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Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire.
By R. Hingley. Routledge, London, 2005. Pp. xiii + 208,
illus. Price: £17.99. ISBN 978 0 415 35176 8.

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Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire. By R. Hingley. Routledge, London, 2005. Pp. xiii + 208, illus. Price: £17.99. ISBN 978 0 415 35176 8.

The debate about how to comprehend the Roman world in terms other than 'Romanization' is an ongoing one. The critique of this concept that has developed over the last decade and a half has had much to do with a growing appreciation of its connection to more modern imperial agendas, and Richard Hingley's recent work has played a significant role in establishing this (especially his 2000 volume, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen*). His latest book attempts to go beyond critique, and to develop an alternative approach to understanding the Roman past, inspired by a different set of modern discourses: those surrounding the phenomenon of globalisation. The explicit recognition of the complex relationship between past and present is one of the book's many strengths, and while there are areas where this and other points could be developed further, on the whole it succeeds in shaping a broad outline of what it meant to be 'Roman' in the culture of the Empire.

The book is a concise volume with six chapters, and extensive endnotes. Ch. 1 establishes a broad context for the approaches that H. has adopted. The interaction of global and local identities is defined as a key concern which connects contemporary globalisation studies and emerging understandings of the Roman world. The implications of such an approach, in terms of the challenges of making the past interesting and relevant without simply replicating present concerns, are tackled head-on. Ch. 2 pursues such issues through a more detailed discussion of the development of ideas about Roman identity and

society in modern Western culture and scholarship. This is quite close to some of H.'s earlier work in substance, but is an excellent synthesis of this and, indeed, goes beyond it in the treatment of certain key themes like eurocentrism.

Chs 3, 4 and 5 shift the focus of analysis to antiquity, particularly in the period of the early Principate, and essentially debate the limits of 'Roman' identity in discourse and practice. The first two of these chapters concentrate on the more 'global', unified aspects of Roman culture, which were fundamentally linked to élite status within the Empire. The emphasis in ch. 3 is on the elements of this culture which are manifest in the existence (as much as in the contents) of written works, such as literacy itself, a classical education, and concepts like *humanitas*. In ch. 4, more diverse material expressions of élite culture are considered, including dress and appearance and architecture. Ch. 5 shifts the emphasis to the fragmentary tendencies which existed in tension with the 'globalising' ones, including the use of supposedly 'Roman' technologies for purely local ends, and the non-participation of many people within the Empire in any kind of Roman culture. Ch. 6 concludes the volume with a brief summary of its core arguments concerning the balance between past and present, and between the enabling and imposing aspects of Roman imperialism.

The convincing portrayal of the complexity and multiplicity of both modern perspectives on the Roman Empire, and of ancient perspectives upon what it meant to be 'Roman', is H.'s major achievement in this book. The argument interweaves both strands, sketching an outline of a Roman past which resonates with, but also challenges, the present. While the attention to élite culture is perhaps a bit dominant within the central chapters, even here there is clear evidence of the flexibility of this culture in the hands of local aristocracies. The range of examples discussed is primarily from the Western Empire, but they are well deployed, and an impressive array of secondary literature from multiple sub-disciplines is also put to good use. The only slightly disappointing feature is the last chapter, which is rather short and ideally could have drawn the reader back much more firmly and explicitly to the issues raised in the introductory discussion. Some of the insights of globalisation studies which are implicit in the main part of the book thus remain implicit. It might also have been appropriate, in this chapter, to refer to the longer term trajectories of Roman history, within which many of the arguments made would have been amplified. Nonetheless, within the period covered, a sophisticated and nuanced picture of 'Roman' identities that goes well beyond 'Romanisation' is created. As a result, this book will do much to set the tone for a new generation of studies of the Roman world.

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