Globalization in Juvenal’s Satires

Juvenal concludes his second satire (2.159-170) with a statement about Rome’s expansion beyond Ireland and Great Britain (*Iuvernae*, 2.160; *Orcadas, Britannos*, 2.161) and its repercussions, namely increased commerce and communication (*commercia*, 2.166) between Rome and its geographic frontier. This link between core and periphery establishes the opportunity for cultural exchange—via people and goods—that potentially threatens both Rome’s institutions and, equally, foreign practices on the margins of its empire. The author’s anxiety about circulation between the local (Rome) and the global (Armenia, Great Britain, etc.) speaks to a larger discourse about the consequences of increased connectivity, sense of place and identity in the Satires that acquires deeper resonance when applied to current bio- and sociological theories of globalization and the modern experience (Robertson 1992, Appadurai 1996, Tomlinson 1999, Robertson and Inglis 2004). Globalization as a model concerns the compression and increased consciousness of the world as a whole.

In this paper I argue how Juvenal’s examination of “globalizing” threats to some of Rome’s political (Satire 2.159-170), social (7.98-105) and economic (11.1-10) institutions comes into sharper relief when read against one process of globalization entitled “deterritorialization.” This process involves the increasing flow of people, goods and foods to a locality—the conditions of which “act to dislodge everyday experience and meaning construction from their ‘anchors’ in the local environment” (Tomlinson 2012). The author’s literary portrait illustrates how the indiscriminate circulation of people and goods dislodges the meanings of these institutions (and their participants) from their traditional and stable Republican context anchored in the city of Rome.
Juvenal’s Rome of the Imperial period, instead, showcases the result of deterritorialization in the example of displaced clients, local environmental devastation and political upheaval.

In conclusion, deterritorialization proves not only relevant to the study of “pre-modern” contexts including Rome (Jennings 2011, Pitts and Versluys 2015), but also helps delineate more clearly how Juvenal must negotiate the shifting parameters of cultural and political activity at Rome during the early 2nd century CE because of increased connectivity with the Imperial world at large.

Bibliography


