Antiquity has served as a model for modern times in many ways, in art and architecture as well as in science, scholarship, and politics. Yet antiquity is not a clear-cut entity, no fact in itself, but rather a cultural code – one that admits of myriad applications and whose meaning and functions can only be understood within the specific settings in which it has been appropriated. It is possible to identify certain cycles and developments in the way antiquity has been reformulated that are bound up with nuclei of tradition, but these have themselves produced accretions that have in turn influenced subsequent uses of the model of antiquity. Instead of a simple process of reception, it makes more sense to speak of complex and dynamic adaptations and appropriations along the lines of cultural transfer. This can be seen equally well in both republican discourses and the various forms of monarchical representation, as well as in more recent attempts at "empire"-building.

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Antiquity and its Appropriation: A Sketch of the Problem

"Quid est enim aliud omnis historia, quam Romana laus?" With this question Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374) expressed the character of early Italian humanism. The rediscovery of antiquity and the retreat from the tenebrae ("darkness") of the medium tempus ("Middle Age") became the programme of the Renaissance, thus inaugurating an epoch that, beginning with the definitive division of history into three periods in Christoph Cellarius's (1638–1707) Historia Universalis, would be called modernity. To put it in a slightly exaggerated form: modernity was defined against the background of antiquity, and without reference to the model of antiquity there would be no modernity.

But what is the "model of antiquity?" How can the processes of reception and transfer that underpin this concept be adequately described? Approaches taken from the aesthetics of reception offer some guidance. The goal of this perspective, which is at home especially in literary studies, is to shift the focus away from the work itself and onto its readers and other recipients, placing perceptions and appropriations of works of art at the centre of attention. Quite similarly, recent studies in the field of cultural transfer no longer primarily investigate the culturemes of a base culture; rather they assume that what is adopted from one culture by another results from appropriative exigencies and that these exigencies determine the form of a given adaptation.

Analogously, one can say that antiquity is appropriated reciprocally and dynamically in different settings. It functions, however, as a model, as a construct of the past, and always with reference to contemporary reality. Nevertheless, the various historical actors are not always aware that what has been transferred is indeed a construct. On the contrary, the model constructed has a retrospective effect, reshaping past realities and therewith modifying bodies of knowledge. We thus speak of "appropriation" and "reformulation", in which the highly fragmentary elements of antiquity that are available in texts, images, and material remains are assimilated to specific argumentative exigencies, giving rise to "hybrid" forms. And we call the various "settings" in which antiquity is charged with new meaning "Aneignungssituationen" ("settings of appropriation"), thus foregrounding "Momente der Konstituierung" ("foundational moments") and the "Neben- und Gegeneinander verschiedener, gleichzeitig abrufbarer Verwendungen." In this way appropriation is embedded in its specific contexts; it has the force of a model because in political debate it is normative and functions as an ideal.
Of course, the appropriation of a model does not occur simply with direct reference to antiquity. Instead, it is always influenced by earlier processes of appropriation as well. Prior interpretations of antiquity lie between it and the present like nuclei of tradition (Traditionskerne), thus predetermining readings and impeding — without the recipients necessarily recognizing it — direct access to ancient texts. These nuclei of tradition are reformulated in contemporary understandings of antiquity and act, so to speak, as a template or a lens that makes antiquity decipherable and interpretable to that later age. In the process, layers are added to these nuclei of tradition that are determined not only by various contemporary discourses but also via specific social and political elements as well as by the peculiarities of the various genres in which they appear.

Antiquity as well as the past in general, it must be accepted, remains in principle inaccessible. Only across numerous layers of reception and appropriation can it be comprehended and appropriated anew. Thus, as a model, it is continuously endowed with new substance and always results in new representations of ancient phenomena. Nevertheless, these phenomena possessed paradigmatic significance, in the form of a cultural code, throughout all of early modernity and far into more recent history, and this despite the at times bitterly waged querelle des anciens et des modernes of the late 17th century. In general, Rome was a more important point of reference than Greece, especially in political history, although philhellenism (Media Link #ae) was an extremely influential intellectual and political movement.

The Model of Antiquity and the Concept of Empire since the Middle Ages

Antiquity (and especially Rome) doubtless enjoyed special significance in the context of claims to universal rule. The concept of empire was heavily informed by the idea that the Roman Empire lived on in the Romano-German Empire. Rome therefore served as a frame of reference for universal power in both the secular and the spiritual realms, a state of affairs that was to last, with manifold variations from age to age, from 800 to 1806. Rome's eschatological function also played an essential role, as Rome counted as the last of the four world monarchies due to appear before the Last Judgment. It is because of the link made to the Roman emperors (Caesars) in the Middle Ages and modern times that the rulers of Rome are called Kaiser in German – an appellation that is not exactly pertinent.

In the mid-12th century, the related concept of a translatio imperii arose, that is of a "transfer of the empire" to the Franks, and the name Sacrum Imperium Romanum ("Holy Roman Empire") remained relevant until the end of the Old Empire (Altes Reich). Indeed, the alleged continuity of the Kaisers from antiquity to modern times ensured that the Old Empire occupied the most distinguished position in Europe. Meanwhile, the name "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" no longer functioned as a claim to political or legal positions. Instead, it expressed the inseparability of the Roman Empire and the German nation.

Although the idea of Rome tended to lose its importance, it nevertheless remained an essential component of imperial self-portrayal, as can be seen in the epitaph on Maximilian I's (1459–1519) cenotaph in the Hofkirche in Innsbruck. The title used for him there makes direct reference to the rulers of ancient Rome: IMPERATORI CAES(ARI) MAXIMILIANO PIO FOELICI | AUGUSTO PRINCIPI. The same can still be found in the 18th century, for example in the self-portrayal of Joseph II (1741–1790) and Maria Theresa (1717–1780), clearly visible in the triumphal arch in Innsbruck. Removed from the military context proper to its architectural type, the Roman triumphal arch was erected in 1765 to commemorate the wedding of Archduke Leopold (later Emperor Leopold II, 1747–1792) to the Spanish princess Maria Ludovica (1745–1792). The inscriptions on the arch naming Leopold's brother, the future Joseph II, and his mother Maria Theresa also reveal a conscious link to Roman imperial titles: IMP(ERATOR) CAES(AR) IOSEPHUS II | AUGUSTUS, and M(ARIA) THERESIA | AUGUSTA. Although its political significance was rather slight, the idea of Rome continued to be of special importance for the self-representation and the insistently claimed pre-eminence of the Kaiser of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (variously adapted to the needs of the times, of course).

The kings of France also sought to forge links to Roman imperial dignity, especially when it came to substantiating claims to the imperial crown. A "new Rome" was supposed to arise in France under Francis I (1494–1547) (Media Link #a), the expression of which can be seen in the numerous citations of antiquity in the architecture and decoration of the Grande Galerie in the Palace of Fontainebleau. Such imperial gestures, which made systematic use of the model of antiquity, reached new heights (Media Link #a).
Moving on to England, the idea of an Augustan Age played an important role beginning in 1660 with the reign of Charles II (1630–1685). To be sure it suggested imperial grandeur, a notion whose significance grew especially in the 18th century, but another important aspect was the belief that a highpoint of civilisation had been reached that had not been seen since the reign of the emperor Augustus (63 BC–14). Imperial trappings and the adoption of an ancient terminology were also standard in the tsardom of the 18th century, as can be seen in Peter I’s (1672–1725) assumption of the title of emperor.

The Italian Humanist Alternative to the Concept of Empire

Humanism introduced a decidedly anti-imperial reflex into the model of antiquity. With marked consistency, the humanists dealt primarily with the Roman republic and developed a keen interest in Roman historiography. Their engagement with Roman history led them to the notion that Rome had been the most perfect culture ever and that it owed its longevity above all to the extraordinary virtue of its great men. This model – especially with regard to early modern republicanism – would manifest an extreme persistence.

Fundamental republican outlooks on antiquity, which would become a decisive template for later reformulations, were developed particularly in Renaissance Florence. Here, as everywhere in Italy, the written and material remains of antiquity were present as a direct inheritance, and this is where the first buds of humanism blossomed – enriched as well by the flow of Greek scholars emigrating from Constantinople in the wake of the Ottoman conquest. Especially in the context of the struggle with Milan in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Florentine citizenry, as evidenced for example by the writings of Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444), sought to legitimate its antiquity and independence via its Etruscan and Roman past.

The “civic humanism” that developed in Florence in the course of the conflict with Milan (although stemming from medieval and corporate roots) was guided by the model of the Roman republic. Like their predecessors, Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540) and Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) used the example of Rome as a template to describe the crises of their own time, especially the Franco-Habsburg duel for control of Italy and the power struggle between the Signoria and the House of Medici that so marked the 16th century. Machiavelli in particular saw republican Rome – subscribing wholly to Marcus Tullius Cicero’s (106–43 BC) notion of historia magistra vitae (“history is the teacher of life”) – as a well-spring of practical guidelines for political action. And therefore it was an ideal whose emulation could help to overcome the crisis of the Florentine political system. Machiavelli’s Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio (“Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy”) are thus much more than a simple commentary on Livy; indeed they offer an analysis of the Roman Republic intended to be used as a guide to its imitation.

In Machiavelli’s work, Sparta and republican Rome appear above all as examples of a successful mixed constitution in the sense described by the Greek historian Polybios (200–120 BC), who had been rediscovered by Leonardo Bruni. According to Polybios, both regimes received their stability from the prudent combination of the constitutional forms of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, each of which entailed the representation of a different social class, as well as from a superior military. Machiavelli thus made use of a particular Greek interpretation of Rome’s ascent, one that was composed in the 2nd century BC in order to explain Greek inferiority and that had itself already gone through manifold processes of reception and appropriation in antiquity.

In Machiavelli as well as in the work of many other Italian authors of the day, Rome and Sparta could serve as models for a kind of order, embodying stability at home and expansion and rule abroad, that was perceived as both an aspirational ideal and a historical reality. Machiavelli’s Discorsi in particular provided a template for republican readings of Titus Livy (59 BC–17) and Polybios, and they also facilitated constructions of the model of antiquity north of the Alps, as the following considerations will show.
Argumentative strategies relating to antiquity and (at least) potentially directed against ruling monarchs gained urgency as confessional rifts opened between sovereigns and portions of their subjects in the wake of the Reformation (Media Link #b2). Both the Calvinist Monarchomachs ("opponents of the monarchy") in France and the Dutch Revolt produced numerous writings on the right of resistance. Furthermore, they developed an imagery of freedom that had a considerable influence on the following centuries. For example, John Calvin (1509–1564) (Media Link #b3) and Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) (Media Link #b4) accorded an active right of resistance only to certain officials whom they compared to the Spartan ephors, the Attic demarchs, and the Roman tribunes of the plebs. However, the treatise Vindiciae contra tyrannos (1579), published in Basel after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, praised tyrannicide on the part of private individuals in extreme cases as long as they, like Marcus Junius Brutus (85–42 BC) (Media Link #b5), Marcus Porcius Cato (95–46 BC) (Media Link #b6) and Cicero, acted in the defence of liberty. The debate over the right of resistance was thus closely connected with these figures; the very pseudonym of the still unidentified author of the Vindiciae, Stephanus Junius Brutus, is a reference to the model of the Roman republic.39

In particular the younger Brutus and the assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC) (Media Link #b7) also became emblems and models for resistance and liberty elsewhere, as can be seen in a medal of Lorenzino de' Medici (1514–1548) (Media Link #b8) that, in imitation of the well-known Brutus coin (Media Link #b9), portrayed his assassination of Alessandro de' Medici (1510–1537) (Media Link #ba) as a tyrannicide.40 In the Holy Roman Empire estates were also able to prosecute their fight for "German freedom" (Teutsche Libertät) against Charles V (1500–1558) (Media Link #bb) with the aid of the same patterns of legitimation. Thus the pamphlet Sendsschriften der Königlichen Maiestat zu Franckreich (Media Link #bc) ("Messages from His Royal Majesty the King of France"), distributed in the Empire, likewise featured the tyrannicide's dagger and the pileus (the cap worn by Roman freedmen) along with the caption "Libertas."41 With unmistakable clarity, the imperial federation's legitimate resistance to a feared Habsburg tyranny is here equated with the defence of the Roman republic via the assassination of Caesar.

In addition, both humanism and confessional struggles considerably promoted the genesis of national identities. In the Netherlands (Media Link #be), which had been fighting for their independence from Spain since 1568, conceptions of the ancient Batavians (Media Link #bf) played an essential role in the formation of national identity. Similarly, the discovery of Cornelius Tacitus' (ca. 55–120) (Media Link #bg) Germania in the Abbey of Hersfeld in 1450 made the Germanic tribes (Media Link #bh) a key reference point for national identity among German humanists.42

On the other hand, monarchies also made use of references to antiquity. Ever since the Middle Ages, the term "monarchy" had referred to the constitutional theory of Aristotle (384–322 BC) (Media Link #bi). Well into the 17th century, it was also connected to the world monarchy of Rome, and thus it had universalising connotations.43 But although Rome was effectively the model of monarchy par excellence, there were those who retreated from this universal concept grounded in the eschatological understanding of the Roman Empire. Jean Bodin (1529–1596) (Media Link #bj), for example, did not even consider the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation a monarchy but rather an aristocratic entity.44 According to strict Aristotelian theory, monarchy meant the rule of a single individual, but classical teachings on forms of government were not the only source of legitimation. Of central importance was also the patriarchal justification of monarchy found in the Bible. However significant the designation of the ruler as pater patriae ("father of the country") may have been, adopted as it was from Cicero and other classical authors, it was also highly charged with the conception of the sovereign as the father of the household as well as with ideas of a cosmic order at the head of which stood God as sole ruler.45

Moreover, all European dynasties (Media Link #bk) sought to legitimate themselves by means of references to ancient mythology and history. For instance, many royal houses attempted to trace their roots back to antiquity. In addition to a direct descent from Noah and the Trojans, the official historiography of the House of Habsburg also introduced a lineage from the Roman family of the Julii. Although in this case antiquity tended to serve as proof of age and prominence and acted as a source of dignity, it seems at the same time to have been a normative frame of reference for the self-portrayal and staging of sovereignty. The triumphal arch in Innsbruck has already been mentioned, and numerous other examples could be adduced. To name one, François Blondel's (1618–1686) (Media Link #bl) Porte Saint-Denis (Media Link #bm) in honour of Louis XIV of France, which was finished in 1672 and resembles the Arch of Titus, depicts the Sun King in its reliefs in the garb of a Roman military commander.

In general, ancient borrowings play a considerable role especially in the heroic and military aspects of royal imagery. Above all, in
the Baroque era equestrian sculptures and artistic depictions of rulers in Roman dress were standard. Examples are Andreas Schlüter’s (ca. 1660–1714) (→ Media Link #bn) monument to Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg (1620–1688) (→ Media Link #bo) and Peter Scheemakers’ (1691–1781) (→ Media Link #bp) gilded equestrian statue (→ Media Link #bq) of William III of England (1650–1702) (→ Media Link #br). In this context, we must also mention the equation of early modern rulers with the great generals and rulers of antiquity, most notably Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) (→ Media Link #bs) and Caesar. In addition, elements of ancient mythology were adopted. Hercules and Mars were often used as symbolic figures in texts and images to represent the royal virtues of courage and fortitude. With Louis XIV of France, Apollo also appeared, playing a central role in the portrayal of the “Sun King”. Other references cropped up in the case of female rulers, as can be seen in descriptions of Elizabeth I of England (1533–1603) (→ Media Link #bt) with recourse to the salutary Astraæa. It is clear that ancient figures of rulers, heroes, and divinities were distilled into ideal types that designated specific traits and virtues and at times possessed a programmatic character. Obviously, the meaning with which they were endowed had only little to do with the details of the historical record. But that was the source of their effectiveness as models. They were patterns used to prefabricate royal imagery for the transmission of a specific political message to a specific audience.

The late-humanistic Neostoicism developed by Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) (→ Media Link #bu) also forged links to ancient exemplars, namely to the Roman Stoa, a later continuation of the originally Greek philosophical school represented by Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC–65) (→ Media Link #bv) and Marcus Aurelius (121–180) (→ Media Link #bw). In combination with the increased reception of Tacitus that is also visible in the states re-emerging from the turmoil of the Reformation, Neostoicism offered early modern rulers new models of “social discipline” and royal virtues. In the emerging power of Brandenburg-Prussia it even became a guiding ideology of sorts. Scholarship has also stressed its influence on the “Oranische Heeresreform” (“military reform of the House of Orange”), which itself was conceived as a continuation of ancient models of military strategy.

Revolution and Opposition in England

1642 witnessed the outbreak of the Civil War in England and with it the formulation of republican theories that, especially in the 1650s under the Commonwealth, made explicit use of ancient models. Here the theory of the mixed constitution was especially favourable to the adoption of ancient models in the form suggested by Machiavelli. The cooperation between the crown on the one hand and the nobility and commons on the other, the latter represented in the two houses of Parliament, had been portrayed by jurists like John Fortescue (ca. 1394–1476) (→ Media Link #bx) as a dominium politicum et regale (“constitutional monarchy”) wholly within the understanding of the common law. In the context of the conflict that would culminate in the Civil War, however, it was described as a mixed constitution in the Polybian sense. In a specific setting of appropriation in which both parties to the conflict sought a balance and at the same time desired to be seen as guardians of the constitution, each made use of a model that seemed apt to find acceptance and to offer a compromise solution to the question of sovereignty.

With the execution of Charles I (1600–1649) (→ Media Link #by) on 30 January 1649 and the abolition of the monarchy that followed swiftly thereafter, the arguments used by the republicans shifted even more decisively toward the model of antiquity. In 1656, James Harrington (1611–1677) (→ Media Link #bz) in particular made a distinction between the excellence of “ancient prudence”, the political wisdom of antiquity, and that of later times. In Harrington’s mind, the foundation of ancient constitutions lay above all in the prudent mixture of forms of government and the system of checks and balances that resulted from it. Conforming to his Polybian model, Harrington considered above all Rome and Sparta – in addition to the biblical Israel and the Republic of Venice – republican models worth imitating. At the same time, this reinterpretation of the English constitution on the model of antiquity enabled the old system of county militias – again relying on Machiavelli’s vision of Sparta and Rome – to be revaluated as a virtue-fostering unity of citizen and soldier. This reinterpretation would go on to be influential in North America as well.

As both Harrington and Marchamont Nedham (1620–1678) (→ Media Link #c0) demonstrate, antiquity served as a frame of orientation in an unprecedented political situation, especially since Rome above all emanated a highly desirable aura of success and grandeur. This was only partially the case with Greece; although Sparta still counted as a model, most authors considered the reputedly tumultuous and anarchic Athens to be no model at all. The images evoked in the reception of Rome transcended the level of rhetorical ornament and, as ideals rooted in historical reality, were accorded a normative function. At the same time, the valence and interpretation given these images and models were anchored in the present; especially in the English reformulation of antiquity it was Machiavelli’s theses that provided the lens through which antiquity was viewed. The same goes for the recourse
made to ancient republics in the radical Whig literature of the Restoration, for example in Henry Neville's (1620–1694) (→ Media Link #c1) Plato redivivus or Walter Moyle's (1672–1721) (→ Media Link #c2) Essay upon the Constitution of the Roman Government.65

Although the model of antiquity retreated entirely behind Christian and teleological patterns of interpretation for the legitimation and justification of the Glorious Revolution of 1688/1689,63 it was soon revivified in its republican aspect with the republication of Harrington's works in 1700, and it received even greater impetus after 1714. The great theme of the 1720s was the "corruption" of the new moneyed-elite in London and of the reigning Whig oligarchy around Robert Walpole (1676–1745) (→ Media Link #c3), which in the series of articles written by John Trenchard (1662–1723) (→ Media Link #c4) and Thomas Gordon (d. 1750) (→ Media Link #c5) under the pseudonym Cato64 was depicted as the antithesis of ancient "virtue".65 The Roman republic could be used as a cautionary tale against the feared degeneration of English liberty if one focused on its demise, as Joseph Addison (1672–1719) (→ Media Link #c6) did in his tragedy Cato (1713).66 Yet it could also be held up as the example of a good constitution, one from which England should take its bearings. In his Dissertation Upon Parties (1733–1734), Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751) (→ Media Link #c7) proposed to reduce the Roman constitution to its basic ideas and to compare it with the English one as a means of analysing the causes of its rise and fall and guarding against contemporary corruption.67 Of course, Bolingbroke's portrayal of the Roman constitution, like Harrington's, is not immune to criticism,68 and no more than in Machiavelli's time can the Roman model be seen as a blanket model for modern action.

The Revolutions of the Late 18th Century

Publications associated with the American Revolution (→ Media Link #c8) also reveal a rather critical reception of ancient models.69 And yet it was here, as in France a little later, that antiquity became the ideal par excellence. On the one hand, the British motherland could be portrayed as the decadent and corrupt imperium romanum (see below). On the other hand, republican Rome served as an inexhaustible treasury of republican models, rituals, and symbols. Read through the lens of their English and in part also of their French reception, the ancient authors Polybius, Livy, Plutarch (45–120) (→ Media Link #c9) and Cicero gave shape to the image of the Roman republic, as did Charles Rollin's (1661–1741) (→ Media Link #ca) widely diffused Histoire Romaine (1739–1749, English edition: Roman History, 1739–1750), which relied heavily on Livy.70 The image of the Roman republic was based largely on the paradigms already established in England: a republic with a well-balanced mixed constitution, and a capacity for expansion coupled with imperialist (→ Media Link #cb) tendencies (see below). The decisive difference, however, was the notion that Rome could be surpassed by the young American republic.71 Nevertheless, the high value that ancient examples were accorded as frames of orientation can be seen even in the critical engagement with ancient constitutional models.

Similar observations can be made for the French Revolution. Certain patterns of perception and reception had already developed in the Enlightenment discourse of the 18th century which portrayed Sparta and Rome in particular as ideal republics and which with their very simplicity encouraged patriotic feeling and active virtue.72 The Revolution's (→ Media Link #cd) overcoming of despotism could thus be seen as a new beginning, but also as a return to the idealised values of ancient republics.73 Although what were considered to be ancient constitutions exercised in point of fact little direct influence, the manifold model of antiquity played a substantial role for the self-understanding of the revolutionaries. For example, Camille Desmoulins (1760–1794) (→ Media Link #ce) used Tiberius (42 BC–37) (→ Media Link #cf), Claudius (10 BC–54) (→ Media Link #cg), Nero (37–68) (→ Media Link #ch), Caligula (12–41) (→ Media Link #ci) and Domitian (51–96) (→ Media Link #cj) as foils to emphasise the accomplishments of the republic.74 In his Manifeste des Plébéiens, Gracchus Babeuf (1760–1797) (→ Media Link #ck) called for a "Vendée plébéienne," thus evoking the example of the plebeian exodus from Rome.75 Both are clear references to the model nature of Roman antiquity in particular.76 In like manner, the naming of offices in the French republic, for example the introduction of the consulate after 18 Brumaire Year VIII (9 November 1799),77 points to Rome as a frame of reference for the fashioning of a collective ethos.

Republican put a premium on the virtue of the citizen, and numerous ancient authors such as Livy, Tacitus, and Plutarch provided illustrative material. Machiavelli had already emphasised the importance of civic virtue for the preservation or recovery of liberty,78 and for others, such as Bolingbroke, it was less Rome's constitution than its citizens' virtue and love of liberty that kept the republican system intact for so long.79 Attempts at turning citizens into exemplary republicans entailed the stylisation of certain ancient figures like Lucius Junius Brutus (ca. 5th century BC) (→ Media Link #cl), Cato and Cincinnatus (ca. 5th century BC) (→ Media Link #cm) as paragons. Thus, in the 18th century, Brutus in particular served as a paradigm of republican virtue, above all in the context of the French Revolution. Voltaire's (1694–1778) (→ Media Link #cn) tragedy about the elder Brutus exercised an influence that can hardly be overestimated, although the drama, which premiered in Paris in 1731, had to wait until the Revolution to achieve success.80 Brutus, who was willing to sacrifice his own sons in order to preserve the republic, was effectively held up as an ideal of
the republican citizen, as can be seen in Jacques-Louis David’s (1748–1825) (Media Link #co) large format painting (Media Link #cp) Les Licteurs rapportent à Brutus les corps de ses fils (1789).\textsuperscript{81}

The same applies to the figure of Cato. Addison, for example, interpreted his suicide in Utica as undertaken in the name of freedom, as an example of unconditional dedication to the republic.\textsuperscript{82} Cato’s stock soared thereafter particularly in England and North America. Cato’s Letters, by Trenchard and Gordon, became a medium of political opposition, and Addison’s Cato would be George Washington’s (1732–1799) (Media Link #cq) favourite play; he even had it performed for his troops in winter quarters at Valley Forge.\textsuperscript{83} The story of Cincinnatus, the yeoman farmer who was called from the plough to be dictator and, after performing his duty, returned to the plough, also enjoyed enormous popularity in the USA, especially through comparisons with George Washington (which, incidentally, are reflected in the foundation of the Society of the Cincinnati and the name of the state capital of Ohio).\textsuperscript{84} Civic virtue, modesty, and immunity from corruption were the distinguishing features of these figures who, even in antiquity, had already had a complex reception history.\textsuperscript{85}

Yet it is precisely models like Cato and Brutus that highlight the virtue-oriented and Stoic aspect of early modern republicanism which clearly distinguishes it from modern liberalism. Romans and Spartans were portrayed above all as idealists, prepared to sacrifice their sons and even their own lives for “freedom” and their “country”. Freedom meant active participation as a zoon politikon, not the absence of constraints or the individual freedom to act.\textsuperscript{86} Of course, when crafting this paradigm early modern authors integrated specific ancient discourses about virtue into their image of ancient reality, turning them into the model of their own pursuit of virtue.\textsuperscript{87}

The wearing of togas on the part of orators during the American and the French Revolution, the use of ancient office titles such as consul, senator, etc., and the near omnipresence of the fasces (Media Link #cr) and the Phrygian cap (Media Link #cs) doubtless play as well to an identification with (especially Roman) antiquity that extended far into habitus and praxis (Media Link #ct) – although it must be said that Greek stylistic vocabularies were also received in architecture, art and everyday material culture in both America and Europe.\textsuperscript{88} The question arises to what extent it is not rather bourgeois appropriative exigencies that were expressed in such cases. Nevertheless, far into the French Republic one can still discern the early modern reflex to measure novelty by the normative yardstick of antiquity, and to recognize in the modern a revival of the ancient. Even in France, the idea of a new beginning was connected with a return to the model of antiquity, and the fading of Christianity as a guideline for the elite of the French Revolution only reinforced this tendency.\textsuperscript{89}

This passage by Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) (Media Link #cu) clearly illustrates the significance that Rome and its empire are accorded in Western thought. It is informed by the conception of Rome as a universal power and guarantor of peace, civilisation, and order. On the one hand, this concept prompted various political entities to make conscious recourse to Rome in order to historically reformulate the political goals and concerns of their own time. It also led them to portray their own rule positively to others – in view of a mandate to bring about civilisation and order that each political entity ascribed to itself – as a continuation of the Imperium Romanum. Besides, it suggested a justification for their rule over foreign peoples. On the other hand, the use of the model of Rome or rather of the Roman Empire also created expectations that have been (and continue to be) pressed upon states and political entities in public discourses. Finally, professional or semi-professional historical accounts, bound as they are to contemporary discourses, consciously or unconsciously impose contemporary models on a historical phenomenon like the Imperium Romanum and, vice versa, turn it into a positive or a negative model for the present.\textsuperscript{90}

Familiar formulations like "new Rome," "second Rome," "third Rome," and so forth point in the direction of what has just been said. Significantly, the USA (Media Link #cv) was accorded the status of a "new Rome" quite early, from which in turn a universal claim to creating order was derived for a future American world supremacy. In 1853, the republican Theodor Poesche (1826–1899) (Media Link #cw)
The newly founded USA thus made use of a concept of romanitas in whose tradition it squarely placed itself. Rome provided it not only with a past that could be reformulated, but also with one that could furnish it with legitimation vis-à-vis the European nations. In this case, the Imperium Romanum actually functioned as an anti-model. Representatives of Great Britain were dubbed delusional Roman Caesars, and British rule was associated with the tyranny that Rome had been accused of exercising over its provinces. In domestic American discourses, the Roman Empire and its fall were increasingly used as a template for scenarios of decline that entailed above all a rampant contempt for the Christian faith and a corresponding state of decadence. It is all the more remarkable that various discourses outside America have consistently assigned to the USA (and continue to do so today) the role of a new Rome and therewith of a new empire. Officially America denies that it has an empire, although voices at home increasingly approve of the idea and suggest that the USA should evolve into a liberal imperial regime. Nevertheless, the Imperium Romanum continues to be cited primarily as a model of imminent decline.

The upshot is that the USA remains a power that in domestic political discourse distances itself from the model of the Imperium Romanum but that is thought to act like an empire, with negative and positive connotations, by both critics and supporters alike. The positive connotation points, against the backdrop of contemporary templates, to the nucleus of tradition according to which the Roman Empire was a power that brought order and civilisation to the world. In fact, in one sense especially the model of the Imperium Romanum has been reformulated positively in American political discourse and popular culture, as the empire provided the vehicle for Christianity's diffusion across the world of (classical) antiquity and its triumph over the emperors of Rome. As a result, Christianity in America has been associated with the victory over Romano-pagan otherness, and thus the war in Europe in the 1940s received a positive ideological charge. Altogether, the example of the USA clearly shows that the nucleus of tradition, or the model, of the Imperium Romanum is embedded in radically differing templates and their reformulations.

These days the concept of empire is not only applied to the USA but rather also to Europe, whose coalescing union is discussed with reference to the paradigm of Rome. This is remarkable, considering that at the end of the Second World War Rome and its empire were viewed rather negatively, and precisely in professional circles. Nevertheless, the process of unification in Europe offered a template for the positive utilisation of the paradigmatic empire, emphasising its character as a "multiethnic state". Rome is rather consistently viewed in the realm of journalism as a benevolent empire in whose footsteps the world power of a united Europe ought to follow.

While the USA has fostered an anti-imperial discourse in its political self-understanding since the Revolution, the British Empire, in order to legitimate its own imperial ambitions, forged links to the Imperium Romanum and its oft-mentioned guise as a bringer of order, civilisation, and peace. Indicative of this is the following statement by Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881): from the year 1859:

"One of the greatest of the Romans, when asked what were his politics, replied, Imperium et libertas. That would not make a bad programme for a British Ministry. It is one from which Her Majesty's advisers do not shrink."

This purported quotation of a great Roman is pure fiction, but it shows that the Roman Empire was used as a justificatory model for personal ambitions. Thus in North America and then the USA the British Empire's resemblance to the Imperium Romanum was
assessed negatively, but the nucleus of tradition in British self-perception made it a model with positive connotations. It is no coincidence that the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries witnessed the zenith of historical analyses of the Roman Empire. Such studies, however, can also ape the reigning ideologies of contemporary imperial powers, thus providing them in turn with models from history for their political action.  

It is not only the British Empire that evinces this intimate interlacing of current political action, historical scholarship that is influenced by it, and examples and arguments for political action culled from antiquity. It can even be witnessed in liberal Italy. Although the universality of the idea of Rome discredited it during the Risorgimento, Roman history, or rather the notion of romanità drawn from it, formed the foundation for the construction of national identity for the state that began to emerge in 1860. Rome thus became the model for providing the manifoldly heterogeneous nation-state of Italy with a template for a common past. This construction was taken up by both literati and professional historians, and it formed the basis for a further reformulation of the Roman Empire, especially after 1911. This is the year in which the Italian nation-state celebrated its 50th birthday, but it was also when liberal Italy began to aspire to acquiring territories outside the peninsula.  

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Romanità was not only an argument for military intervention in Africa, however. It was also used to derive for Italy a special civilising and cultural role, one that was reassuringly distinguished from oriental decadence and “Gothic” materialism (in the form of Protestantism and socialism / communism). This mentality gave rise to a growing acceptance of liberal Italy’s colonial cravings among the upper and middle classes. What is more, it prepared the way for irredentism and its pursuit of the "natural" borders of Italy. Finally, it facilitated the reconciliation between church and state that would ultimately be realised by Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). Just how powerful the model of Rome and its empire was for the irredentists can be seen in the "occupation" of Fiume (Rijeka) in September of 1919 at the hands of soldiers led by Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863–1938). In an address to the Italian soldiers in Fiume, whom he called legionari ("legionaries"), D’Annunzio made explicit reference to Rome: "convien che ciascuno di voi si pianti su i suoi due calcagni robusti e ripeta a fronte alta la parola romana, la parola dei legionari: ‘qui rimarremo ottimamente’."  

Fascist Italy was thus home not only to a cult of romanità but also to a second concept that grew out of the first: italianità. In the process, Mussolini, who proclaimed the resurrection of the Imperium Romanum, was equated with Augustus. Excavations in the centre of Rome and at other archaeological sites like Pompeii were also put into the service of the fascist reformulation of Rome. Romanità continued to play a weighty role even after 1945. For the national anthem of the new republic, Goffredo Mamellis’s (1827–1849) Canto degli Italiani ("Song of the Italians") was chosen. According to the 19th-century text, Italy dons the helmet of Publius Cornelius Scipio (236–183 BC), the goddess Victory is a slave of Rome, and the brothers of Italy draw up in cohorts to suffer death for the nation. The example of Italy vividly shows how the model of the Imperium Romanum could be used on various levels by both a republic and a totalitarian state, having been prepared for such by the relevant fields of scholarship.  

As a whole, this implies the manifold possibilities for reformulation bound up in a model like the Imperium Romanum, which in Western civilisation is certainly the most influential one. Ultimately, cultural memory holds fast on the one hand to the connotation of civilisation, peace, and order, on the other to the recollection of the universal (or universalist) and national regime that managed to level cultural differences. Both templates were applicable to contemporary political entities, depending on their political position. As the examples of the USA and the EU show, this historical model continues to be applied today, unfazed by the actual historical facts and structures proper to the Imperium Romanum. Thus the model of Rome and its empire are more alive today than ever.  

Ulrich Niggemann / Kai Ruffing, Marburg  

Appendix  

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Notes

1. "For what else is all history but the praise of Rome?" (transl. by P.B., quoted from Hirschi, Wettkampf 2005, p. 195).
2. An overview is available in Walther, Renaissance 2010, col. 1–5; Burke, Renaissance 1996.
4. That models are not simple copies, but rather conscious constructions of reality, has been emphasised, for example, by Herbert Stachowiak (1921–2004) – although his theoretical interests caused him to place a stronger emphasis on their representative function (Stachowiak, Modelltheorie 1973, pp. 131ff., 287f.; idem, Wirklichkeit 1983). The exemplary character of models has been emphasized from the art historical point of view by Erben, Verständnis 2008, pp. 284ff.
6. An overview of the current state of research is available in Schmale, Transcultural History 2010; a theoretical focus in Middell, Kulturtransfer 2000, pp. 17–23.
8. Steinmetz, Neue Wege 2007, p. 16: "coexistence and conflict of various, contemporaneously available applications", transl. by P.B.
17. Brauneder, Heiliges Römisches Reich, col. 317f.
30. "Io non mi partirò mai, con lo esempio di qualunque cosa, da' miei Romani" ("Like my Romans, my example in everything, I shall never leave", transl. by P.B.). These are the words Machiavelli puts into the mouth of Fabrizio Colonna, the protagonist of his L'arte della guerra (Machiavelli, L'arte della guerra 1963, p. 501).
35. ↩ For Machiavelli’s reception in Germany in particular, cf. also the contributions in Zwierlein / Meyer, Machiavellismus 2010.
37. ↩ Brutus, Vindiciae 1689 [1579], pp. 185–189.
38. ↩ The likely authors are Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549–1623) and Hubert Languet (1518–1581); cf. Garnett, Introduction 1994, pp. lv–lxxvi.
39. ↩ As far as I know, there is no modern edition of the original Latin text. A German translation is available in Dennert, Beza 1968, pp. 61–202.
42. ↩ Schauerte, Model Germania 2012.
47. ↩ Cf., e.g., Brockmann, Bild des Hauses Habsburg 2008, p. 31.
48. ↩ Cf., e.g., Seeger, Herkules 2008; Burke, Ludwig XIV. 1993, pp. 101ff.; and in general Strothmann, Herrscher 2012. Thanks to the querelle des anciens et des modernes, contemporary rulers were increasingly able to portray antiquity as superior; cf. Burke, Ludwig XIV. 1993, pp. 154f. and 159f.
50. ↩ This was especially the case during the first two decades of his rule; cf. Burke, Ludwig XIV. 1993, pp. 39–46; Ziegler, Sonnenkönig 2010, pp. 44–48; Schilling, Jahrhundert 2010, pp. 127f.
51. ↩ Yates, Astraæa 1975. In Greek mythology, Astraæa was a daughter of Zeus and the personification of justice and innocence. She left mankind during the Iron Age on account of its depravity, becoming the constellation Virgo. Should she ever return to mankind, it would signal the return of the Golden Age.
54. ↩ Comprehensive treatment is now available in Schwager, Militärtheorie 2012, pp. 91–289; and on the history of the scholarship, pp. 4–52.
56. ↩ References to a few examples from the Tudor era, which admittedly were of little moment in the context of the Civil War, are mentioned by Nippel, Mischverfassungstheorie 1980, pp. 177–210.
64. ↩ They appeared first in the London Journal, then in the British Journal, and were later published as a collection under the title Cato’s Letters: Trenchard / Gordon, Cato’s Letters 1995.
69. ↩ For a balanced approach to antiquity, e.g. in the Federalist Papers, cf. Hanses, Antikenbilder 2011; and more generally Heun, Antike 2011.
71. ↩ Hanses, Antikebilder 2011, pp. 87f.
98. "Rome is everywhere the conscious or implicit premise of our observation and our thinking; if in basic intellectual matters
the world was once Roman, universal, and that this ancient global civilisation has flowed into our own. That East and
West belong together, that they comprise a single humanity – the world owes this notion to Rome and its empire." (transl.
99. Thus, e.g., Alföldy, Imperium 1999, p. 48: "Rome vollbrachte die historische Leistung, einen Vielvölkerstaat zu errichten, in
dem Völker, die nicht nur mit den Römern, sondern auch untereinander viele Kriege ausgetragen hatten, jahrhundertelang
miteinander in Frieden lebten. Sie wurden 'Römer', ohne ihr eigenes Profil zu verlieren; ihre eigenen Leistungen bereicherten das Imperium. Zu verdanken war Roms Erfolg nicht nur der wirtschaftlichen 'Globalisierung', sondern vor allem auch der politischen Integration der einzelnen Völker und Regionen in den Römerstaat und der Überlegenheit seines geistigen Fundaments, der griechisch-römischen Kultur. Ein in der Geschichte zuvor nie dagewesenes und auch bis heute nicht wiederholtes Experiment war gelungen." ("Rome achieved the historical feat of creating a multiethnic state in which for centuries peoples coexisted peacefully who had waged numerous wars not only with the Romans but also with each other. They became 'Romans' without losing their own identity; their own accomplishments enriched the empire. Rome's success was due not only to economic 'globalisation' but even more so to the political integration of individual peoples and regions into the Roman state as well as to the superiority of its intellectual foundation, Graeco-Roman culture. An experiment succeeded that had never before been seen in history, nor has it been seen since." (transl. by P.B.) – Cf. also Stahl, Einheit 1998.)
101. Cf. Morley, Empire 2010, p. 9, with the above quotation.

107. "Each one of you ought to stand on his own two robust feet and repeat with his head held high the words of Rome, the words of the legionaries: 'there is no better place for us to stay.'" (transl. by P.B.) Cf. the monograph by Gatta, which has its own irredentist tendencies and is problematic as a piece of scholarship: Gatta, Italia 2007, S. 223–249, especially p. 235 with D'Annunzio's quotation.
110. The poet's romanità is still emphasised on the website of the Quirinale.

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Eingeordnet unter:
Models and Stereotypes › Model Classical Antiquity

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Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) (http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10143279_00002.html)
Messages from His Royal Majesty the King of France 1552, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

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Liberty Tree in the Luxemburg Landscape


Charles Goepp (1827–1907) VIAF [http://viaf.org/viaf/38466881]


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