

Title:**Struggling with a Roman inheritance: a response to Versluys****Comment:**

the phenomenon of globalization is in itself random and chaotic, to the point where no one can control it (Jean Baudrillard 2003, 50).

I am very grateful to Miguel John Versluys (V.) for this paper, which raises several important issues that derive from the current debates in Roman archaeology. I am aware of the context of V.'s arguments as I am a contributor to the forthcoming volume, *Globalization and the Roman World* (which V. has jointly edited; Pitts and Versluys 2014). I am pleased to be able to develop some of the themes outlined in my paper for that volume (Hingley 2014a) through this reflection upon V.'s contribution to the developing debate. The issues raised by V are particularly timely since a number of younger colleagues have observed that the critical focus provided by what I shall term 'Post-Colonial Roman Archaeologies' (PCRA) is stifling innovative research. PCRA is the term I use to address the body of research and publication characterized by V. as 'Anglo-Saxon Roman archaeology' (for reasons given below). I did not attend the TRAC session at Frankfurt to which V. refers, but I recognize his observation that there is a genuine concern about the form and content of PCRA arising from Roman archaeologists in both Britain and overseas. PCRA have focused around two core themes: (1) critiquing the concept of Romanisation and (2) the development of new ways of approaching the Roman Empire. V. suggests that this discussion has culminated in 'an uncomfortable ending' for the Romanisation debate and his proposal includes the reintroduction of this concept. Taking a rather different perspective, I shall propose that a dynamic and transformative agenda is spreading across several continents and that PCRA form an important aspect of this developing perspective.

The global politics of English as a dominant academic language

PCRA arose largely in Britain during the 1990s in response to an academic environment dominated by a simple monolithic concept of Roman identity and social change. The approach to Romanisation at this time was deeply entangled with ideas of civilizing missions that had lived on beyond the collapse of British imperial rule (Cunliffe 1984; Reece 1982; cf. Hingley 1989, 1). The publication of Martin Millett's *The Romanization of Britain* (1990) spearheaded a new agenda that called these imperial pasts into question. Millett retained the use of the concept of Romanisation, but others used his stimulating contribution to develop approaches that avoided using the term, drawing attention to the constraints that it places upon analysis (for recent summaries of these works, see Gardner 2013, 3-6; Laurence 2012, 62-73). A group of archaeologists, led by Eleanor Scott, launched their campaign to introduce theory to Roman archaeology at the first Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (Scott 1993). They were seeking new ways to break out of the restrictions created by over-definitive and inflexible accounts of the Roman past. The creation of TRAC directly resulted in the development of another new initiative, the Roman Archaeology Conference, which first convened in 1995. TRAC has continued to meet in the UK and overseas and new directions of study have been developed at subsequent meetings. The Critical Roman Archaeology Conference, held in Stanford (California) in 2008, was an offshoot of TRAC that developed an explicitly theoretical focus for the Roman archaeology of the Mediterranean (Totton and Lefrenz Samuels [eds.] 2012).

I am not convinced by V.'s idea that the critical debate of Romanisation represent a specifically 'Anglo-Saxon' concern. Recent publications indicate that PCRA form part of an expanding and transnational body of research within a broader field of classical studies (e.g. Dietler 2010; Garraffoni and Funari 2012; González Ruibal 2010; Hales and Hodos [eds.] 2010; Hardwick and Gillespie 2007; Janković and Mihajlović [eds.] forthcoming; Lafrenz Samuels and Totton [eds.] 2012; Orells et al. 2011). In addition, the number and character of these works seems to challenge the idea that post-colonial approaches are stultifying new research focused on the Roman Empire. It is certainly true that not all the contributions to the volumes listed above support or acknowledge the agendas developed through PCRA. Indeed, I recognize many of the issues addressed in V.'s paper from discussions at two of the recent conferences that feature in this list. The agendas outlined by PCRA, however, are encouraging and provoking researchers to articulate new accounts by drawing upon and/or contradicting what some see as dominant perspectives in Roman archaeology.

I suspect that there may be a more insidious issue at play in the spread of PCRA, relating to the role of English as the dominant language of academic communication (cf. Sonntag 2003). Academic practice directly encourages archaeologists from across the world to communicate in this global language, a process that may also promote the adoption of academic research questions, theories and methods that predominate in English-speaking countries (Hingley 2014b). Rather than facing a climate of academic stagnation, however, I perceive a broadening out of research agendas and a healthy intellectual debate that is crossing

international and conceptual boundaries. Debate and discussion may help to ensure that this body of scholarship does not become too random and chaotic, although part of our agenda, I feel, should be to support the opening up of debates that focus upon the meaning(s) of the Roman past (Hingley 2014a).

Relating the Roman past to the global present

V. aims to use globalisation theory and material culture studies to build a new approach to the Roman Empire drawing upon the idea of objects in motion. I agree that it is useful to adopt globalisation theory to interpret the Roman Empire. V. mentions that little detailed work has yet been undertaken to assess the relevance of globalisation theory to Roman archaeology but that momentum is evidently increasing (e.g. Pitts and Versulys [eds.] 2014). As V. notes, I made an early contribution to this debate (Hingley 2005), but my perspective differs from his in that it focuses upon the entanglement of our understandings of the Roman past with concepts derived from the global present (Hingley 2014a). The Greco-Roman past has long provided a rich range of powerful tools and metaphors for people across the West and the reworking of these concepts in the transforming researches of Roman archaeologists require especially careful handling. This is because we continue to live with the consequences of Roman expansion, since later societies have picked up, adopted and transformed Roman concepts, practices and materials (Hingley 2014a; Morley 2010).

In her article 'Value and Significance in Archaeology', Katherine Lafrenz Samuels (2008, 88) has outlined an approach based on the idea of source criticism that I shall explore here (cf. Hingley 2014a). She argues that it is good to reconstruct the past by seeking to excise contemporary influences and by working back critically through the historical sources and material remains. This is how archaeological and classical scholarship has often operated, by using the idea that it is possible to construct an authentic past that can effectively be divided from the present as a result of detailed, scholarly research. Lafrenz Samuels observes, however, that to 'argue that reconstructions of the past should be free of value judgments ignores the fact that archaeology is shaped by its practices and exists in a social context that is decidedly contemporary' (ibid). This is the main reason that the past is regularly reinterpreted—changes in the way that the present is perceived within society are reflected in changing understandings of the past (Hingley 2014a). Lafrenz Samuels (2008, 88) continues by observing that the insistence that there is a strict separation between past and present 'considerably restricts the tools we have available for analysis'. This acknowledges that the present context deeply impacts on the pasts that we create and that the analysis of this inter-relationship can reap rich rewards. She promotes 'a dialogical conversation between past and present' that 'blurs those barriers ... to show their interconnectedness, without disregarding their differences' (ibid). Extending this approach to consider how materials derived from the Roman Empire can be addressed, I have directed my attention to consider the origins and meanings of some of the concepts that lie at the core of Roman studies (Hingley 2014a).

The deconstruction of Romanisation in England focused upon uncovering the ways that the theories and practices of Roman archaeology were entangled with the 'imperial discourse' of Victorian and Edwardian society, providing imperial narratives that had deep relevance to the creation and maintenance of British imperial order at home and overseas (Hingley 2005, 28). The idea that we have moved on to a 'post-colonial' age is not universally agreed upon (cf. Hingley 2014b), but the agenda in Roman archaeology has changed over the course of the past 30 years. First PCRA came to prominence and now a number of scholars are promoting the relevance of globalisation theory (Pitts and Versluys [eds.] 2014). We do not all agree how new approaches to globalising Roman society should be achieved, but there seems to be consensus that we cannot avoid drawing upon ideas derived from globalisation; this results from the idea that global conceptions are omnipresent in our societies, making it inevitable that globalisation theory will influence current research and writing.

The explicit adoption of globalisation theory requires a clear acknowledgement of the influence of the present on interpretations of the past. Post-colonial theory, globalisation and Romanisation are approaches that have been developed in modern times to make sense of the ancient world and we need to consider how the adoption of such concepts impacts on the types of past societies that they help us to (re)create. It is not necessary to interpret the relationship between Romanisation, PCRA and globalisation as a simple chronological procession of successive theories through time. For example, V. tries to argue the continuing value of Romanisation through an engagement with globalisation theory and material culture studies. I prefer to link the post-colonial to the global, but to sideline Romanisation to the field of historiographical study. The introduction to a recent study, *The Post-Colonial and the Global* (Krishnaswamy 2008, 2-3), addresses the relationship of these bodies of theory across the humanities and social sciences, suggesting that works in globalisation theory often tend to pursue a 'brazenly positivistic' perspective and that this contrasts with the 'deconstructive or hermeneutic' focus explicit in much post-colonial theory. I propose that the development of theory in Roman archaeology can seek to work across the divide between positivism and deconstruction by exploring how present and past are interconnected, without losing sight of the possibility of establishing differences (for a focus on difference, see Terrenato 2005).

Interrogating the past and understanding the present

The idea that we need not insist on a strict separation between past and present communicates new possibilities by emphasizing the creative and transformative character of the theories we use to study classical Rome. A number of scholars have argued in conversation with me that, since my generation has spilt so much ink to deconstruct the concept of Romanisation, we can now move forward to develop approaches that build upon this term without reproducing the forms of bias inherent in earlier writings. It is also clear (as V. emphasises) that Romanisation continues to form part of the academic vocabulary in many parts of the Mediterranean and in France and Germany. Indeed, a resistant group of researchers continues to draw upon 'Romanisation' in the UK, although this is largely an undercover movement. The reason that I feel that Romanisation theory is unnecessary today is clearly addressed by the approach that V. adopts in his paper. Much of what he writes about material culture in the Roman world seems to de-centre the idea of Roman identity to the extent that the Empire seems Roman in name only (cf. Hingley 2005, 102). Why therefore, do we need to use the concept of Romanisation, apart from when we explore past research traditions? I should also say that I have no particular objection to people continuing to use this term but that it does not fit with the type of perspective that I seek to develop.

I do agree with V., however, that other core terms in Roman studies also require deconstruction. V. suggests that it would be useful to develop 'critical deconstructions and intellectual contextualisations' of Anglo-Saxon Roman archaeology to match those undertaken within the former traditions of study of Romanisation (page x). In this context, he argues that the concepts of 'imperialism' and 'colonialism', on which much of this scholarship has been based, should be done away with since they are rooted in '19th century nation state discourses and their 20th century deconstructions'. He also aims to justify reintroducing the use of Romanisation as a concept, but this particular term was a product of the same 19th century nationalist and imperialist discourses that created the terms V. asks us to abandon (Hingley 2005, 37-40; Mouritsen 1998). I agree that PCRA cannot be immune from the deconstructive focus inherent in the logic that this work purports to develop.

I wonder whether the combining of globalisation theory with the critical perspectives inherent in post-colonial theory may allow the creation of approaches that enable the further spread of the critical and experimental programme of research that I outlined in reference to recent publications at the start of this contribution. This may also be serving, at least to a degree, to decentre the power relations inherent in academia as a result of the current role of English as a dominant language. Or perhaps this argument is politically just too naïve in a world in which power relations are subject to continuous transformation and obfuscation (Hingley 2014b).

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