit his purposes of Jewish self-assertion and Roman accommodation. I suggest that the Gospel of Mark is doing the same thing in its depiction of Herod's execution of John:

> For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John,
> bound him, and put him in prison on account of
> Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod
> had married her. For John had been telling Herod,
> "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's
> wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and

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[70] Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 82, 168, 172, 185, 277–278, 327, 336–367.

wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod
feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and
holy man, and he protected him. When he heard
him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to
listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod
on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and
officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his
daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased
Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl,
"Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it."
And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask
me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." She
went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask
for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer."
Immediately she rushed back to the king and
requested, "I want you to give me at once the head
of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was
deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and
for the guests, he did not want to refuse her.
Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard
with orders to bring John's head. He went and
beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a
platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it
to her mother (Mark 6:17–28).

Abraham Smith has argued persuasively that Mark 6 is describing Herod

as a stereotyped tyrant, and that this rhetorical strategy has gone "virtually

unnoticed" in the history of scholarship on the passage.[71] Smith's analysis touches

on some points that look very relevant from my point of view, as for example

when he flags the potential significance of the mention of Herod's bodyguard

(σπεκουλάτωρ) in 6:27. As we have seen, the mention of a bodyguard could

amount to an accusation in the stereotyped world of Greco-Roman rhetoric. It was

the mark of the tyrant of the stage. Smith notes that 4 Maccabees also associates

the "tyrant" Antiochus IV with bodyguards, and that Josephus mentions the

bodyguards of his enemies.[72] Smith sees the mention of the guard in Mark 6:27 as

a similar example of Jewish participation in this tradition of political criticism

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[71] Abraham Smith, "Tyranny Exposed: Mark's Typological Characterization on Herod Antipas (Mark 6:14–29)" *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 14/3 (2006): 262.
[72] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 273–274.

through stereotyped innuendo.[73] For our purposes here, though, the most relevant points that Smith's analysis makes have to do with 1) the ironic use of the title/image of "king" in the passage, and 2) the disastrous influence of the strong-willed women in the story.

The first point—the application of the title "king" to Herod, who was more of a local Roman administrator than a Jewish monarch—is, again, a matter of insulting innuendo. Smith suggests that the use of this "historically inaccurate" term should be seen at least partly as "Mark mocking Herod as a pretentious king, as one who was willing to forfeit up to half of a kingdom that he did not actually possess."[74] This may be true. As we have seen, though, the inaccurate use of the title "king" was also seen as insulting and funny from a Roman anti-tyrannical point of view. For Roman anti-tyrants, a "king" is either the legitimate opposite of an illegitimate tyrant, or an insulting code-word for a tyrant. In either case, Mark's use of the term for Herod brings his depiction of Herod even closer to that of a stereotyped Greco-Roman tyrant.

The second image Smith mentions—that of strong-willed women—is similarly interesting for our purposes here. In his analysis, Smith identifies the image as an insulting reference to "a Septuagint 'king' type":[75]

> Like Ahab the king, for example, Herod's wife is drawn as strong-willed and thus reminiscent of Jezebel. In both testaments, moreover, criticism is directed at the king in part because of his marriage to a strong-willed woman. Like Ahasuerus the king in Esther, Herod Antipas makes a rash promise and is absorbed by "pleasure." As Marcus has noted about Herod Antipas, "The girl pleased him" and "up to half my kingdom," for example, are nearly exact quotations from Greek Esther. Like Ahasuerus as well, Herod Antipas asks "the girl" about "her will": "Ask me for whatever you want (θέλῃς) and I will give it."[76]

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[73] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 271, 273–274, 277.
[74] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 266.
[75] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 267.
[76] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 267.

As we have seen, though, strong-willed women were associated in Roman imperial rhetoric with tyrants, with or without the related accusation (which Smith also mentions) of "[sexual] excess."[77] This was an inheritance from Greek tragedy, which identified the tyrant as a sensual man out of control in his dealings with women, and dominated by women and/or his feelings for them.[78] Once again, Hall's summary is instructive here:

> In Greek eyes despotism was inextricably linked
> both with dominant women (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1313b 32–
> 5; 6. 1319b 27–9) and with uncontrolled or illicit
> sexual desires: "the *despotes* is prey to desire (*eros*),
> both sexual desire and desire for power, illegitimate
> love and love of power". In Herodotus the
> transgressive desire denoted by the term *eros* is
> attributed only to tyrants and kings: Pausanias, the
> "barbaric Greek" par excellence, had the desire
> (*eros*) to become "*turannos* of all Greece" (*Hdt.* 5.
> 32). A Euripidean character defined the connection
> (fr. 850); "tyranny is besieged from all sides by
> terrible desires" (*deinos erosin*). Choral passages in
> *Agamemnon* suggest that the aim of the adulterous
> queen and her lover is the establishment of a formal
> tyranny (1354–5, 1364–5), and in *Choephore* they
> have achieved their goal."[79]

Herod's scandalous marriage to Herodias and her scheming wilful ways look quite familiar in the light of this traditional rhetorical association of scandalous relationships with scandalous tyrannical weakness. Conveniently for Mark's purposes, it is not only questionable from the point of view of John's reading of the Torah (Mark 6:17–18). It also associates Herod with tyranny from a Greco-Roman rhetorical point of view, by painting him as the victim of his own lusts, including the lust for power. The Greek literary idea that lust (*eros*) is typical of tyrants is dependably found in Roman historians' depictions of the *libido* of "tyrants" from Tiberius to Domitian,[80] and it seems to me that a similar rhetorical linking of stereotyped tyrannical faults is at work in the image of the Markan Herod. This is the Herod, after all, who "arrested John, bound him, and

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[77] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 274–275, 278–279.
[78] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 209.
[79] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 208.
[80] Dunkle, "The Rhetorical Tyrant," 15–19.

put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife'" (6:17–18). Whether the phrase "on account of Herodias" (διὰ ‘Ηρῳδιάδα) in verse 17 is supposed to mean that Herodias is motivating the arrest actively or passively, the simple fact that she is motivating Herod incriminates him here. If suspicious family dealings, "incest, rape, and parricide" were "especially associated with the tyrant,"[81] then Herod's motivations were tyrannical from the Roman rhetorical point of view, even if the reader did not happen to notice that marrying another tetrarch's widow is a diplomatic coup for any power-hungry ruler. Herod's relationship with Herodias, his promise to her dancing daughter (with or without reading incest into the story, as Smith does),[82] and his execution of John thanks to their scheming, are clearly errors worthy of a barbaric tyrant "king."

The execution of John due to the scheming of the strong-willed women brings me to the last "foreign tyrant" stereotype I want to flag in Mark 6: that of wanton violence. Herod exercises his power of life and death over John with a casual cruelty in Mark's story. He beheads John for no good reason and against his better judgement, almost as if he were himself victim of the wiles of the scheming women. As Hall notes in her study of the Greek invention of barbarism, this kind of pointless physical cruelty was itself a mark of the foreign tyrant:

> [A]ccusations of physical cruelty were a
> commonplace of Greek rhetoric against the
> barbarians, and amongst cruel punishments
> impalement was regarded as the most extreme; it
> was a mark of the tyrant ... Throughout his
> Histories Herodotus' Persians impale their
> enemies... Rhesus, who is modeled in other
> respects on Persian royalty, is accordingly made to
> declare that he will take Odysseus alive, and
> "having impaled him beneath the spine, set him up
> at the gates of the city, a feast for winged vultures"
> (*Rhes*. 513–15) ... The Persian kings' practice of
> mutilation ... deeply disturbed the Greeks ... And

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[81] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 126 (Hall cites here Plato *Resp.* 9.571c–d; 10.619b–c and Detienne's study *Dionysos Slain*).

[82] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 279.

> so the playwrights recast their myths so as to bring
> mythical mutilations into association with the
> barbarian ethnicity of their perpetrators.[83]

In Mark 6, Herod is the barbaric tyrant associated with needless mutilation. This is convenient for Mark for a few reasons. For readers familiar with, and concerned about, Herod's scandalous history and/or his half-Jewish status, this behaviour in Mark's story distances Herod from legitimate Jewish identity and authority. Legitimate Jewish authority can be imagined, as in Mark 10:42–43a, as the antithesis of this kind of barbaric tyranny. It also implicitly distances Herod, as a foreign tyrant, from legitimate Roman rule. Instead, it associates the controversial parts of his career as a Roman proxy with the cruel and unusual punishments of foreign tyranny. As in Josephus, Herod is neither a good Roman nor a good Jew in Mark, though his excesses can be still associated with the excesses of bad Romans and bad Jewish collaborators. However we imagine his vow happening, and whatever we imagine to have been his motivations for marrying Herodias in the first place, Mark's Herod is carried away by his feelings more than once in the story, and is manipulated by controlling women into the kind of wanton cruelty expected of barbarian despots. He is, in short, a perfect tyrant.

The rhetorical payoff for Mark is as clear as it was for Josephus. To begin with, it is true that, as Smith concludes, painting Herod as a stereotyped tyrant helps construct Herod's enemies (i.e. John, and by extension Jesus and his legitimate disciples) as anti-tyrannical.[84] The anti-tyrannical Jesus of Mark 10:42–43a looks better by comparison in Mark's account, as Smith notes.[85] The Jesus of Mark 10:42–43a does not simply oppose tyranny, though. He is the enemy of foreign tyranny. This is very convenient for Mark. By lording it over his people like a Gentile tyrant, Herod associates bad Jews and bad co-operation with Rome with foreign tyranny. He becomes the foreign tyrant Jesus condemns in 10:42, and Mark's Jesus becomes by condemning such foreign tyranny a good Romanized Jew. By Markan logic, Jesus is a better Jew than Herod and the Jews who co-

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[83] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 159.
[84] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 287–288.
[85] Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 286.

operated with his puppet government controlled by foreign colonial powers, and he is a better Roman than those Romans who co-operated with Herod's foreign tyranny. Mark has succeeded in walking the same rhetorical tightrope we saw Josephus negotiating above. A follower of the Jesus of Mark 10:42 can identify with the best in Jewish tradition and be unabashedly Romanized at the same time. In fact, Jesus and his legitimate followers are good Jews in Mark's rhetorical world in part precisely because they are like good Romans in their opposition to foreign tyranny at home and away. In Mark, good Romanized Jews like the Jesus of 10:42–43a—and unlike the Markan Herod and his friends—are the best possible Jews and the best possible Romans. The problem of foreign tyranny at home and away also conveniently explains, as in Josephus's account of Herod as a foreign tyrant, any problems with Roman rule and/or local Jewish imitators and collaborators.

This rhetorical strategy on Mark's part helps explain the gospel's otherwise strange ambivalence toward Roman power. In what looks at first glance like a flat contradiction of the biblical critics cited above, Werner H. Kelber has argued that Mark "is at most by implication opposed to Rome and careful to disguise any pronounced opposition to Roman imperial power."[86] The only resistance Kelber sees in Mark is "a cautiously couched program of an alternative to Roman power,"[87] and according to him the Markan Jesus "studiously evades any direct conflict with Rome."[88] Kelber is much more inclined to believe that Mark intends to blame local Jewish leadership for Jesus' persecution and execution, for example, as when "the narrator has Pilate surmise that it was motivated by the jealousy of the Jewish establishment."[89] It is after all, Kelber notes, a Roman centurion who plays the part of the only human in Mark to acknowledge Jesus as divine, in his speech at the cross (Mark 15:39): "Rome, not Jesus' own disciples, delivers the most appropriate response to Jesus' death."[90]

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[86] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 98.
[87] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 110.
[88] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 101.
[89] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 100.
[90] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 101.

Kelber raises an interesting point. Mark's rhetoric does not appear to be simply and clearly anti-Roman, even in terms of its intention. I think, though, that Kelber obscures his own point by distinguishing so clearly between Jewish and Roman authority and responsibility. I do not see Mark as out to blame either Romans or Jews in general. I agree here with Liew. Mark plainly sets the legitimate authority of Jesus up against that of Roman leaders,[91] but also against Jewish leaders, by narrating explicit and repeated controversies over his "authority."[92] I also think that Liew is right to notice that illegitimate Roman and Jewish authority can work together intimately against Jesus in Mark, as when in the torture scenes, for example, "both the Roman soldiers and the Jewish leaders spit on him, strike him and ridicule him" (Mark 14:65; 15:19–20).[93] I think that Liew is right to assume that such shared power and shared cruelty imply a shared guilt. I do not agree with Liew's conclusion, though, that Mark wants Jesus quite simply to wipe out and replace this nexus of Roman and/or Jewish power.[94] Rather, Mark's implication of their shared guilt suggests to me that Mark is out to shame and blame bad Jews in league with a bad Rome, and thereby implicitly to open a rhetorical space for the construction of good Romanized Jewish values. This evolving understanding of good Roman Jewish values is in my opinion the source of Mark's ambivalence vis-à-vis Jewish and Roman power and identity. Its continuing construction is the purpose of the book's ambivalent rhetoric. I suggest that Mark's apparent strategy of associating John and Jesus with traditional Roman and Jewish opposition to stereotyped foreign tyranny, and blaming their death partly on a Herod who is constructed as precisely such a foreign tyrant, serves such rhetorical purposes very well.

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[91] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," 109–110.
[92] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark,"106–109.
[93] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," 109. Liew argues correctly that Mark sets Jesus up against both Jewish leaders, through repeated controversies over "authority."
[94] Liew, "The Gospel of Mark," 112–117.

6.7. Brigands and Foreign Tyranny in Mark

The Gospel of Mark mentions bandits on several occasions, all of which look relevant for our purposes here if we remember all that we have seen so far about the Roman rhetorical association of banditry with tyranny. The so-called Cleansing of the Temple, for example, takes place very soon after the denunciation of foreign tyranny (Mark 11:15). The scripture that Jesus quotes there about the house of prayer becoming a "cave of bandits" (σπήλαιον λῃστῶν) thereby takes on new potential shades of meaning from a Roman rhetorical point of view. Joel Marcus has already argued, in fact, in an article called "The Jewish war and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark," that this scene identifies the real enemies of the Markan Jesus as Jewish revolutionaries who have politicized the temple. From this point of view, Jesus' reference to their "den of brigands" recalls the rhetoric of Josephus, which (as we have seen) dismissed local Jewish revolutionaries as "brigands" who were "bent on tyranny."[95] From a Roman rhetorical point of view, this association is most welcome. This Jesus not only opposes the foreign tyranny of bad administrators like Herod; he also opposes the foreign tyranny that we have seen to be dependably associated in Roman rhetoric with local popular revolutionaries. This Jesus looks more and more like the good Roman Jew that Mark needs for his purposes of simultaneous accommodation and self-assertion. His Torah-based attack on the foreign tyranny of "bandits" is, from a Roman point of view, as identifiably distinct and Jewish and yet as laudably Roman as the lionized Solomon we saw earlier in Josephus.

This potential implicit contrast between the Markan Jesus and revolutionary banditry is present throughout the gospel. In his book *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus*, Horsley argues that the phenomenon of revolutionary banditry is an under-studied clue when it comes to understanding the mission of Jesus: "Study of Jewish social banditry may shed some light on the way in which Jesus was arrested (as if a brigand, Mk. 14:48) and on the crucifixion scene, in which Jesus was crucified with two

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[95] Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark," *JBL* 111/3 (1992): 448–451.

brigands (not thieves, Mk. 15:27). More importantly, the occurrence of banditry illustrates the disintegrating social conditions in which Jesus' words and actions would have found a resonant response."[96] For me, Horsley's stress on the social importance of ancient banditry serves to underline the rhetorical importance of the word in Mark. This importance can assert itself in very subtle ways, as Jerry Camery-Hoggatt's analysis of Mark 10:42–43a makes clear. In discussing the passage, Camery-Hoggatt points out that the thieves crucified with Jesus were put "one on his right hand and one on his left" (15:29).[97] When James and John ask Jesus, therefore, for the glory and power of being placed one on his right hand and one on his left (10:37), Camery-Hoggatt suggests that they are unknowingly asking to be brigands,[98] and thus to suffer the brigand's punishment of crucifixion, which they also do not realize yet to be true glory and power.[99] Camery-Hoggatt thus sees the passage as an ironic comment on the madness and cruelty of revolution and tyranny:

> If the reader knows—as is almost certain—that at his death Jesus is to be paraded out as a brutal illustration of Roman tyranny, the irony of their request is driven a level deeper: they have unwittingly asked to take the places of the "brigands" on the crosses on either side of him. The play upon their political aspirations here becomes almost explicit. Jesus, of course, is aware of the irony . . . James and John, however, miss the point entirely.[100]

If brigands *are* tyrants, though, in Mark as in Josephus, the irony here is even tighter, and Camery-Hoggatt's analysis can be taken even further. If brigands are tyrants, then Rome was not simply acting tyrannically in treating Jesus as a brigand. Rome was mistaking Jesus for a tyrant by mistaking him for a brigand, especially since the kind of rabble-rousing local who would like to be a brigand would also, in Roman eyes, love to be a tyrant. This may help explain the offence the Markan Jesus takes when the Jewish authorities come out to arrest

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[96] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 256.
[97] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 162–163.
[98] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 162.
[99] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 162.
[100] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 162.

him. "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit (ὡς ἐπὶ λῃστὴν)? I was with you daily in the temple teaching" (Mark 14:48–49). From a Roman Jewish rhetorical point of view, the passage is highly ironic. By referring to his own legitimate authority and activity in the temple, Jesus contrasts himself again with the bandits and potential foreign tyrants he confronted there. The Jewish authorities arresting him in league with Rome are therefore not only opening themselves to the accusation of banditry and foreign tyranny. They are actively oppressing a good Roman Jew who publicly condemned in his rhetoric the whole violent system of banditry and foreign tyranny.

This sad Roman rhetorical irony is continued throughout Mark's Passion Narrative. In the Bar-Abbas scene, the point is driven home as the people literally choose a brigand over Jesus (Mark 15:6–15). In case we miss this irony, Mark stresses that Bar-Abbas "was with the insurrectionists," and committed the murder for which he was arrested "during the insurrection" (Mark 15:7). When the Jewish leadership stirs the mob up to demand that Pilate free him instead of Jesus "the king of the Jews," it is a perfect disaster from Mark's Roman Jewish point of view. Jesus is the real king of the Jews, and the avowed enemy of banditry and foreign tyranny. Bar-Abbas is both a real brigand and a real potential foreign tyrant. By the machinations of weak and corrupt foreign rule in league with corrupt local rabble-rousing powers, though, Bar-Abbas is set free while Jesus dies as a bandit and/or a pretender.

As soon as Bar-Abbas is chosen over Jesus, Mark moves to the mocking scene (15:15–20), in which the image of foreign tyranny drives the sad irony up yet another notch. To begin with there is the basic irony that Kelber describes well in his discussion of pro-Roman and anti-Roman elements in Mark:

> There is one scene in the passion narrative that
> seems to bespeak unbridled anti-Roman sentiments .
> . . The soldiers, determined to make a brutal
> caricature of Jesus, clothe him with a purple cloak,
> place a crown of thorns on his head, and salute him
> as "King of the Jews." The rhetoric of their gestures
> suggests that a royal investiture, or more precisely
> the reversal of such an accession to power, has been

> enacted: Jesus is caricatured as king in an act of
> utter infamy . . . [But] it is the Markan conception
> that Jesus acceded to royal power by surrendering
> all earthly power and by submitting himself to the
> most brutal of executions. Viewed in this light, the
> mocking scene does not, on a subliminal level,
> bespeak anti-Roman sentiments after all, for the
> soldiers who carry out the royal mocking enact the
> truth in ignorance and infamy.[101]

While it is true that the mock respect offered by the Roman soldiers is ironic in Mark because Jesus is in fact the legitimate king of the Jews, I suggest that it is also ironic in that Mark's Jesus is a good Romanized Jew, mocked as a foreign tyrant and a pretender. We have already seen that Roman rhetorical stereotype associated sceptres and purple robes with stereotyped foreign tyrants in the theatre, and with dangerous pretenders in the real world. It was damning enough, remember, merely to mention that a Roman leader had taken to wearing a purple robe. It carried the powerful accusatory stink of barbarian despotism. The Roman soldiers are not only, then, acting out a truth in ignorance in the mocking scene. In Mark's rhetorical world, they are also continuing Rome's disastrous mistake of associating Jesus with the threat of rabble-rousing and foreign tyranny, instead of looking for the problem in people like Pilate, Herod, Bar-Abbas, or the rabble-rousing local Jewish leadership.

It should be noted in closing that Mark's mocking scene also recalls a scene in Philo's *Flaccus* (6.36–39, 33–34, 36–38). The details of the story are suggestive for our purposes here, and are worth quoting in full:

> There was a certain madman named Carabbas,
> afflicted not with a wild, savage, and dangerous
> madness (for that comes on in fits without being
> expected either by the patient or by bystanders), but
> with an intermittent and more gentle kind; this man
> spent all this days and nights naked in the roads,
> minding neither cold nor heat, the sport of idle
> children and wanton youths; and they, driving the
> poor wretch as far as the public gymnasium, and
> setting him up there on high that he might be seen
> by everybody, flattened out a leaf of papyrus and

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[101] Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 101.

put it on his head instead of a diadem, and clothed
the rest of his body with a common door mat
instead of a cloak and instead of a sceptre they put
in his hand a small stick of the native papyrus which
they found lying by the way side and gave to him;
and when, like actors in theatrical spectacles, he had
received all the insignia of royal authority, and had
been dressed and adorned like a king, the young
men bearing sticks on their shoulders stood on each
side of him instead of spear-bearers, in imitation of
the bodyguards of the king, and then others came
up, some as if to salute him, and others making as
though they wished to plead their causes before
him, and others pretending to wish to consult with
him about the affairs of the state. Then from the
multitude of those who were standing around there
arose a wonderful shout of men calling out Maris;
and this is the name by which it is said that they call
the kings among the Syrians; for they knew that
Agrippa was by birth a Syrian, and also that he was
possessed of a great district of Syria of which he
was the sovereign.

The similarity of the lunatic's name to Bar-Abbas is interesting. John

Dominic Crossan argued, in fact, that Christians were inspired by Philo's account

of the mocking of Carabbas to invent both Bar-Abbas and the mocking of

Jesus.[102] For our purposes here, though, it is most interesting to note that the

lunatic is mocked as a rhetorical foreign tyrant. He has the sceptre, the robe, and

the crown, and Philo assumes the meaning of these details to be self-evident. The

lunatic has been dressed like this by his torturers in order to recall "actors in

theatrical spectacles [and their stereotyped] insignia of royal authority." Notice,

too, that the lunatic is not just any stereotyped tyrant. He is a stereotyped foreign

tyrant. His torturers pretend to be tyrant-loving foreigners from Syria, hailing their

barbarian despot as "Maris." In the light of this story and its assumptions about

popular understandings of madness and stereotyped tyranny, the similar mocking

of Jesus by the soldiers looks like an indication of the perceived lunacy of his

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[102] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 380–382, 390–391. See also his *Who Killed Jesus?: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 126–127.

rebellious claim to royalty. Justin J. Meggitt has argued, in fact, in his article "The Madness of King Jesus"[103] that Rome executed Jesus because he was perceived as a lunatic, and not because he was perceived as any real threat. The kind of mocking that Carabbas receives in Philo's story would be very appropriate for Jesus in some Roman eyes if this were the case. As we have seen, however, Jesus is not a barbarian lunatic in Mark's rhetorical world. He is a good Romanized Jew who opposed barbarism and tyranny. When the Markan authorities mock Jesus like Carabbas, then, as a theatrical foreign tyrant, the joke is actually on them. The barbarism, banditry, tyranny, and madness are all on their side.

6.8. Conclusions on Foreign Tyranny in Mark

In 2007, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza introduced an edited volume on rhetoric and empire in the New Testament with an essay entitled "The Rhetoric of Empire."[104] She argued there that, although recent years have seen a great and growing emphasis on these themes, most such studies highlight only the oppositional elements of the New Testament. Most scholars interested in rhetoric and empire, she argues, are out to lionize the New Testament documents, and therefore ignore their deeper imperial influences and accommodations. I agree that this is a real problem in New Testament studies, but I do not see it as the problem here in tracing Mark's epideictic use of the stereotyped insult of foreign tyranny as developed in Greek and then Roman rhetoric. For Mark, rhetorical rapprochement with Rome is not impossible by definition, as we have seen some scholars assume. Mark's gospel is as proudly Jewish as Josephus, and just as accommodating. Such a rapprochement with Rome is not necessarily a failure by definition, either, as we have seen others assume. For Mark, as for Josephus, rapprochement seems in fact to be an essential part of strategic resistance. If it is true that Mark 10:42–43a is "a sharp potential critique of the Roman model of

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[103] Justin J. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus," *JSNT* 29/4 (2007): 379–413.
[104] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Rhetoric of Empire," in *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1–22.

rule,"[105] it is precisely because Mark's critique of Rome claims implicitly to represent the best Rome has to offer. The function of the image of foreign tyranny in Mark amounts, as in Josephus, to a balancing act—a co-operation that co-opts the traditional insult's power of self-definition and self-defence.

Mark's use of the image of foreign tyranny is quite successful from this point of view. As we have seen, it allows the problems of Roman and Jewish power to be imagined as foreign problems. "Bad" Jewish and Roman authority is barbaric. The corresponding construction of "good" Romans and Jews as allied against foreign tyranny implicitly polices both of these co-operating systems of authority. It also establishes an ideal norm for explicitly Christian authority by painting Jesus and his legitimate followers as the best possible Romans and Jews. Followers of Jesus regarded as illegitimate by Mark are also thereby conveniently associated with the worst in Roman and Jewish power. It has sometimes been noted that for Christians, as for the Qumranites and other ancient Jews, "bad" insiders were often seen as worse than outsiders.[106] In Mark, the construction of the good Roman Jew allows, as in Josephus, for these unwanted insiders to be dismissed as "bandits" and "tyrants," with values foreign to both good Romans and good Jews. Good Christians—good Markan insiders—are, on the other hand, implicitly lionized by Mark's rhetorical construction of Roman Jewish identity (again, as in Josephus) as better Jews than most Jews and better Romans than most Romans.

This strategy looks like a very good one, given the wide and messy spectrum of interpenetrating accommodation and resistance to which I have been referring in this study. Different communities and different individuals among Mark's first audiences would undoubtedly have operated at different places on this spectrum, and their identities and loyalties would have been alloyed quite differently from time to time and place to place. Mark's construction of the good Roman Jew, though, accommodates them all. Readers who were quite hostile to Rome and its dominant Gentile culture could be happy to hear that good Jews

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[105] Peter Oakes, "A State of Tension: Rome in the New Testament," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (ed. John Riches and David C. Sim; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 84.
[106] Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander," 440.

could be better Romans than the Romans themselves, and could better uphold Rome's best ideals while seeing them as Jewish. The image of the good Roman Jew offers the hope of co-existence, and even conciliation, without humiliation and surrender. On the other hand, readers who were quite sympathetic to the Roman Empire and/or wary of its minority Jewish cultures could also be relieved to hear the message that good Jews and good Romans could co-operate in imagining and pursuing their highest ideals, in this case by being perfectly allied with the Jesus of Mark 10:42–43a against barbarism, tyranny, and banditry, at home and away.

7. Notes on Implications and the Future of the Problem

The study of Mark looks quite different if one accepts my thesis that the gospel is simultaneously accommodating and resisting Rome through a selective and creative participation in Roman rhetoric. It relieves, for example, the false dichotomy of the anti-Roman Mark who writes of a man possessed by an evil power with the suggestive Roman military name of "Legion" (5:1–20), versus the pro-Roman Mark whose Christ is pronounced "God's son" by the mouth of a centurion at the cross (15:39). Mark's gospel is neither pro-Roman nor anti-Roman. It is a negotiated Jewish Roman work in progress. This is why the demonic "Legion" can recognize Jesus as divine (5:7) just as the centurion did, and still be a problem that needs to be cast out (5:8). This is also why some locals can be afraid instead of happy when they see "the man who had had the legion" set free (5:15–17). In Mark, the colonizing culture is a mixed bag, its effects are mixed, and the reactions of the colonized are also mixed. The problems of power, authority, and Rome are therefore quite complex in Mark, and words like "pro-Roman" and "anti-Roman" do not do them justice.

Identifying Mark 10:42–43a as a selective and creative engagement with Roman rhetoric also has implications when it comes to studying the way in which the saying is used in Matthew and Luke, as they build their own rhetorical paths of accommodation and self-assertion. Matthew 20:25–26 has Jesus say, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you" (οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν. οὐχ

οὕτως ἔσται ἐν ὑμῖν). Luke 22:25–26 has Jesus say, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you" (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἐξουσιάζοντες αὐτῶν εὐεργέται καλοῦνται. ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως). Some of the small changes in these versions look significant when it comes to understanding the rhetorical methods and goals of the gospels.

Like Mark, Matthew has long and often been taken at face value in its description of foreign tyranny. From John Chrysostom[1] to the Anchor Bible Commentary,[2] its equation of authoritarianism with "the heathen" has been treated as a simple matter of fact. Also like Mark, Matthew's gospel has been recognized more recently, by Warren Carter and others, as a more subtle critique of Rome in particular—one that is both intentionally subversive and unintentionally self-subversive,[3] since it "imitates the very imperial worldview that it resists!"[4] According to Carter, Matthew's Gospel counters the ideology of Rome with such a dogged symmetry it "perhaps contains the seeds of its own critique."[5] If this is true, then analyzing Matthew's engagement with the Roman rhetoric of foreign tyranny in 20:25 and elsewhere could help elucidate what is actually happening in its rhetoric, in terms of resistance, imitation, and accommodation.

Warren Carter has written, for example, about the willing payment of taxes as a mocking, "subversive act"[6] in Matthew. The willing adoption of Rome's rhetoric of foreign tyranny could very well be another piece in that puzzle of rebellion through mocking submission. The special connotation of the loaded word "Gentiles" within Matthew's Gospel would also deserve study. It may not mean at all the same thing that it means in Mark. Carter has written, for example, of Jesus' command in Matthew to "take my yoke" (11:28–30) as a critique of

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[1] *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, 65.4.
[2] W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (AB 26; Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 242.
[3] Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 242.
[4] Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 89 (see also 171 on the "irony" of "imperial imitation").
[5] Warren Carter, "The Gospel of Matthew," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 101. See also pp. 71, 72–73, 96–101, as well as his *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 403.
[6] Carter, *Matthew and Empire* 140–142 (See also Carter, "The Gospel of Matthew," 88–89).

Rome's Gentile oppression, since foreign rule (and Roman rule in particular) was so often referred to as a "yoke" in ancient Jewish writings, including those later incorporated into the canons.[7] This connection suggests that Matthew's reference to Gentile tyranny may, when situated within the rhetoric of the work as a whole, function with a more "nationalistic" or "xenophobic" connotation than Mark's.

Readings of the Gospel of Luke have followed the critical pattern now familiar from Mark and Matthew. Commentators from ancient[8] to modern[9] times identified Luke 22:25 as a simple description of "the normal pagan experience,"[10] but Luke is now being recognized more and more "both as radically subversive and as skillfully accommodationist in relation to the forces of imperialism and colonialism."[11] This recognition is based on analyses of the gospel's rhetoric as both stylistically and ideologically accommodating to imperial Roman culture. [12] It has also been recognized, though, that this accommodation is probably itself a subversive strategy similar to that which I have described in Josephus and Mark:

> At the same time, it should not be denied that Luke-Acts carries a message of political subversion. The subversiveness of the text may lie less, however, in the extent to which it opposes the totalizing claims of empire—the Roman—with the totalizing claims of another—God's Kingdom—than in the very ambivalence that has earned Luke his reputation as an apologist for Rome . . . Luke has, in the act of laying claim to the political values of Rome, used those same values to interrogate the oppressive policies of empire, thereby wedging open room within which a persecuted people might manoeuvre . . . Many radical attacks initiate in critiques within the hegemony—in taking the values of ruling elites

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[7] Carter, *Matthew and Empire* 108–129.

[8] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*, Homily 143; see Arthur A. Just Jr., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 3, Luke* (ed. Thomas C. Oden; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 335.

[9] Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Luke 10–24* (AB 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985).

[10] Fitzmeyer, *Luke 10–24*, 1416.

[11] Virginia Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 133.

[12] Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles," 138–139; see also Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Christian Scribality," 102, 105–106, 110; and Randall C. Webber, "'Why Were the Heathen so Arrogant?' The Rhetorical Strategy of Acts 3–4," *BTB* 22/1 (1992): 19–25.

seriously, while claiming that they (the elites) do not.[13]

This is the analysis of Virginia Burrus, based in part on the work of James C. Scott, who famously wrote that public cultural accommodation and imitation on the part of an oppressed minority group often involves subtle and private expressions of resistance,[14] which are ironic and "disguised . . . for safety's sake."[15] I have avoided referring to resistance in Josephus and Mark as "hidden," since the resistance in which I am interested is inseparable from their accommodation, and since the form and function of their resistance/accommodation are so essentially public. If Burrus's analysis of Luke is accurate, though, further inquiry into the gospel's engagement with the rhetoric of foreign tyranny might help elucidate such "hidden" rhetorical methods and goals. The addition in Luke 22:25 of "kings" and "benefactors" to the saying on foreign tyranny, for example, looks like an excellent example of a code-word that expresses simultaneous accommodation and resistance. As we have seen, "king" could be a subtle insult in imperial Rome. Are the Herods or the Caesars included here among the "kings of the nations," if and when they act like foreign tyrants? The title of "benefactor" also looks very significant. It was a coveted piece of high praise in the Roman Empire, but it also served to underline the hierarchy of the system, as the "generosity" of rulers implicitly "bound all the citizens into the system of imperialism."[16] Countless ancient inscriptions refer to ruling benefactors and grateful locals,[17] and it seems that even despised tyrants and extortionists could appoint themselves "benefactors."[18] Frederick W. Danker, in his work *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, refers to a decree "passed about 100 C.E. at Hierapolis, a city in Phrygia," which "imposes restraints on security officials, some of whom were

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[13] Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles," 139–140; see also 152–153.
[14] See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 106, etc.
[15] Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke," 140. See also Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 137.
[16] Jones and Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, 23.
[17] Braund, *Augustus to Nero*.
[18] See Fitzmeyer, *Luke 10–24*, 1417; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982), 324.

guilty of oppressive exactions and at the same time had the nerve to pressure villagers in reckoning them among their benefactors."[19] "Insolence of such stripe," he writes, "is well summarized in Luke 22:25."[20] Danker refers to other ancient examples like "Aischines' accusation (*Against Ktesiphon* 3.240) that Demosthenes was a benefactor only to his own interests."[21] In his opinion, "[t]he logion of Jesus concerning tyrants who masquerade as benefactors (Luke 22:25) belongs in the same rhetorical stratum."[22] Arthur Darby Nock has similarly compared the "passionate ridicule" that Plutarch lavished on useless leaders who "called themselves *euergetai*" with "the irony of Jesus' words about the 'Benefactors' of the Gentiles (Luke 22:25)."[23] For me, these examples are particularly interesting because they do not simply express an antagonism "hidden" in accommodating words. They suggest that Luke's gospel is participating in the internal critical rhetoric of imperial euergetism, not simply criticizing it from outside. The depiction of Jesus and his followers as legitimate "benefactors" in Luke and Acts[24] underlines the accommodating, internal nature of the critique. In any case, these variations on Mark's strategy in Luke (and Matthew) look significant. They deserve our attention if we want to understand the forms and functions of the gospels.

In closing, I want only to mention that the implications of studying Mark 10:42–43a and its derivatives as epideictic rhetoric are not confined to understanding the New Testament or the ancient world. In World War Two, Denmark resisted the Nazis partly by welcoming them as the friends and liberators they claimed to be, and then holding them uncompromisingly to the letter of their word. This strategy worked at least as well as competing with the Nazis directly in either propaganda or brute force, and showed that the accommodating tactic of resisting oppression by taking the propaganda of the

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[19] Danker, *Benefactor*, 294; see OGI 527 in Wilhelmus Dittenberger, ed., *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae, Vol. 2* (New York: Georg Olms, 1970), 184–186.
[20] Danker, *Benefactor*, 294.
[21] Danker, *Benefactor*, 484 n.178.
[22] Danker, *Benefactor*, 484 n.178.
[23] Arthur Darby Nock, "Soter and Euergetes," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World Vol. 2* (ed. Zeph Stewart; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 726.
[24] See Danker, *Benefactor*, 28, 324

oppressor seriously is not just a historical curiosity. It is a viable option, which means that all of its potentials and problems are live issues that deserve very careful study. Similarly, in conflicts ranging from Vietnam and the Cold War to the various invasions and conflicts in the Middle East, leaders and collaborators on all sides have consistently condemned their enemies as agents of foreign tyranny. Clearly, these patterns of representation are not confined to the rhetorical theory and practice of the ancient world. The ancient problems of the seductions and delusions of propaganda and power, of the confusion involved in negotiating resistance and accommodation, and of the construction of positive identities and freedoms through paranoid visions of barbarism and tyranny at home and away, are our problems.

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