7. Conquest by text: Juvenal and Plutarch on Egypt

Richard Alston

Introduction

Studies of cultural change in the Roman Empire and the impact of Roman imperialism have concentrated, for easily understandable reasons, on the provinces themselves. Generations of historians and archaeologists have attempted to interpret the artefacts of provincial societies in the light of Roman imperial expansion, and have tried to assess the extent to which those societies developed a uniform culture. Such investigations have tended to concentrate on the western provinces and, because of the nature of most our evidence from the region, on material culture. The arguments are now familiar and are characterized by radically different interpretations of the same, relatively small body of material. Scholars may represent a single artefact either as an example of the Romanization of an indigenous culture, or as the use of a non-traditional method to express traditional indigenous ideas.

I suggest that this level of disagreement derives from the historiography of the discipline, and from rather too crude an application of explanatory models for cultural change which have been taken from the European imperial experience. Like others of his generation, Haverfield (1923, 11), who in many ways still sets the terms of the debate, explicitly compared the European imperial mission with that of the Romans. Haverfield helped establish an analogizing explanatory model for cultural change (or the lack of it) which is only now being questioned, though Haverfield's own conclusions have, of course, been continually revised. Although historians can come to diametrically opposed conclusions, the European colonial experience and varying interpretations of that experience underlie most considerations of cultural change in the Roman Empire.

If, however, European and Roman imperial cultures differed considerably, then it is likely that the result of the interaction between imperial culture and disparate native cultures would be markedly different. Studies of acculturation frequently emphasize the resilience of indigenous cultures, but comparatively little attention is given to the other side of the equation; the nature of the imperial culture. This paper is a preliminary investigation of this hypothesis and is, therefore, concerned principally with ideology and with imperial culture rather than the indigenous cultures of the provincials.

The empire had a pervasive influence on Roman culture, and a detailed examination of the relationship between culture and imperialism in the literature of the Roman and Graeco-Roman elite would be a huge task, extending far beyond the confines of the present paper. Here, I will examine Roman attitudes to conquered peoples and their cultures through two contrasting texts: Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* and Juvenal's *Satire XV*. These texts are not, of course, chosen at random. They are roughly contemporary;

the *De Iside et Osiride* was probably written *c* AD 118 (Griffiths 1970, 17), and *Satire XV c* AD 130. Both texts concern the same province. Interestingly, they also provide what seem to be radically differing pictures of that province. Plutarch studies - with some sensitivity - the nature and meaning of a central myth of Egyptian religion: the dismemberment of Osiris at the hands of Seth, and his resurrection and restoration, together with the fall of Seth, through the labour of Isis. Juvenal, on the other hand, tells a particularly gruesome tale of inter-communal violence resulting in an act of cannibalism. I shall argue, however, that both the the philosophical treatise and the poem present very similar views of Egypt and Egyptian culture and their relationship to imperial culture.

Juvenal *Satire XV*

Like all the Satires, and, indeed, like all Roman poetry, *Satire XV* is a complex, multi-layered, ambiguous text. Juvenal plays tricks on his audience and clearly adopts a persona in presenting the story (Anderson 1988; Henderson 1989a, 1989b; Braund 1988, 1). He includes an explicit invitation to the audience to disbelieve the story, comparing his tale to those told by Odysseus, the 'mendacious story-teller' (*line 16*), and to mythical tales, normally involving anthropophagy. Credibility is, however, anchored by a claim of personal experience of the area (*line 45*), though not of the event itself, and by specific details. The event is given a recent consular date, nuper consule Iunco (*line 27*, (AD 127)), and a location in upper Egypt which is not only named - Tentyra (Dendera) - but also sketchily described (*line 76*). This physical context provides (spurious) credibility, but Juvenal also offers a cultural and intellectual context. In fact, he provides two seemingly disparate contexts. Most obviously, Juvenal tells his tale against the background of Egyptian religion, pouring scorn on the unusual Egyptian custom of regarding animals as embodiments of particular deities (*lines 1-12)*. The act of cannibalism at the centre of the poem grew out of a religious quarrel between inhabitants of neighbouring towns. Its origins lay in the differences between the sacred animal cults of the two towns, and the animosity shown to the sacred animal of one town by the other. At a particularly drunken festival - and Juvenal suggests that the excessive alcohol consumption was another facet of the decadence of the Egyptians (*lines 38-48*) - the quarrel boiled over into violence. The violence escalated from a brawl to a riot, to an armed rising, culminating in the capture and consumption of one of the townsfolk. Juvenal uses this act of cannibalism to reinforce his assault on an already ridiculed religion; a religion which was the most potent symbol of Egyptian identity.

The end of the poem provides another context for Juvenal's attack on Egyptian religion. The scene is moved from Egypt to the philosophical schools, and Juvenal wonders what Pythagoras would have made of these events (*lines 173-4*). Elements of Egyptian culture had spread to Italy generations before Juvenal's time (Roullet 1972, 1-5; Tran Tim Tinh 1972, 25, 44; 1983; Höbl 1983; Malaise 1972; Turcan 1989). Rome itself had at least six Isea, three of which were quite large structures (Roullet 1972, 23-38). The pyramid of Cestius, built in 12 BC, and another now lost pyramid tomb attest the influence of Egypt on at least some of the Roman elite. A

catalogue of monuments connected to Serapis has 232 Italian entries, though most are unfortunately undated (Kater-Sibbes 1973). 'Egytomania' was perhaps to reach its apogee in Rome with the emperor Hadrian (de Franceschini 1991). The Egyptian contribution to mainstream Graeco-Roman culture, especially in the areas of medicine, philosophy and religion, was acknowledged. Juvenal uses the atrocity not just to reflect on the barbarity of Egyptians, but also to question the contribution of Egyptian and Alexandrian culture and learning, singling out Pythagoras as a mainstream philosopher who had considerably benefited from his visit to Egypt. The story is twisted in Juvenal's hands to mock the large number of his contemporaries afflicted by Egyptomania.

In this poem, Juvenal sets up two major and one minor axes of division which create a differentiation between 'them', the Egyptians, and 'us', the Romans. The first of these axes is cannibalism. Cannibalism has long been used cross-culturally as a marker of the inhuman, the hostile 'other'. Food is, of course, a significant symbol and cooking famously divides the civilized from the uncivilized. Similarly, the animalistic eat human flesh, cooked or raw (in this case raw). Arens (1979) went so far as to attribute all attestations of customary cannibalism to attempts to depict a radically different and hostile group, and although this may be an extreme position, it is clear that accusations of cannibalism are comparatively common, but the practice is in fact extremely rare. In the ancient world, cannibalism was also used to designate the other (Hall 1989, 53; Wiedemann 1986). Accusations of cannibalism or similar anti-social behaviour, including extreme sexual promiscuity, incest, and human sacrifice, were frequently levelled at the marginal or remote tribes well beyond the frontiers (Strabo IV.5,4; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* VI.195), at enemies within, such as bandits (Dio LXXII 4; LXVIII 32; Josephus *Contra Apion* II.18), and at insane or inhuman individuals (Suetonius *Nero* 37).

Several times in this period, Egyptians were charged with cannibalism or human sacrifice (Sextus Empiricus III 24; Achilles Tatius III 15; Dio LXXII 4), but there is no good evidence for Egyptian cannibalism at this date or any other. In fact, Pharaonic Egyptians also employed the charge of cannibalism to designate the other (Griffiths 1948; Baillet 1930; Vandier 1950, 200).

The second major axis of Juvenal's Roman : Egyptian opposition is animal worship. Animal cults were extremely popular in Late Egyptian religion, and huge mortuary areas have been found at various temple sites. The animals were sacred to the gods, and also representative manifestations of them, in the same way that Pharaoh was both himself sacred and a manifestation of the divine. This treatment of animals and the (supposed) fanaticism of the Egyptian population may not have been easily understood, and although some Roman writers attempted to comprehend the theological importance of animal cults (Cicero *De Natura Deorum*, III 16; Nigidius Figulus Fragment 98), the practice provided Juvenal and others with an easy target for mockery.

While not completely foreign to Graeco-Roman religious thought, animal worship was certainly distinctive. Juvenal was able to exploit this unusual practice in the context of the anthropophagy discussed above. Worshipping

animals and eating men was an inversion of the normal hierarchy of gods, men, animals, and plants. Gods, animals, and, according to Juvenal, plants (*lines 9 - 10*), were confused, and animals and plants regarded as superior to men. This confusion of the normative hierarchy again in some way dehumanized, or perhaps derationalized, the Egyptians

The third, and more minor, division established between Romans and Egyptians is that of audience and object. The Egyptians are objectified, classified, and discussed by their poet and audience. They are separated by this very act of analysis. The physical setting of the tale made them comfortably remote, an effect which becomes more obvious if one envisages the tale set among the Isis worshippers in Rome or Pompeii. The Egyptians are disempowered by their objectification: they have no voice or version of their tale. The literate Roman 'us' discuss the voiceless Egyptian 'them'.

Even as they are created, these axes of differentiation dissolve in the story-teller's words. Belief in the act of cannibalism itself depends upon the credibility of the voice of the story-teller. Yet it is common in Roman poetry to distance the poet from the voice of the narrator, be it the morally correct Ovid inspired by a joking Muse to write as a *praeceptor amoris*, the chaste Catullus discussing nights with Lesbia, or the upright Apuleius denying that the actions depicted in his novel could have any relevance to his personal morality (Rudd 1976, 175). The sophisticated manipulation of Hellenistic or Latin precursors and the traditional abdication of responsibility to an inspiring Muse allowed poets to distance themselves from the narrating voice. A Roman audience must always have been conscious of literary artifice lying behind any proffered attitude or opinion. There must always have been considerable doubt as to the sincerity of a poet's words.

In addition, Juvenal's frequent reference to mythological exemplars, the comparison of the narrator with Odysseus (the most famous of literary fabulists) and the mock-epic style must have raised doubts as to the veracity of the tale. Tales of cannibalism did not always gain credence amongst the Graeco-Roman elite and in transmitting reports of cannibalism beyond the frontiers of the empire both Strabo and Pliny appear either to reserve judgement on their veracity or to be sceptical (Strabo, IV 5.4; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* VI 195). Both implicitly, through the poetic form, and explicitly, through the mythological references, the audience is invited to consider the veracity of the tale. But once one questions the credibility of the story, the nature of the differentiation between 'them' and 'us' is thrown into doubt. Since the tale of anthropophagy is used to establish the differentiation of Romans and Egyptians, if the story is disbelieved, the differences between 'them', the anthropophagic Egyptians, and 'us', the non-anthropophagic audience, begin to dissolve. Once the distance is eroded, then further doubt is cast on the veracity of the tale, in something of a spiral of incredulity. The credibility of the story is thus inextricably intertwined with the distance between 'us' and 'them', and questioning one element affects our understanding of the other.

Furthermore, Egyptian religion and architecture formed a major and visible part of the urban environment in the imperial city and the cities of Italy. Egyptian religion was not limited to the other side of the empire but

surrounded the audience, some of whom, perhaps many of whom, may have taken part in Egyptian cultic practices. By eroding the differences between 'them' and 'us', and by paying regard to the impact of Egyptian artefacts on Rome, we see that this *Satire,* like Juvenal's others, was also concerned with Roman society, though almost certainly a distorted vision of that society. It was not 'them' but 'us' who were being discussed in *Satire XV*.

Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride*

The *De Iside et Osiride* is a far more transparent text than the *Satire*. Plutarch, who was rather interested in religious rites and ideas, recounts one of the central myths in the Egyptian canon, that of Isis and Osiris. In marked contrast to Juvenal, Plutarch treats the myth with respect. The work is learned. Plutarch clearly went to considerable lengths to investigate the cult, and Egyptian religious practice generally. He provides us with several etymologies though it is clear that he himself had no Egyptian. There are errors in his work and some of his derivations are unparalleled in the Egyptian material, but, on the whole, Plutarch's accounts of the myth itself, Egyptian customs, and the Egyptian language are accurate. His attitude and approach were respectful, even deferential. Egyptian religion is not mocked.

As an insight into Egyptian religion, however, the treatise poses several fundamental problems. There is a certain carelessness in Plutarch's usage of terminology, especially in the names of the gods: he uses Greek syncretic names and Graecized versions of Egyptian names almost indiscriminately. Plutarch appears conscious of possible problems but excuses his slipshod methodology by arguing that names could transfer between linguistic groups (*375 E*) and that disputes over the correct name were meaningless since the powers described were the same whatever names they were given (*376 A*). This assumption gave Plutarch the freedom to use Greek etymologies to investigate the Egyptian myth. He derives Isis from *oida*, 'I know' (*352 A*), and offers a very weak Greek derivation of Osiris (*357 D*) though he has already given a perfectly sensible and very different Egyptian derivation (*354 F - 355 A*).

Plutarch relied heavily on Greek sources for his interpretations and probably for his basic information. He referred to Egyptian authorities, but the only Egyptian sources explicitly mentioned are Manetho and the Hermetic books. None of his other Egyptian sources are specified. By contrast, twenty-nine Greek authors are explicitly cited. In addition, Solon, Thales, Plato, Eudoxus, Pythagoras, and Lycurgus are said to have been heavily influenced by visits to Egypt. The myth is discussed in the context of Greek literary culture, and this may be responsible for a certain archaism in his discussion of supposedly contemporary Egyptian culture (Griffiths 1970, 110). More seriously, the meaning of the myth is affected by this Greek context. In Plutarch's hands, the myth becomes a complex Platonic allegory where the dismembered Osiris is the *logos* which Isis has to restore (*351 F*). Pythagorean influence on his interpretation is also very marked. The Egyptian tradition may have interpreted the story allegorically, but it is very unlikely that it was interpreted in these terms. The myth is read in the context of the Greek philosophical tradition, a reading which cannot have been central to traditional Egyptian interpretations.

By interpreting the myth in a Greek philosophical context, Plutarch divorces the story from its Egyptian origins and from the native interpretative context, whatever that was. The myth becomes part of universal - that is, Greek - knowledge. This allows Plutarch to invest the myth with a whole series of new and different meanings. By universalizing the myth, the context and, therefore the meaning of the myth is changed. In Plutarch's version, the myth is not the cultural possession of the Egyptians. It is, like so many other cultural artefacts of the imperial period, subject to the *interpretatio Graeca,* and in such an interpretation ceases to be Egyptian and becomes Greek.

The myth is also intellectualized. It is made the preserve of an intellectual elite, divorced from popular religion. Popular religion does, however, make a brief appearance in the work in a description of a riot between the neighbouring towns of Oxyrhynchus and Kynopolis. Their quarrel concerns the maltreatment of sacred animals by the opposed town. This is, of course, very similar to Juvenal's story though the satirist sets his tale several hundred miles further south. In Plutarch's earlier version, however, the riot, although an appalling example of religious fanaticism and confusion, does not result in the ultimate inhumanity. Plutarch seems to support the theory that the religious rivalry between various towns was a result of a conscious attempt by a Pharaoh to divide the population, a policy which worked only because of the character failings of the Egyptian population. This fanaticism was, in Plutarch's view, of only limited religious significance (*379 F - 380 C*). The sophisticated philosophical myth of Isis and Osiris belongs to a world separate from that of the rioting townsfolk of Oxyrhynchus and Kynopolis.

Imperial images and imperial rule
Analogies can certainly be drawn between these texts and the texts of European imperialism. The intellectual construction of the East (especially 'The Arab World') and the emergence of an Oriental character have been implicated in European imperial expansion into the area, and the subsequent reordering of the Levant by the European powers (Said 1978). The creation of the academic disciplines associated with the Orientalists was dependent on imperial expansion. Their construction of the Orient both justified that expansion and aided the imperial mission. The development of a specialist rhetoric led to an increase in the power of the experts who legitimized and ran the systems of empire. Imperialism pervaded the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and literature played an important role in integrating the empire into normal life (Said 1993). The role, importance, and status of the Europeans in their respective empires were displayed and discussed in literature, whether through the economic dependence of Jane Austen's families on the exploitation of the British Empire, or as the arena in which white men struggled with their destinies and souls in Conrad. In addition, the overwhelming power of the West imposed the images of the Orientalist on the East. Throughout the European empires, there was an expectation of behaviour and character, such as the Eastern preference for tyranny or the tribalism of Africa, which both influenced the decisions of governors and, in turn, the society of the governed, creating new societies which were an uneasy mixture of the

traditional and the invented tradition (Ranger 1983), the indigenous and the imperial creation.

In Juvenal and Plutarch, we can see a very similar process at work. The image of the East is carefully created by our two experts. Egypt and the Egyptians are characterized. The barbarity of the Egyptians justifies imperial expansion and control, explicitly in Plutarch but implicitly in Juvenal. The contrasts, however, are also marked. The image of Egypt is not simply of an 'other'. The Roman Empire is not simply conceptualized and normalized. In the European context, texts and artefacts were transferred to the centre, to the museums and libraries of the West, but were used as means of *differentiating* the European and barbarian, of seeing what is or was different about the natives and of understanding native cultures. Both Juvenal and Plutarch produced texts which *integrate* what is distinct and separate in a way which is completely foreign to the imperial texts of the European empires. In Plutarch, Egyptian culture is made 'ours'. The hierarchy of cultures and history so evident in the Orientalist and Africanist writings is clearly not part of Plutarch's message. The acknowledgement of the value of Egyptian culture is clear in *De Iside et Osiride*. In Juvenal, the perceived integration of Egyptian culture into the Graeco-Roman milieu is what gives the *Satire* its bite for a Roman audience: the cannibalism which removes the Egyptian populace from the ranks of the civilized also reflects on contemporary Roman society.

These texts thus attest the erosion of fundamental distinctions. This erosion was, nevertheless, aggressive, and can be seen in the province itself. Hadrian, traditionally seen as a philo-Egyptian emperor as well as a philhellene, visited Egypt and during his brief stay his favourite, Antinoos, was drowned. Near the site of his drowning, Hadrian ordered the construction of a new city, Antinoopolis of the New Hellenes (Bell 1940). Although it may have had some traditional Egyptian-style temples and ceremonials, the city was to be a bastion of Hellenism in Middle Egypt, a centre of Greek urban life (Kühn 1913). The period also sees the transformation of many of the traditional urban centres of the region (Bailey 1991; Krüger 1990; Lukaszewicz 1986; Bowman 1992). New Classical buildings were erected, and streets were adorned with colonnades. As in many other provinces throughout the East, the early second century saw an explosion of building activity which had a tremendous effect on the appearances of the Egyptian cities. Egyptian elements were, however, preserved in these new Classical cities. The traditional temples remained and some continued to prosper, though the evidence for extensive building work in these temples is sparse after the end of the first century AD (Glare 1993).

The perceived paradox for modern writers of maintaining a tradition within a context of aggressive cultural imperialism and seemingly rapid change dissolves when considered in the intellectual context attested by Plutarch and Juvenal. The old Egyptian temples were absorbed into new civic structures and came to be administered by the new 'Greek' civic elite, though rites probably continued to be performed by the traditional priestly caste. There was no absolute opposition between Greek and Egyptian temples. The temples and aspects of traditional religion were absorbed into the dominant Greek culture.

This was not just an Egyptian process, but was a feature of the cultural history of many of the provinces of the East. Bowersock's (1990) analysis of Hellenism shows how the traditional and local cults were preserved in a wider framework of Hellenic culture. Hellenism did not impose cultural or religious coherence. Indeed, there was no perceived necessity for such coherence until certain Christian writers made polemical use of the incoherence of 'paganism', elevating the myriad local cults into a system. Yet, the translation of those local cults into Greek idiom was, *contra* Bowersock, more than just a change of linguistic pattern: it was a change in ownership. In absorbing these temples, the meaning of the religion was changed so that the temple of Hermes, for instance, became the repository of the wisdom of the Greeks, rather than that of the Egyptians (*P.Herm* 3).

In the context of ancient Egypt, where local loyalties and ethnic identifications were closely bound up with the temples, such shifts had profound implications. The Romans had enhanced ethnic divisions in Roman Egypt by creating or considerably reinforcing legal boundaries between groups. The divisions created various status groups which roughly corresponded to a tripartite hierarchy of settlements: Greek city, other city, and village. Gradually, these status divisions came to be related to ethnic divisions. The lowest status group, the rural population, came to be identified as the Egyptian ethnic group, while the urban population came to be regarded as Greek. The correlation of legal and ethnic boundaries was, however, far from perfect (Alston *forthcoming*).

These shifting ethnic boundaries reflect the processes of redefinition at work in the two texts. Both authors are concerned with the division between Egyptian and Graeco-Roman, and the tension of Juvenal's *Satire* and the puzzle of the treatise derives from the location of the ethnic boundary. In Plutarch, the boundary runs between the mass of the population and the learned, inevitably the elite. In the extreme world of Juvenal's narrator, there is no line, but the association of Egyptian culture with the centre of empire and the heart of Graeco-Roman culture suggests that in reality there must have been a division between acceptable and unacceptable Egyptian culture. The disliked elements of Egyptian culture and religion, notably unruly popular participation and animal cults, were separated from those elements which were approved of: the philosophy and mythology. The best of Egyptian society and culture, the Graecized urban elements, were integrated; the rest remained firmly 'other'. These popular elements had claims to legitimacy because of their longevity and integration into the traditional Egyptian social order. By separating out the mythology and philosophy, the popular elements could be considered ephemeral; an illegitimate element of Egyptian culture.

These attitudes, like the attitudes of the Orientalists, were both bound up with the imperial experience, and aided imperial rule. They offered intellectual avenues of integration for the Egyptian elite by which the elite could identify with the dominant Mediterranean culture. They also attest to an attitude on the part of the Roman elite which would allow integration. Since the Egyptian elite was so like the Graeco-Roman elite, as Plutarch and Juvenal point out, there was no obvious block on their integration. The

workings of this mentality can be seen not only in the works of Juvenal and Plutarch, but also in the actions of the imperial government in Egypt. It was not just an elite philosophical attitude. Intellectual integration of culture had concrete effects on the culture of the city. As the interpretation of Egyptian culture reinforced its supposed Hellenic elements, so the Egyptian cities were expected and encouraged to develop Greek institutions. Simply by eroding differences, this mentality was a very powerful tool in the integration of local elites and, through those elites, in the transformation and integration of local cultures.

The contrast between the Roman 'integrating mentality' and that of the European imperialists is marked. Although European cultures were profoundly affected by the imperial experience, the mentality was not integrating but divisive. Racism and, possibly more significantly, the monotheism and evangelism of Christianity, added to the difficulties in integrating many local elites. In the end, the native remained the native and could not be properly assimilated. Certainly, British culture did not claim to owe much to Semitic, Indian, or African influences, in spite of the obvious Semitic influences on the national religion. Since the mentalities of empire differed fundamentally, the effect on native cultures of forming part of the empire must also have been different. A second conclusion follows from this emphasis on the ideological context of cultural artefacts. Apparent continuities, such as the continuity in practice of traditional Egyptian religion, can mask fundamental changes in ideology and in cultural significance. The subtlety of this process means that the preservation of certain aspects of traditional native society within the Roman Empire cannot be seen as a symbol of the failure of the population to adopt imperial culture, as it can for the British Empire. Local traditions could be preserved within the imperial culture: the 'integrating mentality' simply changed the meanings of those cultural artefacts.

Conclusion

This paper has proposed three hypotheses. First, that the mentality of Roman cultural imperialism differed fundamentally from European imperialism of the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. Second, that an examination of Roman interpretations of native cultures suggests that the Roman elite may have been far more willing to integrate aspects of the culture of their subject peoples. Third, that these Roman interpretations fundamentally misinterpreted local cultures by examining them in the Graeco-Roman context rather than in a native context. The Romans, however, provided local elites with concrete benefits which would encourage them to accept this fundamental reinterpretation of their culture. The result of this Roman mentality was that it was far more likely that native elites would adopt Roman imperial culture. If we accept this model for explaining the Romanization of elites and of cultural institutions, we must also accept the theoretical possibility that fundamental cultural and ethnic changes in non-elite groups would also result from these changes.

The argument also shifts the debate on Romanization from artefacts to the ideologies informing material culture. Our concepts of what is Roman must take account of the changes in the conception of 'Romanity'. By the Late

Empire, 'Romanity' had come to be divorced from political loyalty to Rome and from any specific geographical location. 'Romanity' was a package of cultural values and attainments. A Roman artefact may originate from Spain, from Africa, or from Italy, since its geographical origin does not correlate simply with its cultural-ethnic significance. A temple of Serapis in Britain is as sure a sign of Romanization as a temple of Jupiter. More significantly, a temple of Sulis may be evidence of the same process. Any interpretation of an artefact is dependent on the ideology of the observer. If all we have is the artefact, reconstructing the reaction of the ancient observer to that artefact becomes problematic. It is only by paying more attention to the ideology of the interpreters of the artefact - and we must be aware of the possibility of conflicting contemporary ideologies - that we can hope to make any progress in assessing the degree of cultural and ethnic change in the Roman Empire.

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