

BRITANNIA

R. HINGLEY: *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen. The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology*. Pp. xv + 224, figs. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Paper, £16.99. ISBN: 0-415-23580-4.

This ambitious work aims to examine the development of Romano-British archaeology in the context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British imperialism. The author lets slip in his preface that his original aim—to provide an understanding of where the subject is now—was, during the course of his research, superseded by a concern with constructions of English identity and the nature of British imperialism. Nevertheless, most of the final section is devoted to a critique of twentieth-century Romano-British studies.

The first two sections of the book, entitled respectively ‘Imperialism’ and ‘Englishness’, focus on the period from 1860 to 1930. H. highlights some fascinating texts, which bear witness to the pervasiveness of concern with empire in literature of the time. Particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, parallels serving a variety of purposes were often drawn between the British and the Roman empires; the Roman empire might function as an inspiring example or as a dreadful warning. In particular, H. makes clear the degree to which literature on Roman Britain was influenced by more general debates about race, debates which were profoundly implicated in the imperialist projects of modern European powers. He is surely right to suggest that modern Britons felt ill at ease with the notion that they themselves had once been conquered. Many argued that the English at least were not descended from those Celts who had been ruled by Rome but rather from the Anglo-Saxons who had invaded after the Romans. This belief made it rather easier to identify with the conquering Romans. For others, modern Britons were a mixed breed descended from Celts, as well as Anglo-Saxons—and also from the Romans themselves. By implication, Roman civilization had been a constant presence in the British Isles from the invasion of Claudius to the present.

Rightly drawing attention to the interrelationship between popular and academic perceptions of Roman Britain, H. chooses to include in his discussion works such as G. A. Henty’s *Beric the Briton* (1893)—a ripping yarn aimed at younger readers—and Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906). H.’s suggestion that the scholar Francis Haverfield was perhaps influenced, no doubt subconsciously, by the picture of a Romanized British élite provided in Henty’s novel is an attractive one.

Haverfield, who might be described as the founder of Romano-British archaeology as an academic subject, dominates not only ‘Part III’ of H.’s book—concerned with ‘Romanization’—but also an earlier chapter on ‘Incorporation and Assimilation’.

Taking issue with the work of Phil Freeman (who has argued that Haverfield’s writings on the Roman empire were remarkably unaffected by the imperial preoccupations of his own time), H. emphasizes a number of passages in Haverfield’s work which draw analogies between the Roman and the British empires. Haverfield can also be found suggesting that the spread of Roman civilization throughout Europe was a precondition for modern civilization. In Haverfield’s view, Roman culture was in many respects superior to the native cultures which, according to him, it superseded.

H. takes issue with the notion of ‘progress’ implicit here, but his main criticisms are reserved for Haverfield’s followers. H. argues that most subsequent scholars of Roman Britain have accepted Haverfield’s emphasis on the Roman elements in Romano-British society. H.’s exposé of the preoccupation of many scholars of Roman Britain

with the wealthy, villa-dwelling élite of south-east England seems fully justified. Scholars such as Rivet and Frere are found guilty of an élitist concern with mosaics and hypocausts rather than mud huts; even Martin Millett may be found writing of the spread of Roman culture as ‘progress’ (p. 142). The notion of ‘progress’ employed here (and in Haverfield’s work) is, H. argues, necessarily implicated in imperialism. It is not clear to me that scholars of colonial studies (for whom this book is described in the blurb as ‘essential reading’) would be very struck by the part recent Roman archaeologists have played in sustaining the imperialist world order (stressed by H., p. 153). Still, relativism is probably a more productive position to adopt for students of the ancient world; the recent shift toward excavating native villages rather than Roman-style villas will surely generate a more balanced picture of Britain under Roman rule.

British imperial administrators may well have looked to the Romans for frontier management strategies (as H. argues, p. 42), and Britons may well have sought to justify their own empire through comparisons with the enduring and prestigious empire of the Romans (though points of contrast often received greater emphasis). The attitudes of those modern scholars whose work is castigated by H. may indeed owe something to the concerns of earlier generations with empire. In the end, though, it is not clear that material discussed in the final section of the book is much illuminated by the preceding sections (or vice versa). A low point of this work is the sub-structuralist table of binary oppositions (Roman vs. native, Englishman vs. Celt, civilized vs. barbarian, ‘us’ vs. ‘other’, etc.) which he argues characterizes twentieth-century accounts of Romanization (p. 148). As H. himself concedes, one of the most striking features of discussions of the Romans in Britain is the slipperiness of identifications. Henty and Kipling are often seen as exemplars of turn-of-the-century imperialism—yet their pictures of Roman Britain are significantly diverse. While Henty invites his readers to identify with a young British leader who emulates Roman virtues, Kipling’s central characters—though deeply attached to Britain—are Roman by descent. H.’s obsession with the evils of imperialism does not allow him to consider other factors which may have influenced debates about the Roman empire in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. In the end, these were perhaps as much about justifying the position of Classics (perceived even then as under threat) as about legitimizing the British empire.

H.’s writing is inelegant, occasionally, indeed, almost incomprehensibly awkward. There are places, particularly in the earlier sections of the book, where the text lurches from one summary to another of the work of other scholars, often without spelling out their implications for H.’s own argument. Much of the material he has assembled is, however, of great interest. This will be a useful book for anyone studying Rome’s place in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain.

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VIRGIL IN THE VENETO

CRAIG KALLENDORF: *Virgil and the Myth of Venice. Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance*. Pp. viii + 251, 12 pls. Cased, £40. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. ISBN: 0-19-815254-X.

Kallendorf sets out his stall in a reflective introduction on his approach to the history of reading in light of the various trends in book history over the last forty years (it