Eurocentricism and theory in Roman Archaeology: a further contribution to the Romanization debate

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Introduction: problems with the inheritance

Many past studies have developed the idea of 'Romanization' to explore the spread of Roman cultural identity during the later first millennium BC and early first millennium AD. Archaeologists and ancient historians have, over the past 100 years, used various forms of the term Romanization to explore the spread of Roman culture, including Romanisation, Romanization, romanisation and romanization (Alcock 1997, 1). The use of the lower case 'r' perhaps sometimes focuses upon a more critical evaluation of the significance of the term than the use of the upper case letter. Bill Hanson suggested in 1994 that Romanization is 'the single topic which effectively underpins and potentially unites all aspects of the study of the Roman period in Britain' (Hanson 1994, 149), while the term is also applied to the societies of Italy, the Mediterranean, Iberia and Northern Europe, and is used by numerous writers in Europe and the USA (for reviews that take a variety of different perspective to Romanization, see Alcock 1997; 2000; 2001; Barrett 1997a; 1997b; Blázquez 1989; Curchin 2004, 8-14; Curti et al 1996, 181-8; Dench 2003; Derks 1998, 1-9; Freeman 1993; 1997; Hanson 1994; Hingley 1996; 2000, 111-3; Laurence 2001; Merryweather and Prag 2003; Millett 1990a; 1990b; Slofstra 2002; Webster 2001 and Woolf 1998, 4-7). In the final twenty years of the twentieth century and the early years of this century, a plethora of books was published that focused on Romanization, taking their detailed subject matter from Italy, Athens, Spain, Gaul, the Low Countries, Britain, the West and the empire of Augustus.[1] Many of the accounts that adopt the Romanization perspective do not provide any detailed discussion of the concept, effectively assuming that it derives directly from classical society. Traditional approaches often appear to consider that the term provides an account of a spontaneous process that requires no explanation (Mouritsen 1998, 60), a description of 'what really happened', free of any conscious bias (Johnson 1999, 167).

Romanization, however, is problematical. Classical authors did not use it: the theory of Romanization drew upon concepts articulated in classical texts but was invented in the relatively recent past to explore an issue that modern scholars have felt to be important (Freeman 1993; Hingley 2000, 111 and Mouritsen 1998, 59). It is a cultural construct and not a self-evident entity; as, it should be noted, is the Roman empire itself (Barrett 1997b, 52). Romanization was invented to account for the process of social change that is argued to have occurred under Roman rule, first across Italy and then throughout the provinces of the Western empire and also across some areas of the East (David 1996, 1; MacMullen 2000). Many of the terms in which the Romanization debate has been defined (including 'Roman', 'Greek', 'Hellenic', 'Etruscan', 'Italic', 'Celtic', Germanic', 'native', 'barbarian' and 'civilization') are themselves derived from classical texts, as is some of the conceptual framework within which they operate (Huskinson 2000, 21; Woolf 1997, 339; 1998, 54-67). This is significant, since, as Greg Woolf has indicated, it means that there is a hermeneutic aspect to the debate. Romanization is, at one and the same time, linked to more recent national and imperial ideologies (Desideri 1991; Hingley 2000; Laroui 1970, 47-9; Sheldon 1982, 102-3; Terrenato 1998, 21 and Mattingly 1997a, 8), while owing much to accounts of empire and civilization formulated during the late Republic and early empire in writing, art and rhetoric. At its core are imperial images that presented the idea of empire as divinely sanctioned, conceiving that Rome had a mission and moral right to civilize the barbarians (Woolf 1997, 339).

This reuse of the past is a significant issue, since the incorporation of ideas that are derived from classical society into the contemporary analytical framework has often been used to provide powerful intellectual support for the authenticity of the concepts themselves. Ideas derived from classical sources were felt to have a particular authority, since this inherited tradition was often attributed with an un-challengeable status (Farrell 2001; Kennedy 1992, 37 and Stray 1998, 11-2). In reality, the core concept – Romanization – was first formulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was the intellectual product of a group of nineteenth- and early twentieth-

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[1]   A wide variety of works are listed by Hingley (2005, 128 n. 27 and n. 35). These include Blázquez and Alvar (eds.) (1996), Brandt and Slofstra (eds.) (1983), Curchin (2004), *Digressus* (2003), Hoff and Rotroff (eds.) (1997), Keay and Terrenato (eds.) (2001), MacMullen (2000), Millett (1990a), Torelli (1995).

century historians, perhaps the most significant of whom were Theodor Mommsen, Francis Haverfield and Camille Jullian (Freeman 1997; Goudineau 1998 and Mouritsen 1998). It drew in various ways upon contemporary concepts of nationhood and empire (Desideri 1991; Freeman 1996; Hingley 1996; 2000; Laroui 1970, 47-9; Mattingly 2002; Mouritsen 1998; Terrenato 1998 and Woolf 1998, 4-7). Classical images formed a rich source of inspiration for the ruling classes of European nations during the imperial ventures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, because they spoke within these contexts in powerful and authoritative ways (Desideri 1991; Hingley 2000 and 2005). In more general terms, some of the ideas inherited from the past – for instance, 'civilization', 'barbarism' and the idea of the 'just war' – have remained popular and are redefined again today in order to justify the international actions of Western nations.[2] The survival of these political concepts mirrors the continuing popularity of the theory of Romanization today.

Many past accounts suggest that the spread of Roman culture (often termed 'civilization' in works that were written in the first half of the twentieth century) occurred through a process of Romanization. Material culture, the objects and material structures that are found across the empire, is then thought to have spread as part of this expansion. This historical process is argued to have encouraged the adoption of the culture by groups of varying status. The process of Romanization was seen as involving a form of social change from one way of being to another, a change that has sometimes been conceived to have, in effective terms, a moral quality, since it was partly based on ideas of progress and development in the contemporary world. I shall focus here upon the general context in which the concept developed. Attitudes have been in a constant state of change over the past 100 years and Romanization has been reinvented in each age to reflect upon the contemporary situation. Initially, Romanization was viewed as a centralizing and civilizing process, and it was felt to operate in fairly simple ways. I shall discuss the context of this body of thought. Elsewhere, I have provided an account of the development of Romanization down to the present day (Hingley 2005, 37-48).

Classical inheritances

Romanization developed within the context of the ideas of classical civilization that were current within Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concepts that were themselves derived from earlier origins. In Western Europe, classical study originated during the Renaissance from a revival of the Roman interest for visiting monuments

and collecting ancient works of art (Barbanera 1998, 3-48 and Barkan 1999). The observation of ruins and collection of exotic objects represented one of the ways in which scholars who studied classical Greece and Rome attempted to understand and interpret the ancient world (Barkan 1999 and Schnapp 1996). Classical archaeology and classics share a fascination with the inheritance of Western 'civilization' from Greece and Rome (Greene 1995, 30). Classics as a discipline grew, in particular, out of the Grand Tour of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it performed a specific role in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: to educate future colonial administrators (Stray 1998 and Toner 2002, 2). Classical archaeology became a distinct discipline during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of the growing specialization of various topics within the broader categories of classical and historical studies (Dyson 1993, 195; 1998, 1).

Knowledge of the classical past was a significant element in the creation of what today constitutes 'Europe' and 'the West' (for concepts of Europe see Chakrabarty 2000, 3-23; Gross et al 2002 [1996], 198-200 and Pagden 2002). The past, in general terms, has been deployed by Europeans, and peoples of the Western world, to construct identities that have often been defined in opposition to others, to construct the West and the non-West and to create ideas about ancestry (see Meskell 1999, 3 and, for the relationship of the East to the West, see Said's 2003 [1978] seminal work). The idea originates from the division between the Eastern and Western halves of the empire, but it also incorporates religious aspects that defined the West as Christian and the East as Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist. This is ironic, since Christianity originated in what is today the Middle East, while the Eastern Empire inherited this religion and survived the fall of the Western empire by almost a millennium (Herrin 1987, 295). Also reflected is the post-war division between the capitalist West and the Communist East (Williams 1981, 334). Ideas about the identity of Europe have a significant role with regard to the definition of the West, although some Eastern European countries are often not included entirely within the area (Babic 2001 and Janik and Zawadzka 1996). The West also incorporates 'neo-Europeans', descendants of the people who settled in the Americas, Australia and elsewhere (Shohat and Stam 1994, 1). The construction of the past of the West, and that of Europe, has never been a neutral or an unbiased activity (Smith 1986, 180-1 and Jones and Graves-Brown 1996, 6). The role that the classical past has been given in the definition of the identity of people in 'the Western world' is a vital topic. Although dominant ideas of the core significance of classical society to Western identity remain powerful, this issue has only recently become subject to informed discussion (See Kennedy's 1992, 38 discussion of classical literature and literary theory and Vasunia's 2003 account of Hellenism).

The 'civilization' of classical Rome has been drawn upon directly since the 'fall of the Western empire' in the fifth century. This inheritance is one of two broad – but dichotomous – myths of origin within Western and Northern

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[2]   Differences of opinion exist as to whether we now live in a post-colonial or post-imperial world. Many argued that the current world system is no longer an imperial one (Hardt and Negri 2000), while others argue that imperialism never went away and has reared its head in powerful new ways in the past few years (see, for instance, Brennan 2003, 93; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001 and Said 2003, xiii-xvi). For the use of the concept of the 'just war' in the Roman world see chapters in Rich and Shipley (ed.) (1993) and Webster (1995), for the idea in the contemporary world, see Hardt and Negri (2000, 12, 36-7) and Petras and Veltmeyer (2001).

European society (Barford 2002, 77 and Kristiansen 1996, 138). Barbarity, the second myth, also originated with Greece and Rome. The idea of the inheritance of classical culture and the variety of concepts derived from the barbarian origins of Western nations have interacted in complex ways in the development of knowledge about the ancient past, and the theory of Romanization came to fulfil a core role in the debate about European cultural origins.

Civilization and imperialism

In a study of the significance of classical knowledge to present day society, Mary Beard and John Henderson have suggested that the academic subject of classics links us to the world of the Greeks and Romans (Beard and Henderson 1995, 6). This means that the aim of those who study classical society is not only to uncover the ancient world but also to define and interpret our relationship to that world (*ibid*, 6-7). The questions that classical study raises are the result of our distance from the world of Greece and Rome and, at the same time, our familiarity with it (*ibid*), since classical culture remains central to our own. For Beard and Henderson, it is this centrality that binds Western society to its heritage (*Ibid*, 32). They choose two particular examples – the Parthenon and Virgil's *Aeneid* – to underline this argument.

Beard and Henderson deliberately use single examples derived, respectively, from Greece and Rome. Classical Greece provides an alternative series of ideas to those derived from Rome, concepts that have often been felt to have a more pure historical significance (Dyson 1995; Habinek 1998, 15-20; Morris 1994a and Vasunia 2003). Classical Greece has often been felt to provide a more original and untainted source for many Western traditions. In fact, this idea draws directly upon a Roman attitude towards the cultural superiority of Greece (Farrell 2001, 28 and Toner 2002, 12). A lively debate has developed about the social origins of past studies of ancient Greece, including the roles performed by ancient history and archaeology (Morris 1994a; 1994b; 2000, although see Vasunia 2003 for the need for a fuller study of these issues within the study of classical Greece). In these terms, 'Hellenism' involves the idealization of Greece as the birthplace of a European spirit (Morris 1994b, 11 and Whitley 2001, 16). That classics can be argued to have appropriated the Greek past for political purposes is felt by some recent writers to make the subject central to any attempt to study the place of archaeology in Western society (for the appropriation of the Greek past see Lowenthal 1988, for the significance of this to scholarship see Morris 1994b, 11).

Classical Rome shares a special place with Greece in the definition of Western history and thought (Farrell 2001; Potter 1999; Thompson 1971 and Wyke and Biddiss 1999 consider various aspects of this relationship). This is at least in part a result of the range of practices and beliefs that people of Western origin are often argued to hold in common core Western values. Part of the fundamental importance of this idea of a classical inheritance has been the significant role that Rome is perceived to have performed in passing on a broadly-conceived Western

civilization to the modern world. We shall see that the manner in which civilization is considered to have been passed through to contemporary populations is not entirely straightforward, as, in addition to a considerable lapse of time, it has had to account for the writings of classical authors that address the 'barbarian' populations of what is today Western Europe.

An inheritance from imperial Rome has, however, been drawn upon in Europe from the early medieval period. Roman civilization forms part of an inherited and re-invented tradition that has been handed down from antiquity, through the 'Middle Ages', on to modern times. Despite the 'fall of the Western empire' in the fifth century, Rome retained a vital role in the definition of political leadership (Hingley 2005, 20-1 reviews various examples from the ninth to nineteenth centuries). Christian Europe inherited its religious traditions from classical Rome. In addition, classical authors spoke, through their surviving writings, to the educated elite classes of modern Europe in Latin, a language that they were schooled to interpret and one that helped to define their identity (Farrell 2001; Lanham (ed.) 2002; Stray 1998 and Waquet 2001). Many felt a direct association with classical Rome through the inheritance of common tradition, language, religion and civilization. Ideas derived from Republican and imperial Rome have also been significant in modern times within the USA and other areas that have been colonized and settled by Western peoples (For the USA see Dyson 2001 and Linderski 1984, 145-9).

Knowledge of classical Greece and Rome has been made to play a fundamental role in the ways that people in the West have imagined both their past and present. In particular, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people in the West created a classical past that served their own nationalist and imperialist aims (Bernal 1994; Hingley 2000; Patterson 1997 and Vasunia 2003). An idea that has been explored in various 'post-colonial' readings of the writing of history in the West is that of 'Eurocentricism'. This concept provides a rather simple and linear idea, which does not allow for the full complexity of the ways in which the classical past has been interpreted – it has a direct value, however, since it enables an assessment of the, often, unquestioned ways in which classical society has been used to formulate images of Western superiority.

Eurocentricism focuses upon the idea of a classical inheritance. From the middle of the nineteenth century, European powers controlled or influenced most parts of the world and from the early twentieth century the USA has taken over much, although not all, of the former economic and political power of European states. During this lengthy period of 'Western' dominance, a Eurocentric perspective focussed attention upon the importance of Europe in world history (Bernal 1987; Shohat and Stam 1994 and Patterson 1997, 22). In these terms, it provided, and is still taken to provide, part of the justification for Western superiority and the resultant acts of imperialism (Shohat and Stam 1994, 2). It embeds, takes for granted and 'normalises' the hierarchical patterns that are

established through imperial actions (*ibid*). 'Civilization' and western origins are, effectively, used as an excuse and justification for the imperial domination that Western powers exercise over others. The Eurocentric perspective suggests that civilization was successively displaced in time and space from the ancient Near East through 'Western' (and democratic) classical Greece and then to Rome (for the Near East see Bahrani 1999, for Greece see Said 2003 [1978], 55-8 and Vasunia 2003). Rome acted as the link to the Christian Middle Ages and then civilization passed through the Western European Renaissance and to the modern European imperial powers, finally to form the inheritance of the countries of contemporary Europe and of the USA (for contemporary American imperialism see Johnson 2004). In these terms, Eurocentric discourse renders history as a sequence of empires: *Pax Romana*, *Pax Hispanica*, *Pax Britannica* and *Pax Americana* (Shohat and Stam 1994, 2). In all cases Western Europeans or their descendants are seen to provide the 'motor', or impetus, for historical change.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this image of the classical origin of an inherited Western civilization was drawn upon in Britain, France and elsewhere as a powerful support for imperialism (Desideri 1991; Hingley 2000 and Majeed 1999). Writers in the West appropriated ancient cultures for their own interests in terms of a form of teleology in which the significance of the past lay primarily in its relevance to the imperial present (Bahrani 1999; Bernal 1994 and Hingley 2005). The study of ancient history and classical archaeology, in these terms, was of value since it helped to establish the roots of contemporary Western society (Morris 1994a; 1994b; Martindale 1993, 25-36; van Dommelen 1997, 306 and Vasunia 2003), but this approach can also be argued to have established an over-simplistic view of the past, one that was deeply influenced by the historical context in which it developed. Although this inherited perspective has been subject to increasing criticism, as the result of recent research that reassesses information in a search for new understanding, the central idea of classical inheritance remains powerful today (Said 2003, xv-xvi and Seth 2003, 47).

Barbarity

Classical Rome has been used to provide alternative contributions to the origins of people across Europe; identities that form the second half of the civilization-barbarism dichotomy defined above (Kristiansen 1996, 138). Romans inherited knowledge from ancient Greek society, communicated through the writings of previous authors about the 'barbarians' that they had experienced during earlier colonial actions. Roman generals and traders also encountered non-Roman peoples during imperial expansion across the Italian peninsula and when they ventured across the Mediterranean, the Near East and beyond, into northern and western Europe (for Italy and the Mediterranean see Curti 2001, 22; Curti et al 1996; Mouritsen 1998 and Terrenato 2001, 71, for the Near East see Shahîd 1984, 157). Classical authors described and classified native peoples by contrasting their own civilization to the actions and institutions of these 'others' on the periphery of contact and control (Malkin 1998 and Nippel 2002 [1996]). By describing the appearance and actions of these others, classical writers came to provide ideas that had a lasting relevance (Habinek 1998, 157; Mattern 1999, 71-8; Nippel 2002 [1996]; Shahîd 1984, 157 and Webster 1996). This image of barbarity, however, was not simple; it was attributed varying meanings at different times and places (Nippel 2002 [1996], 297).

Classical accounts became widely available to the educated elite in Western Europe from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards. Contrasting traditions of study developed well before the twentieth century, drawing upon classical ideas of barbarian otherness to define contemporary national identity. The classical authors recorded the names of various ethnic groups in Italy, the Western empire and elsewhere, including Etruscans, Iberians, Gauls, Batavians, Germans, Britons and Dacians (Curti 2001, 22; Hessing 2001; Ruiz Zapatero 1996, 179). Although sometimes developed in very dismissive terms, at other times these accounts glorified indigenous peoples, arguing that they represented the pristine virtues that had been lost in Rome (Clarke 2001 and Mattern 1999, 78). The classical texts also contained useful information that described the habits and natures of these ancient peoples and the valiant warriors who led them in opposition to the armies of imperial Rome. These positive renditions of barbarians came, from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, to serve particular roles since they provided powerful images that were of direct value for the bringing into being of modern nations across Western Europe. Native peoples became adopted into national consciousness in differing ways, but usually in the guise of ancestors (Patterson 1997, 94-102).

The classical texts sometimes included information that enabled the former homelands of these ancient groups to be established and, as a result, from the seventeenth century onwards, writers and artists in the countries bordering the North Sea explored national identities by drawing upon knowledge about prehistoric peoples derived from the classical texts (Smiles 1994, 26). With the rise of antiquarianism from the late sixteenth century, physical evidence (artefacts and structures) derived from the past could be employed to locate these peoples in the contemporary landscape of Western Europe. Physical evidence from the past came to be used to translate classical descriptions of pre-Roman peoples onto the map of Europe, using the developing techniques of survey and classification (Smith 1986, 180), to provide a concrete and physical link.

Classical writings included accounts of the ways in which Rome came into conflict with these 'barbarians', and the tales of the resistance of various of the peoples of Western Europe to Roman imperial expansion were sometimes developed in a strongly anti-Roman fashion. This often, in effect, gave a voice to certain individuals and peoples within the prehistoric West. Texts named and

described native leaders who led these pre-Roman groups in armed resistance. The classical authors also put words into the mouths of native rebels, including Arminius in Germany, Vercingetorix in Gaul, Boadicea/Boudica in Britain, Civilis in the Netherlands, Viriathus in Iberia and Decabalus in Dacia (For Viriathus see Pastor Muñoz 2000; for Vercingetorix see King 2001; for Arminius see Struck 2001 and Wells 2003; for Boudica see Hingley and Unwin 2005 and for Civilis see Hessing 2001). These individuals were, in turn, called upon to play an important role in the definition of self-identity – staunch figureheads of national autonomy. Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, various nations adopted these ancient leaders in order to map territorial claims derived from classical writings on to the contemporary landscapes of Europe.

Within the disparate national traditions of archaeological research that exist in many of the countries that make up Western Europe, the ethnic or tribal terms that were recorded by the classical authors have been used to identify the inhabitants of various countries in the period immediately prior to Roman annexation. With the further development of archaeological methodology by the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, archaeologists were using techniques to locate, date, describe and classify material remains in some detail. This work enabled the writing of stories about the origins of monuments, artefacts and specific named individuals that assisted in the articulation of national self-identity. As a result of this information, and the development of knowledge about the pre-Roman monuments, prehistoric archaeology in Western Europe has developed according to an alternative logic to that adopted within Romano-centric classical studies.

Those with interests in prehistoric Europe often aimed to counter the classical myth of origin that emphasized the idea of the barbaric character of the peoples in the West prior to the Roman invasion, by emphasizing the 'civilization' of the pre-Roman cultures (Kristiansen 1996). This prehistoric civilization was explored through study of the impressive monuments that these peoples left behind and also of their evocative material culture.[3] The identification and description of these pre-Roman peoples within Europe has often formed the basis for the exploration of national identity (for archaeology and nationalism, see Díaz-Andreu and Champion (eds.) 1996 and Meskell (ed.) 1999). In these stories, the physical elements of prehistoric culture – the artefacts, barrows, henges, hillforts and houses – provided tangible connections with an imagined ethnic past (Smith 1986, 180). Sense of place is vital to national self-definition, and the tying of ethnic identity to certain physical forms of archaeological evidence has provided a useful tool for regional and state nationalism in various countries (Díaz-Andreu 1998; Hessing 2001; Struck 2001 and Ruiz Zapatero 1996, 180). The most extreme example of the nationalistic use of barbarians arose through the development of racist and exclusionist accounts of Germanic peoples within Germany during the early twentieth century (Kristiansen 1996, 139 and Struck 2001, 101), but comparable visions of exclusive archaeological cultures were constructed in other European countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jones 1997, 2-3).

Civilizing the barbarian

The idea of a clearly-defined barbarian identity was adopted from the classical sources, but reconfigured in contemporary terms through the mapping of cultural groups as clearly bounded and unchanging territorial units. In creating such clear boundaries, these accounts usually followed the lead of the classical texts by setting up their interpretations of native and Roman in opposition to one other. Classical writings, however, enabled another significant story to be told, one that allowed for the accommodation of native and classical civilizations. Certain classical writers had explored the manner in which barbarians might become civilized through contact and involvement with Roman culture (Clarke 2001). Some of these writings, therefore, provided the potential for an accommodation between the important but apparently conflicting images of classical and barbarian origin, an idea that was adopted in Britain and elsewhere from the sixteenth century onwards (Goudineau 1998; Hessing 2001 and Hingley 2000).

This highly significant idea, which was particularly influential in Britain and France during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, built upon the Roman concept of the civilizing mission by arguing that imperial incorporation provided the opportunity for barbarian valour to be combined with an imported classical civilization. In Britain this image was articulated through the creation of an idea of mixed racial origin that had a contemporary imperial relevance. It drew upon the writings of classical authors who presented the empire as divinely sanctioned and with a mission to civilise the barbarians of the West (Desideri 1991, 586 and Woolf 1997, 339). Rome is made to represent the means by which classical civilization was transferred through the conquest and incorporation of territories that came in due course to form parts of Western Europe. The archaeological evidence that survives for Roman sites had a particular importance from this perspective, since it provided physical evidence for the introduction of civilization from the Mediterranean – roads, towns, villas, bath-houses, forts, frontier works and churches. These physical traces had a particular immediacy with regard to the tracing of cultural identity, as they focussed attention upon specific locations that provided physical links between classical past and imperial present. For many, this material link had a far more direct relevance than the descriptions provided by the classical writers, which emphasized, alongside their valour, the barbarity (or 'otherness') of native peoples across Western Europe. For some, it also had a more direct relevance than the remains left behind by prehistoric populations.

The inheritance from classical Rome had a directly political purpose. Classically-educated English administrators

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[3]   A variety of national and regional studies have explored the extent and character of these peoples, see, for example, Curti (2001, 22) for the Etruscans, Díaz-Andreu (1998) for the people of Iberia and Cunliffe (1991) for those of Britain.

and politicians derived guidance from the example of classical Rome with regard to the topics of decline and fall, contemporary frontier issues and matters of 'race relations' within the empire (for 'race relations see Betts 1971, for decline and fall and frontiers see Hingley 2000, for international politics see Purnell 1978). Late Victorian and Edwardian administrators and politicians used the Roman conception of a linear legacy of Mediterranean civilization to suggest that the British empire had inherited and improved upon the Roman example (Hingley 2000). The study of archaeological monuments had a direct role in this claim, since, increasingly, it was used to support the argument that Roman civilization had been passed onto the native peoples of Roman Britain (*ibid*). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this idea of a classical inheritance was developed in academic circles, and also in some popular accounts, through the creation of the idea of Romanization, particularly in the influential work of Haverfield (1905; for a review of this work, see Hingley 2000). Romanization provided a simple account of how Western barbarians were able to adopt Roman civilization. The search for the homes of the Romanized natives, therefore, had a role in the development of a concept of the history of the nation, since through their exposure to Rome they were felt to have become civilized and were, in turn, the civilizers of those within their contemporary imperial domains.

The role of classical literature was highly significant in creating this idea of the continuity of the history of the West. Within the Roman context, the concept of *humanitas* had become an ideological justification for the Roman elite that supported conquest and domination (Woolf 1998, 54-60). Some classical authors considered that *humanitas* had originated in classical Greece and was spread to a wider world through Roman imperial expansion. By representing Greek culture as the first stage in a universal process, authors within the empire could assert the superiority of Rome in a manner that served to counter anxiety over their own identity and status (*ibid*, 57). The ideas of the Roman inheritance of *humanitas* from the Greeks and that of the Roman cultural superiority over the peoples of the West were adopted during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the context of Western imperialism. This was because the concept, in turn, was used to help to justify the imperial domination of other peoples by Western nations (Bernal 1994, 119 and Hingley 2000, 162).

Rome was argued to have brought classical civilization to barbarian peoples in the north and west of the empire and, in turn, modern peoples in the West have drawn upon these classical sources both in defining their own ideas of imperial purpose and in their dealings with others (Desideri 1991, 611-21). With regard to Western Europe, knowledge derived from the classical past was used to help to define national ancestry, while the theory of Romanization mapped the course by which influential native peoples were able to adopt civilization under the influence of Rome (Hingley 2000). As a result of the Roman conquest, these indigenous peoples were felt to have been able to learn the lessons provided by the imperial power. Romanization enabled a

clear link to be reaffirmed between the civilization of the ancient Mediterranean and that of the contemporary West (Desideri 1991), even though, in the West, this link had been broken by the barbarian invasions and the subsequent fall of the Western empire.

Politicians and intellectuals of Western nations could therefore argue that contemporary empire was passing on an inherited civilization that had itself been brought into their countries in the distant past by a previous race of imperialists (Hingley 2000). The 'gift' of this (supposedly) inherited civilization helped to define acts of colonialism as 'civilizing missions', supposedly providing justification for the associated acts of violence and oppression (for civilizing missions see Bernal 1994, 119; Desideri 1991, 586; Hingley 2000; Mattingly 1996 and Sheldon 1982). This type of perspective arises naturally from adoption of the classical concept of *humanitas* and from the development of this perspective within the modern concept of progress (Hingley 2005, 27; for *humanitas* see Moatii 1997, 293-8 and Woolf 1998, 54-60). Both *humanitas* and progress suggest that the adoption of civilization represents a form of transition from a barbarian state to one that was closer to the present day. As such, the topics that have been discussed helped to supplement each other. A teleological perspective on technology and innovation helped to articulate ideas of imperialism and progress that then fed back into images of imperial purpose and power (Hingley 2005, 27). Effectively, modern authors drew upon the Roman example to argue the historical continuity of a European identity that was passed from civilization to civilization while being improved in the process.' Rome presented the example of an extensive, powerful and well-organised world-empire – a parallel that could be drawn upon in a variety of ways.

Keeping the unwanted at bay

Classical accounts were also used, from the sixteenth century onwards, to provide a directly contrasting representation of otherness that was utilized during the exploration and incorporation of Scotland, Ireland and part of the 'New World' into the expanding British empire from the early seventeenth century onwards (Nippel 2002 [1996]; Patterson 1997, 94-102 and Shaw 1983). Re-evaluation of the classical texts at this time led to the revitalization of geographical knowledge as ancient writings were adopted and adapted in the context of the new information derived from voyages overseas (Nippel 2002 [1996], 296-310). Ancient texts provided intellectuals with facts about 'others'. The classical idea of the barbarian was adapted in the contemporary context to play a role in European colonization, as the ancient sources were called upon in order to help people to understand the natives and territories in these new lands (Clarke 1999, 69-70 and Malkin 1998). Concepts of savagery suggested that some of these contemporary peoples might be in a comparable condition to the barbarians that had been described by classical authors and, in a complementary manner, native peoples of the New World were used as ethnographic

analogies in order to inform writings about the prehistoric peoples of Western Europe and also the engravings that were produced by Europeans to illustrate these ancient ancestors (Olivier 1999, 177; Smiles 1994).

As time progressed, in the context of the development during the nineteenth century of modern concepts of imperialism, the construction of an absolute racial difference often formed the essential grounding for the conception of a homogeneous national identity, while images and ideas of the character of the barbarian continued to play a part (for imperialism and racial definition, see Hardt and Negri 2000, 103; for colonial definitions of 'otherness' and their perpetuation into the contemporary global world system, see Gupta and Ferguson 2002 [1997]). Wilfried Nippel has suggested that:

> 'The structure of the concept of the Barbarian as 'a concept of asymmetrical opposition'... justified and made possible its being reserved to define, every time afresh, now pagans, now Muslims, now 'primitives'... Even the conceptual paring of Europe/Asia could be employed in differing situations: to repel Arabs, Monguls, Turks,... to justify European colonialism, as well as to understand Europe's role in the course of world history' (Nippel 2002 [1996], 297).

Doubts were sometimes expressed about the ability of non-European 'races' to absorb the 'gift' of civilization offered by the West and permanent assistance was often felt to be necessary (Hingley 2000, 51 and Mattingly 1996, 56); in the mind of the colonizers, this force did not invalidate the potential of the gift itself (Hingley 2005, 28).

In the writing of the Roman past, a similar logic was developed in the direct contrast that was often defined between the areas of Europe that formed the core of the West and areas of the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and the Near East that once formed the colonial possessions of the empires of Western nations. During the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the French drew upon the Roman concept of the civilizing mission in their colonial occupation of North Africa, while the Italians argued a comparable motivation in the first half of the twentieth century during their occupations of North Africa and Albania (Mattingly 1996, 51, 56; Sheldon 1982, 102-3; van Dommelen 1997, 307 and Wyke 1999, 190). In North Africa, French colonial administrators and military men saw themselves as the direct descendants of the Romans (Mattingly 1996). They adopted concepts from classical historical sources and used knowledge derived from the study of Roman monuments in the creation of their colonial present. The expansion of Italian territory to include parts of Africa during the 1910s and 1940s, and the campaign to conquer Albania, were projected as attempts to regain lands that were formerly part of the Roman empire that were seen as properly belonging to Italy (Desideri 1991, 621; Gilkes and Miraj 2000 and Terrenato 2001, 80). In this context, modern colonialism provided both the opportunity and motive for the colonial authorities to map and interpret Roman monuments (Mattingly and Hitchner

1995, 169).

In accounts of what is today the Maghreb of North Africa, the indigenous people of the Roman period, were often regarded as incapable of self-rule or advancement without assistance (Mattingly 1996, 51-2, 56 and Sheldon 1982, 103 provide examples of such works). The Berber population were seen as crudely stereotypical barbarians, incapable of living in peace or organizing self-rule (Mattingly 1996, 51). While these ideas have subsequently been challenged by many authors in their studies of the Roman period within the Maghreb (Most notably by Bénabou 1976, but also by other writers, including Mattingly 1996; 1997b), it has been argued that a comparable Romano-centric image remains influential in contemporary accounts of the Roman Near East (Ball 2000, 448; Shahîd 1984, xxiii).

An anti-Oriental interpretation of history has formed one significant element of Eurocentric discourse and is particularly common in Western accounts of history (Ball 2000, 447; Isaac 1990, 20; Said 2003 [1978]; Mattingly 1996, 52). Interpretations of North Africa and the Near East in the Roman period have often been marred by ethnic and cultural prejudice and it is significant that such modern attitudes often draw upon ancient sources – once again, the writings of classical authors have been made to serve modern agendas (Isaac 1990, 20-1 provides several examples of dismissive modern accounts, while Shahîd 1984, xxi, 157 and Isaac 1990, 21 consider the way that these have drawn upon ancient writings). Although more extreme versions of these imperialist conceptions have declined within classical archaeology since the mid-1980s, general frameworks of thought remain difficult to critique (Mattingly 1996; Shahîd 1984, xxiii and van Dommelen 1997, 308). In fact, a more challenging perspective in a post-colonial context is to make allowance for the two-way character of cultural influence across the whole of the empire (for the impact of Rome upon the East see references discussed by Mattingly 1996, 59 and Ball 2000, 444 and for influence passing in the opposite direction see Shahîd 1984, 149).

Moving forward

The relationships constructed between imperial Rome and the contemporary world have never been simple and the discussion above has relied upon the use of a theory of Eurocentricism that simplifies a very complex picture. Nevertheless, I would argue that classics, as an academic discipline, needs to deal with this inheritance. The argument that I have been developing suggests that Rome was made to share a particularly vital role with classical Greece in the course of Western history. Attention has been focussed upon the passing of classical Greek culture to the West through the medium of the Roman empire. From this perspective the Romans brought forward various vital innovations that are seen to form the core of Western cultural value systems, and as such Rome was seen to have a focal purpose in the history of the development of Western society (Hingley 2005). Indeed, Roman imperialism has been made to form part of this idea of dominance, which,

in turn, was an essential element in Western identity and served a role in modern colonial action (Bernal 1994).

These studies of concepts of inherited civilization and barbarism indicate some of the contrasting ways in which the Roman past has been used to articulate ideas derived from contemporary contexts with evidence from the past. The Western empire, which formed the territorial base for modern Europe, has been emphasized in Roman studies at the expense of the Southern and Eastern areas: interpretations of the latter have been coloured by ideas of the 'oriental' domains of Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations (Alcock 1993, 3). The past has been recast in the context of the present for particular reasons. Indeed, a consideration of the context of past and present work is vital at the present time if we are to try to build a relevant Roman past that helps to inform our present situation (Hingley 2005, forthcoming).

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