Post-colonial and global Rome: the genealogy of 'Empire'

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> 'Methodologically, postcolonial studies tend to be hermeneutic or deconstructive, problematizing the issue of representation, whereas globalization theory tends to be more brazenly positivistic, taking its representational ability for granted'.[1]

Introduction: the post-colonial and the global

This short quotation from the writing of Revathi Krishnaswamy helps me to introduce the motivation that lies behind a number of recent contributions that I have made to the study of Roman imperialism and cultural identity.[2] Krishnaswamy reviews the complex relationship that exists in linguistic and cultural studies between colonial discourse analysis and globalization theory. In the course of a number of interesting observations, he draws a simple opposition between these two apparently 'dominant discursive formations'. In creating this division, Krishnaswamy raises an issue that also appears to me to be central to the study of the incorporative culture of imperial Rome. Krishnaswamy argues that the literature on contemporary globalization is positivistic and, in general, relatively unconcerned with the way that it represents the world. In other words, it takes representing the world as a relatively straightforward task, an issue that does not require detailed deliberation.

It is sometimes imagined that post-colonial analysis has undermined the certainties of former colonial knowledge, eroding the problematic assumptions that were formerly embedded in the field of academic research and also in

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[1] Krishnaswamy (2008, 2).

[2] Hingley (2005), (2010), (2011a). For recent definitions of the terms 'imperialism' and 'colonialism', see Mattingly (2011, 6-7) and Kiely (2010, 1-8). For 'globalization', see the introduction to this volume and for 'empire'/'Empire' see below.

politics and popular culture. In turn, this is used to suggest that we have now moved forward to 'post-colonial' form of understanding that contradict the assumptions on which former knowledge was based. But, in this paper I follow Krishnaswamy's lead by asking whether the new intellectual works emerging in our 'post-colonial' world are actually any less problematic than the colonial knowledge that they seek to replace. Do the accounts of Roman culture that have been produced since 1995 represent the world in a way that is free from the problems that dogged the modernist forms of knowledge inherent in theories of Romanization? Having spent almost two decades undermining the certainties of ideas about Romanization, have we now moved onto safer intellectual ground?[3] In other words, can we ignore the issue of representation with regard to recent approaches that address Roman identity and cultural change?

Krishnaswamy considers the relationship between two contrasting intellectual positions when he asks whether post-colonialism has become complicit with forces of neoliberal globalism or whether it provides fertile feeding ground for antiglobal sentiments.[4] His main contention is that the forms of 'empirical pluralism' that globalization theory derive from post-colonial approaches—its drive to create ideas of 'hybrid' identities—can become, effectively, an 'alibi for global capitalism. A good deal of the available literature that has emerged within cultural studies over the past decade adopts a deconstructive and critical perspective with regard to the theory of globalization. These works, which I will consider below, form a 'post-colonial' response to the arguments outlined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their influential monograph *Empire* (2000).[5]

Drawing on Hardt and Negri's claims, Giovanni Arringhi has written that

[3] cf. Hingley (2011b).

[4] Krishnaswamy (2008, 3).

[5] To differentiate between the ancient world and the modern, I shall refer in this article to the Roman 'empire' and contemporary 'Empire'.

> ‘Empire is the new logic and structure of rule that has emerged with the globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. It is the sovereign power that effectively regulates these global exchanges and thereby governs the world.’ [6]

Krishnaswarmy and Arringhi outline a critical perspective with regard to Empire and their work formed part of a substantial body of scholarship that arose to critique Hardt and Negri’s interpretations of the modern world.[7] These critical works on *Empire* direct sustained attention to the political context of the predominant theories of globalization. But what, you may ask, has this to do with studies of classical Rome?

The critiques of *Empire* focus attention of the present world and that of the immediate past and in this paper I draw upon their example but direct my observations to a rather different field by considering whether globalization provides a useful approach to apply to the incorporative culture of classical Rome. A number of authors have already adopted globalization to consider the geographical expansion and connectivity of Roman culture.[8] These works do not all seek to do the same thing. Just as scholars who draw upon globalization theory to model the modern world are not all motivated by the same aims and desires, Romanists draw on the body of globalization theory in many different ways. My contribution to this volume asks whether the works that have addressed the globalization of Rome culture reflect an unrealistic confidence in the forms of representation that they create? Can we see the potential for the marrying of globalization theory and post-colonial critique

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[6] Arringhi (2003, 29). For a more detailed consideration of Hardt and Negri’s conception of the relationship between ‘*Empire*’ and globalization, see Balakrishnan (2003, ix-xi), Arrighi (2003).

[7] Balakrishnan (2003, vii). e.g. Balakrishnan (ed. 2003), Meiksins Wood (2003), Passavant and Dean (eds. 2004), Boron (2005), Krishnaswamy and Hawley (eds. 2008).

[8] Including Witcher (2000), Hingley (2005), Sweetman (2007), Robertson and Inglis (2006), Hitchner (2008), Pitts (2007) and the papers in this volume.

within the field of Roman studies today? If so, how can such knowledge operate to construct arguments that deal with the hermeneutics of knowledge? Should we struggle for consensus, as the editors of this volume suggest in their introduction? Indeed, what are the connotations of aiming to create academic consensus over an issue as deeply political as the genealogy of Empire?[9]

Recently, it has been suggested to me that post-colonial approaches in Roman archaeology have begun to hold back the development of creative interpretations by focusing too seriously on deconstruction. Although I find it hard not to agree with this point, this does not mean that we should develop overarching new accounts of Roman imperial identities which are positivist in character. I will argue that we can never subjected previous approaches to sufficient critique since we can never decolonized our subject? Are we now content to develop accounts of Rome that take their representation potential for granted without any sustained self-analysis? My contribution here aims to emphasize the need for empirical pluralism in the accounts that we create of the ancient past. Such a diversity of perspectives is likely to help to represent the problematical relationship of imperial Rome to the contemporary world.

Continuity in transforming systems

Part of the argument for continuous deconstruction relates to the immense cultural capital that classical civilization continues to hold in our society. We only need to consider the widespread use of classical concepts over the past decade in the military and political actions of Western nations, to reflect on the degree of continuity in the transforming systems that are used to regulate and order our world. Ideas about the bringing of civilization, peace and order to barbarians and backward peoples, together with arguments about the 'just war' and idea of securing the boundaries that define and defend the civilized, continue to form powerful political models, ideas that are used to justify

[9] cf. Hingley (2011a), Mattingly (2010, 292-3), Morley (2010, 1)

political and military actions.[10] Classical Rome, in its republican and imperial phases and also in its collapse, continues to hold immense cultural capital in our century, leading some to claim that Rome never died, but has been transformed into a global cultural phenomenon ('Empire') which has spread across today's world.[11] For some, Empire is alive and kicking and the extent to which classical Rome declined and fell is certainly open to sustained debate.[12] This can be addressed through the concept of the ancient genealogies of post-modern Empire,[13] a field of knowledge which explores the reception, forgetting, rediscovery and abandonment of past ideas and materials.

It is important to recognize that whatever perspective we take when we address classical Rome should not ignore the cultural power of Roman images today, as portrayed in the international political actions of the USA, Britain and other Western nations. Importantly, this image is also communicated, contested and contextualized through numerous film and other forms of popular culture.[14] The cultural currency of classical Rome provides part of the reason that over the past two decades, a number of archaeologists and ancient historians have aimed to unmask the roles played by our received versions of classical Rome in the political and cultural actions of Western nations.[15] At the same time, scholarly approaches to the Roman past have been modified to articulate with the changing cultural and political contexts of Western thought.[16] Despite this, the hermeneutic relationship between past and present continues to haunt the accounts that seek to reconstruct classical Rome; this consideration requires that we continue the

[10] Petras and Veltmyer (2001), Benton and Fear (2003, 268), Parchami (2009).

[11] cf. Hardt and Negri (2000), Willis (2007).

[12] Shumate (2006).

[13] Hardt and Negri (2000); cf. Balakrishnan (2003, xiii).

[14] cf. Joshel et al (2001).

[15] Mattingly (2011, 3).

[16] Hingley (2010, 54).

sustained analysis of the complex relationships that exist between, on the one hand, the forms of knowledge of the past that we seek to develop and, on the other, the politics, culture and economics of our contemporary age.

The hermeneutical relationship of past and present

F. G. Naerebout, in a review of my book *Globalizing Roman Culture* (*GRC*), observes that I told him in a conversation at a time when he had almost completed writing his review that what I aimed to present in my book was a critique of globalization as a new paradigm for Roman archaeology, in much the same way that Romanization had already been critiqued.[17] Naerebout argues that this aim is not clearly expressed in *GRC*. Although I thought that I *had* provided some emphasis,[18] I accept that I could have communicated this argument more clearly.[19]

Building upon Naerebout's comment, Pitts and Versluys note (this volume) that 'it is clear in his later work that Hingley's objective is not so much to use globalization as a theory to explain the Roman empire, but rather to use the analogy as a basis to challenge ideas about the modern world'. I can see how Pitts and Versluys' came to this conclusion. Since 2005, I have been drawing upon the critical accounts of the idea of 'Empire' that have been listed above to set imperial Rome in context.[20] The interrelationship of imperial Rome and Empire relates to the nature of our knowledge of past and present, raising complex issues of representation which require consideration.

The position that I took in *GRC* was based on an approach that addresses the

[17] Naerebout (2007, 167).

[18] See Hingley (2005, 117-20).

[19] Placing these arguments in a short section in the conclusion may have detracted from the message that I aimed to convey (cf. Gardner 2007, 390). This paper offers the opportunity to re-emphasize this issue, pursuing ideas that have been briefly explored in two recent articles (Hingley 2010; 2011a).

[20] See works referenced in fn 7. cf. Hingley (2010, 54-64, 70-1), Hingley (2011a).

relationship of the past to the present. Much of my recent work seeks to establish the extent to which it is possible to rigorously separate knowledge of the classical past from the contemporary context in which ideas about ancient times are received and transformed.[21] All the knowledge that we receive and seek to re-create when we address the classical past can only exist in the context of the present, since the past dies as soon as we make it the object of our research. By distancing it from the present we kill the past, but we also need to bring this knowledge back to life by setting it in a contemporary context.[22]

Images derived from classical Rome have a deep legacy that relates to the manner in which this ancient culture was (and is) drawn upon in the West. Since the Renaissance powerful people have aimed to create cultural capital through reference to imperial Rome. Rome has long formed an iconic image, drawn upon to inform and help to redefine the present. This is the context of the European Renaissance and images derived from classical Rome have continued since early modern times to operate in a complex variety of ways in many different areas of culture, politics, religion and the economy. This is a vast topic and I cannot draw in any detail on the complexity of the ways that ideas derived from classical Rome have served across Europe and beyond.[23] One important issue that has received detailed study concerns the intellectual process by which classical knowledge has been drawn upon in scholarly study in order to make this information relevant and apposite to those with an interest in cementing nationhood and in the creation imperial domination over others.[24]

The past is a mirror in which the contemporary age can be viewed, but the idea of an objective or authentic past is also an abstraction. The creative action of making the past relevant to the present has often been posited,

[21] cf. Hingley (2011a).

[22] These arguments are explored in detail in Hingley (forthcoming).

[23] cf. Beard and Henderson (1995), Moatti (1993), Hingley (ed. 2001).

[24] cf. Mouritsen (1998), Hingley (2000), Hingley (ed. 2001), Marchand (2003).

explicitly or implicitly, on the assessment of the perceived parallels and contrasts that can be drawn between ancient times and our contemporary world. Part of the value of classical Roman sources—texts and material remains—lies in the way that these traces can be used to create lessons and models for present times. Although imperial Rome has often been seen to provide a cultural paragon in the fields of politics, culture and architecture, many have cast critical reflections on Rome; by drawing on the ancient evidence for despotism, military force and enslavement classical Rome can be defined in negative terms. The role of Rome can change through time within the confines of a single society in order to address transforming political and cultural agendas. For example, a generally negative perception of imperial despotism typified the British attitude to imperial Rome for much of the nineteenth century, but a contrasting fixation on the efficacy of the creation of order and peace came to characterize the final decade of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.[25] The inherent complexity of the cultural models that classical Rome has offered to later people helps to explain its attraction to a broad range of societies over the substantial period from the fifteenth century to the present day. It provided (and provides) a contrasting set of concepts that often operate more effectively as a result of their inherent ambiguity.

This is a very brief and short summary of a substantial field of international scholarship, but I need to draw slightly more detailed attention to recent works in Roman archaeology that have addressed the ways that classical Rome has provided, and continues to provide, models for political centralization and imperial domination. The theory of Romanization was effectively deconstructed during the period from the mid 1990s to the mid first decade of the present century. The unmasking of Romanization was based on the uncovering of the imperial agenda inherent in concept, a process in which the particular interests of archaeologists and ancient historians drew upon the concerns and interests of their own societies.[26] This critical approach, in the

[25] Vance (1997).

[26] Hingley (2011b).

works of scholars such as David Mattingly, Jane Webster and myself,[27] drew upon the use of 'post-colonial' theory, including the writings of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and others. A dominant element in this tradition represents the interrogation of the relationship between knowledge of the imperial Roman past and the forms of knowledge that were created in Roman archaeology during much of the twentieth century.[28]

Post-colonial Roman archaeology aimed to unmask and also to supplant the forms of imperial knowledge that called on classical Rome for lessons and morals for the present. Relevant issues that appeared increasingly problematic during the late twentieth century included the idea that imperial contact encouraged a progressive transformation on the periphery of empire, from barbarity to civilization. Post-colonial works focused on the implicit manner in which this idea of a Roman civilizing mission fed on and supplemented the imperial agendas of certain Western nations during the first two thirds of the last century, in particular within Great Britain.[29] By Romanizing, indigenous people were felt to be becoming more progressive and more modern, a process that would eventually lead to the rediscovery of classical examples during the Renaissance, a process that eventually led to the modern imperial context by which Western nations dominated indigenous peoples across much of the globe. The powerful post-colonial critique of this inherited tradition included a significant number of practitioners and this critical tradition of work continues today, although it is also true that the nature of the debate has evolved and changed during the past fifteen years.[30]

To an extent the battle that has been waged in Roman archaeology over the last decade and a half has been won. Linear concepts of progressive social change and the reified concepts of Roman and native/barbarian identity on which these interpretations were based have generally ceased to be popular

[27] Mattingly (1997, 2006), Webster (1996, 2001), Hingley (1996, 2000).

[28] Hingley (2011b).

[29] Hingley (2011b).

[30] cf. Hingley (2005, 45-8), Mattingly (2006, xii; 2011).

in the field of classical studies.[31] It is important to recognize that this trend commenced prior to the introduction of explicitly post-colonial theory into Roman archaeology.[32] Archaeologists and ancient historians today have more complex comprehensions of Roman identity and the flexible ways that contacts between Rome and the various indigenous groups across the empire worked to establish and contest the growth of the network of power relations that formed the empire.[33] A number of influential accounts provide coherent ways of re-imaging classical Rome that appears particularly apposite in our post-colonial world.[34]

A problem here is that ideas about social change in the Roman empire have been transformed to address the new political and economic context of our present age; at the same time these ideas continue effectively to recast the Roman past in the image of the present. This transformation occurs through the changing research agendas of archaeologists and ancient historians. As we have seen, the past and the present are deeply connected in a complex hermeneutic relationship. The use of Rome to contextualize contemporary imperialism in an early twentieth-century context appears to have been replaced in contemporary work by a focus on the contemporary global relevance of Rome. This is one of the reasons that we cannot just dismiss globalization as a viable model for the way that the Roman empire came into being. Indeed, the past and present are too deeply interrelated to make such a position viable.

Authors who write on the topic of ancient civilization and classical Rome tend to divide into two groups. One the one hand we have those who consider that the assumptions that underlie the concepts outlined in globalization theory are irrelevant to the world of imperial Rome,[35] while other scholars seek to adopt

[31] Hodos (2010, 23-7).

[32] Hingley (2011b).

[33] cf. Terrenato (2008), Hingley (2005, 47-8).

[34] Hingley (2011b).

[35] e.g. Naerebout (2007), Forsén and Salmeri (2008, 1).

and transform these ideas. The writings that have already emerged on this topic indicate that it is possible to find evidence in the information that we derive from the Roman past to support either of these oppositional ideas. This, however, is not the core of the issue that I am addressing.

Scholars who study the past usually aim to construct a barrier between the present and the materials that form the subject matter of their research. This aim is pursued in order to create a reliable knowledge of the ancient past, but the act of delimitation on which this technique is based is elaborated through the creation of a linear sense of temporal order. This is a concept of sequence that places the subject of our scholarship in a distant position entirely separated from the world in which we undertake our research and writing. Often, scholarship appears to focus on the idea of creating secure understanding that distances the subject of this historical research from the contemporary world in which we live and work. This is achieved through a series of theoretical and methodological procedures that help to create temporal distance. Archaeological methods of excavation and dating, together with the approaches adopted by classists to textual analysis, seek to provide rigorous ways to create forms of understanding that can be defended as 'authentic'. As Pearson and Shanks argue 'What is found becomes authentic and valuable because it is set by choice in a new and separate environment with its own order, purpose and its own temporality—the time co-ordinates of the discipline archaeology which give the object its date and context.'[36] But, although we may work hard to create this clear temporal division, how separate can the past actually really be from the present?[37]

All accounts of the Roman empire—its culture, religion, politics and economy—are based on assessments of the textual sources and the material remains that have been uncovered, but they also, inevitably, relate to the concerns and interests of the present. In other words, the past and present are not as conveniently separated as our theories and methods might often

[36] Pearson and Shanks (2001, 115).

[37] This is explored in detail in Hingley (in press)

appear to suggest. The critique of Romanization pointed out the national and imperial contexts within which this theory arose, thrived and declined. In turn, contemporary ideas about the Roman empire inevitably reflect the beliefs and assumptions of the current age.[38] We have to draw on ideas about the condition of the world in order to create an image of the Roman empire and to understand the processes of identity formation and social change that occurred there.

The way that contemporary knowledge informs understanding of the past is a problematic field that is ripe for further exploration. It has been observed that the need to use present theory to interpret that past derives, in part, from the fact that we have only fragments from the Roman imperial past on which we can base our interpretations. Many classical texts have been lost through the ages and all the surviving fragments are reinterpreted in each age to draw out new meanings. Archaeological information is also highly fragmentary and requires interpretation before it can be drawn upon to inform us about past culture. Neville Morley argues that the fragmentary nature of knowledge of imperial Rome means that modern analogies have often been used to plug the gaps in our information.[39] In this way, I would argue that interpretations of the classical world inevitable take on board the current explanatory ideas for the nature of the contemporary world. Just as ideas and information from the ancient world influenced Western imperialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so contemporary ideas and explanations influence the ways that we comprehend the ancient world today. Morley shows that the concept of Rome as a magisterial and glorious symbol of empire is an extremely partial and misleading ideal that can be eroded and undermined by exploring the generation and genealogy of imperial thought through time and also through the contradictions that are inherited with this knowledge.

The relationship between past and present is deeply hermeneutic. The gaps in our knowledge are wide, but our comprehension of the contemporary world

[38] cf. Dench (2005, 233), Hingley (2010).

[39] Morley (2010, 9-10).

is also deeply embedded within inherited ideas that reflect classical ideas about order and civilization, as Hardt and Negri's *Empire* observed. The Roman world makes sense to us, partly, because our society sees contemporary values and aims reflected in the evidence that is available for the classical past. This reflects the two-way relationship between the classical past to the present. Our comprehensions of order, logic and justice are bound up with an inherited body of knowledge much of which ultimately derives from the classical societies of Greece and Rome. We transform and develop these ideas, but we also build on them in the changing character of the interpretations of the world of classical Rome that are created within archaeology and ancient history.

The popular field of reception studies in classics focuses attention on to the ways that some aspects of the past have been selected out and 'appropriated' in order to create concepts of value, status and power in subsequent cultures.[40] Reception study has considerable potential when it focuses attention on the representation of the modes of thought that lie behind the interpretations that we create of classical Rome. To uncover the genealogy of thought, we need a critical focus on the context of contemporary ideas about the Roman empire that explores the origin, source and transformation of these ideas. It is important to consider the context of the approaches to cultural identity and change that have now achieved power and influence in Roman studies. Romanization as a theory is not dead, even in Britain, but it is no longer appears to represent the dominant agenda in Roman archaeology.[41] How do the forms of logic that have come to replace this theory relate to the politics of the present?

Roman imperial culture as global discourse

In *GRC* I focused on the relationship of some of the recent approaches that have been developed to address Roman identity and social change, starting an exploration of the hermeneutical relationship of this field of knowledge to

[40] Hardwick (2003, 3).

[41] Hingley (2011b).

ideas about the present world-order.[42] I aimed to extend the critical focus that had been developed in the attacks on Romanization theory to address these recent works that had constructed what might be considered to represent broadly 'post-colonial' accounts of identity in the Roman empire. In particular, I explored the focus of some of the new approaches that have developed to address the elite cultures of the Western empire ('becoming Roman') and alternative recent accounts of fragmented identities, including military and urban ways of life.[43] In the terms articulated by Krishnaswamy (above), I was addressing the extent to which these are positivistic and take their representational quality for granted.

The debate about whether globalization theory is, or is not, a useful field of knowledge for Romanists is based on the misconception that we can avoid the influence of contemporary concerns on the ways that we bring the classical world back to life. There is a lively debate amongst scholars about whether globalization is an appropriate interpretational tool for the modern world and also regarding how ideas about the global world might operate today.[44] Whatever certain academics may think, however, many of the concepts on which globalization theory draws have become fairly common currency within the media and society in general. The particular issues that are the focus of attention in many studies of globalization include the breaking down of former geographies of oppositions between the core and the periphery and the erosion of former ideas about the centrality of the West. Some works focus on the centrality of economic interrelation in the modern world, while others concentrate more fully on cultural integration and fragmentation.

Many writers have considered these views, but Krishnaswamy provide a convenient summary that is of relevance here:

[42] cf. Hingley (2010; 2011a).

[43] cf. Woolf (1998), Hingley (2010).

[44] cf. Hardt and Negri (2000); Balakrishnan (ed. 2003), Boron (2005).

> ‘Postcolonial conceptions of difference, migrancy, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism serve to harmonize the universal and the particular in ways that appear to open up the global to a multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of imperialism. In many theoretical formulations, postcolonial cosmopolitanism appears to work against all forms of totalization and homogenization ... Welded with poststructuralist ideas of difference and decentring, and yoked to postmodern notions of fragmentation and multiplicity, this postcolonial content is often strategically marshalled to represent the emerging global order as a deeply disruptive yet ultimately enabling condition that unleashes subaltern resistance and enables creative adaptations in the margins.’[45]

We end up with a world in which categories of identity appear to be breaking down under forces of global integration and regional resistance to assimilation, but a central issue that is explored by much of this work is that the categories that we draw upon, including assimilation and resistance, are not binary concepts that can be defined in simple terms in opposition to each other.

Indeed, in accounts of contemporary globalization, categories that were formerly viewed as oppositions are now often seen as related in complex ways. Gopal Balakrishnan writes that, under the forms of Empire-logic that constitute a dominant tradition in globalization studies:

> ‘An old statist world of ruling class and proletariat, of dominant core and subject periphery, is breaking down, and in its place a less dichotomous and more intricate pattern of inequality is emerging. “Empire” could be described as the planetary *gestalt* of these flows and hierarchies.’[46]

Inequalities in this colonial world order are mutated and transformed. This suggests that the challenge that was mounted to colonial knowledge through

[45] Krishnaswamy (2008, 3).

[46] Balakrishnan (2003, x).

the creation of the powerful conception of pluralism has, in turn, become a defining force in the political, cultural and economic system that has come to replace the former colonial state. As such, 'heteroglossia or hybridization offer no alternative: the ideology of Empire has become a supple, multicultural aesthetic that deactivates the revolutionary possibilities of globalization'.[47]

As Krishnaswamy and others have noted ideas of 'empirical pluralism' have, since the 1970s and 1980s, been efficiently and effectively incorporated into the logic of the new 'post-colonial' global world order. Therefore, it is not necessarily quite so challenging today to create accounts of pluralism in the world of the present or that of the classical past.[48] This claim has a number of connotations, since recent attempts to re-think identities across the Roman empire in more complex terms also lead to the reinterpretation of existing data by focusing, for example, on the landscapes, settlements and lives of the less privileged.[49] Research agendas and data collection strategies have changed since the middle of the last century, a trend that also helps to transform understandings of the Roman empire.[50]

The new research traditions and changing patterns of thought have in turn served to create ideas of less dichotomous and more intricate patterns of inequality in the Roman empire. As a result, ideas of elite and non-elite, incorporation and resistance, are seen to break down, to a degree at least, in a global empire that is recreated through local engagement.[51] Thus pluralism, or heterogeneity, becomes a binding force of the Roman empire, just as in the contemporary world. Cultural variation becomes a tool for the creation of a state of perpetual imperial order. It is equally problematic that these rather more inclusive accounts of the Roman empire that have been generated in the past two decades may well serve to establish a historical foundation for

[47] As Balakrishnan notes (*ibid*, xiv) this is a contentious claim.

[48] Hingley (2010, 62).

[49] Mattingly (2011, 26-30).

[50] Hingley (2005, 36-7).

[51] Hingley (2010, 61).

arguing for the enabling influence of globalization in the contemporary world. We might well reflect in this context on the observation that in the Roman world, cultural difference was also used to establish opposites and to crush and exterminate people.[52] Perhaps such ideas require more emphasis in accounts of provincial Roman identities.

These critical considerations do not, in themselves, make accounts that seek to address cultural pluralism and hybridity in the modern or in the ancient worlds inherently wrong. Such approaches have formed a powerful and well-intentioned response to earlier ideas of the centrality and homogeneity of colonial and imperial power. They have served to help to undermine former colonial understandings of the ancient world, including the arguments inherent in ideas of progress and Romanization. The problem today appears to be that accounts of pluralism may have ceased to represent very much of a challenge to the dominant ways in which the world is represented. Therefore, my critical observations on recent scholarship in Roman studies is not a call for a return to the types of binary conceptions and ideas of simple progress that typified imperial discourse for much of the twentieth century. Rather it is based on the claim that we cannot move forward in our interpretative work without thinking of the complex inter-relationship of the ideas that we hold about the present and the past.

The position that I have argued is that archaeologists and ancient historians need to reflect deeply on the forms of knowledge of the classical world that scholars in our disciplines have been creating for the past two decades. It is not adequate merely to deconstruct Romanization and to imagine that we have effectively moved beyond the limitations of this theory, since this ignores the cultural and political context of the approaches that have been created to replace former ways of comprehending. The critique of Romanization contended that much twentieth-century Roman archaeology was informed and defined by the historical context in which study was conducted—can we really can claim that our current accounts of Roman culture and social change

[52] Mattingly (2011, 22-6).

avoid exactly the same issue of their relationship to the present? To put this argument another way, have recent accounts that re-conceive Roman culture positivist?

Romanists cannot be thought to be immune to developments in thought about the modern world and the main point that I have been seeking to make is that this should cause those who work within our fields to read and contemplate published texts that address the politics and economy of the contemporary world. Since we seek to create knowledge that is helpful and/or interesting to our peers and publics, we cannot conceive knowledge of the past to be any more apolitical than the ideas about the present that we hold. If we consider that the contemporary world has been fully globalized—and there is some debate about this issue—there is no way to avoid the issue of the impact of global knowledge on the disciplines that address classical Rome. The present 'infects' the past through the academic methods and theories that aim to make our studies relevant, believable and authentic. This is true whether we explicitly acknowledge the influence that the present plays in accounts of the Roman past, or whether we deny the very idea.

I would accept that it is certainly worth thinking about some of the theories and methods that have been adopted in globalization theory to consider whether these have value and relevance in the context of classical Rome. A number of papers in this volume pursue this logic. This does not mean, however, that we can sideline the way that writings on the past reflect the interests and thoughts of the society in which these ideas emerge. In this context, we cannot neatly separate the past and the present and, as a result, the study of the past should incorporate a critical assessment of the relationship of knowledge of the Roman empire to the present contexts in which transforming ideas are created.

Genealogies of empire

One way to pursue the challenges laid out in this paper is to think about genealogies of empire, the way that empires have grown and been perpetuated by drawing on the example of former imperial peoples. Hardt and

Negri pursue a particular direct analogy between the image of the Roman empire created by Polybius and the analogous structure that they claim for the modern world.[53] To suggest that the Roman empire is in some way directly comparable to the modern state of 'Empire' is a rather naïve idea. It is rather more accurate to suppose that Hardt and Negri, together with other scholars, have drawn upon Roman imperial models to provide a reflection, a metaphor or an analogy for contemporary global sovereignty.[54] It is evident to anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the classical past that the world of imperial Rome and that of modern times are quite distinct from each other in a variety of ways, for instance in the scale and intensity of the respective economies and in modes of transport and communication. As noted above, it is through the analysis of comparability and difference that knowledge of the past is constructed and elaborated. I have been suggesting that we need to be aware of the ways in which we cannot avoid writing the present into the past through the theories and methods that we develop and I have also emphasized that the past can only exist, as a field of knowledge, in the context of the present. This does not mean that the Roman empire was in any sense the same as the present.

The twin concepts of e/Empire and imperialism are inherited from the classical past and these ideas have played a significant role in the creation of political power and the enforcement of order across the globe over the past two centuries and longer.[55] This does not mean that all forms of empire are in someway reflections of a single grand conception, since meanings are constantly transforming in space and time. Classical Rome has presented a fundamental origin myth for many Western empires since the end of classical times. The reception of imperial models in post-Roman times forms a fundamental part of the study of the genealogy of imperialism across the

[53] Hardt and Negri (2000). cf. Balakrishnan (2003, xiii), Robertson and Inglis (2006, 36), Willis (2007).

[54] cf. Hard and Negri (2000, 10-20, 163, 314-6), Robertson and Inglis (2006), Willis (2007, 330)

[55] Richardson (2008), Parchami (2009), Kiely (2010), Mattingly (2011, 5-6).

West. This means that cross-temporal studies of the concepts that lie behind imperialism are of fundamental importance in helping to define the ways that ideas have been inherited, forgotten, transformed and contradicted.[56] Cross-cultural studies are also vitally important in helping to identify the links and discontinuities in the logic of empire, as in some of the volumes that have compared empires from different parts of the world and from different periods of time.[57] As scholars who aim to reconstruct the nature of society in the Roman empire, we also need to engage with concepts of the genealogy of empire. This is necessary if we are to situate the context of contemporary studies, to explore the motivations behind the meanings that we seek to bring into being through our creative thoughts.

Consensus?

The fundamental point that I have stressed here, however, is the inherent political nature of the ideas that we derive from the evidence that exists for classical Rome and its empire. My concern is that in aiming to decolonizing the subject of Roman imperial archaeology, we have effectively written out aspects of the Roman imperial past that we feel to be, in some way, unpalatable or undermining. A post-colonial Roman empire often appears to be of a place where all (or at least the vast majority) had at least some power to determine their own lives and to live in active and creative ways. The hybrid or plural ideas of identity that have become common in much of the literature tell richer tales of (at least partial) emancipation from imperial force.[58] These accounts seek to replace previous colonial forms of knowledge that usually placed a far greater emphasis on the political and cultural dominance that Rome exercised over its empire.

The creation of such approaches appears entirely justifiable as a response to the ideas of Romanization that dominated Roman archaeology during the middle years of the twentieth century. Indeed, these new ideas in classical

[56] cf. Parchami (2009), Bradley (2010), Morley (2010).

[57] cf. Alcock et al (eds. 2001); Munkler (2007).

[58] Hodos (2010, 26).

studies have formed part of a wider agenda to create a ‘post-colonial’ world, a society that is based on a fundamental challenge to the older binary forms of logic that characterized colonial discourses. If the arguments outlined in this paper are accepted, the problem becomes that the world has, in the meantime, moved on. It has transformed in a way that has helped to incorporate the idea of plurality into the common discourse of identity, the structure through which the culture and economy of the contemporary work is regenerated. There is nothing inherently wrong with a world that is based upon plurality, but perhaps this argument about the context of study should cause some concern about the creation of ideas of plural pasts. It suggests that Roman society continues to play a direct role in our concepts of origin in the West, even though ideas focus more on discrepancy and hybridity. The critical reflection on Rome continues to be subverted through an agenda that seeks to drive a basic conception of genealogical ancestry for the enabling power of modern global forces.

One answer to the conundrums that are raised in this paper relates to the issue of consensus and agreed agendas. In the context of the development of modern knowledge, Pitts and Versluys comment in the introduction to this volume that ‘the conceptual vacuum created by the discredited concept of Romanization is somewhat discomforting.’ Their aim in promoting this particular volume is to move debate forward and they comment that ‘not only is it possible and methodologically sound to use globalization theory in the study of Roman history and archaeology; there are also many compelling reasons why we *must* use it.’

I am fully in agreement with this argument, but I suspect that my reasons differ from the editors. Accounts that aim to build new knowledge of the Roman world should also aim to engage with the context of how this knowledge is articulated to communicate with people in the present. Such an approach requires that we consider the source of our ideas about the classical and contemporary worlds and also that we address the political and economic contexts in which these understandings have developed. This is an openly reflective agenda since people do not agree about the politics of the present

and, as a result, we should not necessarily aim to build a consensus about the past. Part of the living value of the Roman past, from the perspective addressed here, is the way that our ideas and approaches are constantly changing, at least in part as the result of new discoveries. To aim to achieve a degree of unanimity in our discussions may well require some active and passive suppression of the alternative views and approaches. What motivates the desire to aim to achieve such a state of affairs in Roman studies? Is this the idea that there is (and was) only one classical past? Or is at, at least in part, a desire to control and manipulate the present? Perhaps this is part of a concern about the possibility of contemporary disorder and lack of unity in the modern world?

An alternative agenda has motivated this paper. At a conference a few years back I was told by one of the audience that the post-colonial generation in Roman archaeology (i.e. myself and various friends) want to force everyone to think and write the same way. My own academic origins occurred in a context in which it was a common occurrence to be told that what I was saying, usually about the Roman empire and by association the British empire, was patently wrong.[59] In this context, I feel that a more helpful agenda today is to accept that there is no single way to study and interpret the past. Rather than looking for consensus, we might well welcome and encourage the type of open agenda that dispute and disagreement can help to create. From this viewpoint, the proliferation of approaches that typifies contemporary studies on imperial Rome appears to signal the intellectual strength of the subject; it is also a testament to the value of our thoughts and writings.

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[59] cf. Thomas (1990, 184).

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