

2. British imperialism and the Roman Empire¹

Philip Freeman

Introduction: imperialism and the Roman experience

It is a truism that historians frequently reflect the prejudices of their time. This is especially so where it is believed that interpretation has been fashioned by a prevailing methodology, or by the general outlook of a particular age. With interpretation of the past comes explanation of how such opinions were formulated and conditioned. This I take to be one of the characteristics of post-colonial analysis. But a thin dividing line separates such analysis from the isolation of patterns in historical writing which are not explicit in the publications of some historians, and therefore were not necessarily meant in the way that they are read today. This process can lead to unmerited or at least misdirected criticism and condemnation of earlier historians.

This is not to deny that some writers may have articulated opinions or sentiments which seem distasteful today. With reference to post-colonial perspectives, we can see this in the contrast between the self-congratulatory assessments of late-nineteenth-century British imperialism and culture, and the anti-German views held by contemporary scholarship. However, this paper is meant to highlight an instance where the integrity of a body of literature can be lost in the general condemnation of the late-colonial phase of British history. In turn, this has implications for the way we might assess the wider significance of the work of historians of that era.

The subject of this paper is Francis Haverfield.² In a collection of papers which focuses on the relationship between archaeology and imperialism, Haverfield may seem an obvious target (see Hingley, this volume). Haverfield, a leading Oxford academic at the turn of the century, might be thought to represent the intellectual establishment at the apex of British imperial confidence. At the same time, he is recognized as a leading figure in the establishment of a more rigorous archaeology of Roman Britain. Haverfield wrote extensively on the history and archaeology of the island under the Romans, and is acknowledged to have had a seminal influence on subsequent developments in these subjects.

There are any number of ways in which misrepresentations of the past can be made. To isolate one example pertinent to the theme of this collection of essays - imperialism - it has been said that:

Specialists in imperial history well understand the frustration which prompted Sir Keith Hancock's much quoted remark that 'imperialism' is no word for scholars and they may even sympathise with his plan for consigning it to the dustbin. Disposing of the term however, does not dispose of the problem, and any substitute is likely to come with the ideological accoutrements which Hancock rightly wished to jettison. The fact is that historians need holistic terms, even if they also need to be wary of them. Their principal obligation in this regard is to declare the contents of their baggage and to avoid smuggling bias under the cover of objectivity.

(Cain and Hopkins 1993, 42)

Hancock, an Australian, was Professor of History at the University of Birmingham and is best known for his *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* (1941). My first point is that most writers on ancient imperialism and/or the Roman Empire rarely fulfil the obligation defined by Cain and Hopkins. The phrase 'Roman imperialism' is now a catch-all. It means different things to different writers, but usually in a negative sense. It is used to account for the growth, form, development, and collapse of the Roman Empire.

The Cain-Hopkins statement is afforded an even greater relevance by the simple fact that theories of imperialism - like any concept - have their own peculiar origins. Nowadays, the tendency is to see imperialism as imperialism as imperialism: as it is, as it always was, and as it will be.

Attempts to define it [imperialism] more narrowly ... as a phenomenon which occurs exclusively as a result of capitalism are now entirely futile ... in the first place [it] is a matter of language, not of politics. ... Writers who artificially redefine imperialism as such-and-such, prove to their own satisfaction that Rome's expansion was not a case of such-and-such, and therefore was not imperialism, have proved only what all Roman historians have long known: that Roman imperialism was not identical with any imperialism of the nineteenth century or twentieth century. In fact the term is, despite its vagueness, indispensable.

(Harris 1979, 4)

Whilst there might be something in this assessment, the facts remain that:

- (i) The term imperialist did not make an appearance in Europe until the mid-nineteenth century. At that time imperialism was not construed negatively, as it is today.
- (ii) The earliest theories of imperialism were devised by socio-economic theorists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, to explain a potential crisis in western and US capitalism (the acquisition of new markets) and in turn to offer possible solutions to this.
- (iii) Such ideas were utilized by Marxist-oriented political theorists in the early-twentieth century, to attack prevailing socio-economic conditions. The major impetus for the critique of imperialism, however, came after the First World War. In turn, the term imperialism, and in particular theories explaining its existence, increasingly were applied *retrospectively*, to explain the present with reference to the past.
- (iv) The debate engendered by (iii) explains the multi-variate nature of theories of imperialism.
- (v) A combination of (iii) and (iv) was adopted by (ancient) historians and archaeologists.

We have here, therefore, a mode of explanation which owes more to the present than to the past (Etherington 1984). Its recent origin may go some way to explaining why ancient writers are unable to explain the growth of the Roman Empire in a vocabulary or concepts familiar to today. For instance Polybius, one of the few writers from antiquity who wrote on Roman expansion in any systematic fashion, attributed it to a mixture of Rome's high principles, her organized and disciplined army, and above all her well-balanced constitution (*Histories* VI). But as Harris noted:

Roman behaviour requires explanation. 'No sane man' wrote Polybius, 'goes to war with his neighbours simply for the sake of defeating his opponent, just as no sane man goes to sea merely to get to the other side ... All actions are undertaken for the sake of the consequent pleasure, good or advantage' (III.4.10-11). He was thinking of the Romans' expansion. In the surviving part of his work, unfortunately, we have no discussion of their real purposes. They felt the ambition to expand he believed: but the text does not explain why they felt it or why so strongly or why for so long a period.

(Harris 1979, 1)

We are left, then, with a conundrum; how relevant to the past is a contemporary explanation for contemporary behaviour? One way of getting round the problem is to argue that even if the ancients could not recognize what we can see, they were nevertheless imperialists and can be defined as such. This brings me to a second point. Cain and Hopkins have argued that:

The distinguishing feature of imperialism is not that it takes a specific economic or political form but that it involves an incursion into the sovereignty of another state. Whether this impulse is restricted or welcomed or whether it produces costs or benefits are important but separate questions. What matters for purposes of definition is that one power has the will and, if it is to succeed, the capacity to shape the affairs of another by imposing upon it. The relations established by imperialism are therefore based upon inequality and not upon mutual compromises of the kind which characterise states of independence.

(Cain and Hopkins 1993, 43)

At face value, one can see in this much that could be applied to the example of the Roman Empire. But it is a generalization, and as such, levels out as much as it isolates.

Discussions of the Roman Empire and of Roman imperialism tend to work at three, often interrelated, levels;

- (i) On an assumption of what the Roman Empire was/is. Dialogue occurs within a framework of what the Roman Empire was/is in the eye of the beholder, and it is striking how few writers have defined what they understand the Roman Empire to be. Likewise there have been few attempts at analysis in anything other than traditional linear political terms.
- (ii) A modified view of (i) is the belief that all empires are broadly the same in form and content with minor subtleties between each (eg as reflected in core/periphery models and World Systems analysis). The objective in this form of analysis is some sort of 'Grand Explanation' which accounts for empires. As an example of this type of treatment - one chosen at random - we may cite Alcock's *Archaeology and Imperialism*, where:

Of the many topics included under the rubric of imperial behaviour, one aspect of the treatment of conquered and incorporated societies will be examined here. Stated simply, this is the fact that, as imperial polities expand to absorb additional political units, some measure of territorial reorganisation within these areas often (if not invariably) follows.

(Alcock 1989, 87)

Alcock's argument is predicated on changes which occurred in the Roman Empire (in this instance the absorption of Greece from the second century BC). He assumes firstly that these changes were consciously made by the Romans, and secondly that by making them, Rome was working towards some grand imperial plan. The principal weaknesses of this argument are threefold. It underestimates actions (eg colonization) as a response to Roman internal needs. It overlooks the fact that other, peculiarly Hellenic, factors can account for these changes. Finally, it fails to identify the executors of the 'policy' here adduced.

A series of beliefs underly levels (i) and (ii). A belief that Roman imperialism was consciously manipulative and exploitative (eg state controlled); that the expansion of the empire was largely systematic; that Roman imperialism involved forced or at least officially encouraged forms of 'acculturation'; that peripheral areas served a core consuming area; and that control was organized and executed largely on the whim of a central authority (the emperor) and the Roman elite or its provincial counterparts.

The third level at which discussion of Roman imperialism is conducted is

- (iii) The application of 'theories of imperialism' to the interpretation of the past - that is, how modern writers have written about and characterized the past.

This has been debated by both historians and archaeologists of all periods. For some scholars the existence of a 'British Empire' has made comparison with its ancient counterparts (notably the Roman Empire) attractive, if not inevitable. Such comparisons can operate in two ways. On the one hand the ideology, structure, and dynamics of the two empires can be compared and contrasted. This approach is often isolated as a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century phenomenon, particular to historical scholarship at the height of imperial confidence. A second approach is to ask why those who made such comparisons did so, and to attempt to adduce their motives. This is a trend of the later twentieth century, and one which invariably characterizes earlier writers as at best apologists of empire and at worst out-and-out imperialists.

It is something of a surprise to find, however, that few prominent ancient historians and archaeologists adopted the compare-and-contrast approach. This, it may be argued, negates the significance of the second, critical, mode.

A common characteristic of Victorian intellectual society was its use of the world of Classical antiquity to bolster contemporary self-confidence. Both the Greek and Roman periods were plundered in this respect. Such interpretations are typified by Jenkyns' (1980) study of the Hellenic influence on Victorian society, a work which argues that direct comparison between Roman and British imperialism was encouraged by (Oxford) academia. Jenkyns maintains that the basis for English comparisons with the Roman experience came from such Classical works as Virgil's *Aeneid* (citing VI.847ff), with its emphasis on Destiny. He argues that Classical literature influenced the great proconsuls, entrepreneurs, and adventurers of the British Empire:

...the usual, the inevitable comparison was with ancient Rome. It had been inescapable ever since 1850, when Palmerston, defending his action in the Don Pacifico affair, had quoted the words, 'Civis Romanus sum'. The phrase *imperium et libertas* was much bandied about; it seemed to have a good Roman ring, but had actually been coined by Disraeli in 1851 - an inspired misquotation of Tacitus. By 1870 J.R. Seeley was noticing that the admiration of a previous generation for Brutus was giving way to a new respect for Caesar, who was now regarded by some as 'the greatest Liberal leader that ever lived' Between 1900 and the First World War both Bryce and the diplomat Sir Charles Lucas devoted whole books to exploring the similarities and differences between the Roman and British empires, while the thesis of Cromer's *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* was that the comparisons must all be with Rome since 'the Imperial idea [was] foreign to the Greek mind'. The parallels were no less obvious to such enemies of imperialism as J.M. Roberston and the economist J.A. Hobson, who castigated the economic parasitism and moral enfeeblement produced by both empires. It is a sign that an idea is pervasive when it is accepted on both sides of a dispute.

(Jenkyns 1980, 333)

When one looks at the evidence a little more closely, however, a slightly different perspective may be offered. The first point to make is that the examples cited by Jenkyns might, for want of a better term, be characterized as received opinions: the opinions of writers, poets and novelists who extracted their own meaning from the Classical literature.³

In an article entitled *Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism*, Peter Brunt (1964-5) helped to perpetuate the impression that 'modern' historians of Rome often tended to slip into this form of analysis, although he concluded that such comparisons between the two empires 'were in fact always rather forced; there were more points of contrast than of likeness' (1964-5, 267).

Closer examination of those authors cited by Jenkyns (1980) and Brunt (1964-5) reveals that none can be considered as historians in the strictest sense of the word. Evelyn Baring, as Lord Cromer (1841-1917), was an administrator with experience of India and was Consul-General of Egypt (1883-1907). In his retirement he devoted himself to literary pursuits, from which derived his *Imperialism: Ancient and Modern* (1910). Lord James Bryce (1838-1922) was also a diplomat, though with stronger academic credentials than Lord Cromer. After a brilliant undergraduate career, Bryce read for the Bar before being elevated to the Regius Professorship of Civil Law at Oxford, a position he held until 1893. From the late 1870s, however, he became increasingly involved in politics, particularly in South Africa, Ireland, and North America. Author of a number of books on international affairs, including a *History of the Holy Roman Empire* (1864), some of Bryce's Oxford lectures were subsequently published as the two-volume *Studies In History and Jurisprudence* (1901), which included *The Roman and the British Empire*. Similar observations apply to Sir Charles Prestwood Lucas (1853-1931), author of numerous books on British colonial government, including *Greater Rome and Greater Britain* (1912). As public-school educated and Oxford-trained politicians, diplomats and administrators, the motivation of such writers can be easily surmised. Their understanding of the ancient world emanated from their junior education, and their progress at Oxford through Moderations and Greats.

Mid-nineteenth-century Oxford was the scene of a number of circulating debates concerning University education. Two key issues here were the relationship of the University to the (Anglican) secular establishment (which included the 'Oxford Movement' and the Tractarians), and debate regarding the nature and execution of a University education. A movement for the reform of what was perceived to be an undemanding curriculum (itself a consequence of the low reputation held by Oxford in the eighteenth century) had begun to crystallize in the middle of the nineteenth century, and led to discussions on these key issues. Leading figures in this group of 'reformers' included Mark Pattison and Henry Nettleship, who were influenced by developments in some German universities. Others, including William Ramsay, William Warde Fowler, and Henry Pelham, shared an outlook which extended

...beyond the needs of one College to those of the whole University and beyond the needs of teaching to those of learning of research. They desired that Oxford should not overly popularise knowledge and conduct the necessary round of examinations, but should definitely encourage scientific inquiry and advance true learning.

(Green 1988, 4-5)

In the short term the views of this 'reform' group were superseded. A Royal Commission was set up in 1851 to look at the state of the universities and to recommend changes in their constitutions and teaching. The Commission was not entirely successful:

When we consider the work of this Commission, we are struck by one significant feature in it; it did much for education, very little for learning, by which I mean the investigation of truth for its own sake in any department of knowledge.

(Warde Fowler in Coon 1934,18)

One of its consequences was the rise of a more utilitarian approach to education. This was an outlook which saw the purpose of the universities to be the production of men who would work in the public service, which included the administration of the Empire. Credit for the transition is accorded to Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893). First as Master of Balliol, and later as University Vice-Chancellor, Jowett saw to the

...transition of Oxford University from an Anglican institution into one to prepare the elite (through the College tutorial system) for offices of responsibility in lay society ... Jowett encouraged the recruitment, not only from the aristocracy but from the middle class, of Imperial administrators who would govern the Empire in a humanist rather than a religious spirit and would concern themselves meticulously with the details of administration.

(Symonds 1986, 10 and 29)⁴

A similar attitude is evident in the Macaulay Committee of 1854, which inquired into the examination of Indian Civil Service (ICS) candidates:

...its recommendations defined the policy guidelines for the examination, training, and selection of ICS candidates. ... Macaulay's Committee defined its priority as the recruitment for the East India Company's service of young Englishmen who would have 'received the best, the most liberal, the most

finished education that [their] native country affords'. In practice this meant changing the qualifications of age so as to ensure that 'considerable number of the civil servants of the Company should be men who have taken the first degree in arts at Oxford or Cambridge'. In accordance with this general aim, the syllabus of the examinations was to be 'confined to those branches of knowledge to which it is desirable that English gentlemen who mean to remain at home should pay some attention'. As one might expect, the Committee argued that in Greek and Latin the examination should be 'not less severe than those examinations by which the highest classical distinctions are awarded at Oxford and Cambridge'. But the examination had to be flexible enough in this area so as not to exclude any part of Britain or any class of its schools. Skill in Greek and Latin versification must have 'a considerable share' in determining the issue of the competition, especially as the fact that great figures such as Fox, Canning, Grenville, Wellesley et al surpassed in this accomplishment indicated how 'powers of mind ... properly trained and directed, may do great service to the State'.

(Majeed 1994)

Jowett's outlook also had consequences for a third issue which concerned some dons at this time; the question of compulsory Classics for undergraduates. The conservative view was that change was not necessary, and indeed would be detrimental. The

... teaching of Classics had an important place. The lessons of the history of the Greek city states were often applied to relations between British and the old Dominions, whilst in the government of dependent territories comparison was frequently made with Rome.

(Symonds 1986, 1)

The study of the Greek philosophers was thought to shape and inspire standards of personal conduct, whilst the Athenian Empire provided lessons on policy and 'democracy gone mad'. It was argued that the study of Greats was the best possible preparation for a political or administrative career because it taught 'good judgement'; a view that persisted into the twentieth century, when George Stevenson (1922, 193-196) questioned the relevance of teaching Roman history.

This debate took place in addition to the thrust and counter-argument of academic publication, where Turner (1989) has shown that Hellenic rather than Roman studies dominated British intellectual life in the nineteenth century. The late-eighteenth century had witnessed the publication of numerous histories and political pamphlets about Rome, especially the Republic. But in the nineteenth century

... a startling change ... occurred. Between the publication of the revised edition of Ferguson's history of the Republic in 1799 and the appearance of William Heitland's three volume history in 1902, no other major study of the Roman Republic appeared in Britain ... Furthermore the Victorian age produced no successor to Gibbon's history ... This paucity of Roman history contrasts with the ever expanding bookshelf of Greek history.

(Turner 1989, 62)

Turner attributes this concentration of scholarly effort in the eighteenth century to ongoing debate on the Constitution, the monarchy, and the State, relative to the individual and the decline of British society. By the end of the eighteenth century that discussion had become largely irrelevant (Turner

1989, 70-71). This shift, which was also manifested in other aspects of the study of the Classics, was the result of another combination of factors: a direct perception of the relevance of Greek (particularly Athenian) history to contemporary matters; an awareness of the problematic character of ancient documents; and the distinction accorded to scholars engaged in Classical studies (Turner 1989, 64). Furthermore,

... comparison between Britain and Rome was unavoidable but not necessarily welcome, since many people regarded Roman civilisation with a mild contempt, comparison between Britain and Greece was more in the nature of a temptation directed to the emotions, a strong and perhaps ... an unconscious influence.

(Jenkyns 1980, 334)

But in contrast to the preferences of the eighteenth century, and due in part to reappraisals of Virgil's *Aeneid*, with its evident overtones concerning the foundation of a great people, praise for both Virgil and the emperor he lauded re-emerged in the Edwardian age. With the turn of the century, Rome began to reassert itself over Greece, 'with new appreciation appearing for empire, efficiency and administration' (Turner 1989, 75). Turner traces these shifts in the writing of narrative political histories of Rome through a more constructive appreciation of Virgil and to on-going work on the interpretation of religion and philosophy. Jenkyns also adduced a change in the public mood:

Imperialist sentiment was in part the product of an immense pride and self-confidence; yet it was also created, or at least infected, by the nervousness, the menacing sense of decadence that invaded the public mood towards the close of the century and imparted to much of the rhetoric of empire a certain dark splendour.

(Jenkyns 1980, 334-5)

It is clear that the study of the Classical world formed a central component in the training of young men. But the lessons were moral, organizational, and judgmental ones, rather than a crude inculcation of the justice of imperialism and the predestined mission of the British Empire. Given that the 'young men of the Empire' had to be trained, one might expect that it would be professional, academic Classicists and ancient historians who promulgated the outlook and comparisons which are to be found in Bryce, Cromer *et al.* Surprisingly, this was not entirely the case. Although Symonds has stated that

Although Classicists exerted an important influence on the philosophy and style of Empire, it was the historians who were more prone to become involved in current Imperial issues from the middle of the nineteenth century

(Symonds 1986, 47)

his statement requires qualification. Symonds refers particularly to modern historians, including men like Thomas Arnold and EA Freeman, both Oxford Professors of Modern History (cf Stephens 1895; Gooch 1952, 323ff). Whilst the vast majority of future administrators proceeded through Moderations and then Greats, and would therefore be given a knowledge of

the literature of antiquity, it was the *modern* historians and their protégés who were the dynamic force in the discussion of Britain's imperial mission, and who tended to draw such parallels. As proof of this we may note the evolution of that group of Oxford graduates who came to be known as 'Milner's Kindergarten' and who eventually formed the core of the 'Round Table' movement of 1909:

the young men who went out to South Africa [with Lord Milner, British High Commissioner, 1897-1907] had carried with them the fundamental belief shared by most of their Oxford contemporaries, in the inherent superiority of British civilisation and in Britain's duty to carry the forms of that civilisation throughout the world.

(Symonds 1986, 76)⁵

When we examine the work of late Victorian and Edwardian ancient historians, it is significant that the scholarship of Classical antiquity at that time was untainted by the preoccupations which concerned Cromer and Bryce. An admittedly cursory reading of the works of such ancient historians as Greenidge, Rice Holmes, Pelham, and Warde Fowler reveals virtually nothing of a comparable nature. At most their opinions and interpretations of Roman history and society might be cited by Cromer *et al.* But these academics were often reluctant to draw such comparisons, whether for moral or intellectual reasons. This does not ignore the fact that some were in sympathy with their government or saw lessons which might be learnt from the past (eg Warde Fowler 1920; Coon 1934, 118; 260-261). Others were overtly critical (eg WT Arnold and Gilbert Murray). Passages from such works as Stobart's *The Grandeur That Was Rome* have been cited as illustrative of the use of the ancient past to justify the modern condition (Hingley 1991, 91). But the comparison has to be worked hard. Again, Stobart was never a historian in the mainstream sense, but a well-respected popularizer of the past.⁶ Specific passages from others contemporary works could be cited which might substantiate the impression that ancient literature was plundered to explain or justify the present. But such passages are isolated and are rarely coherent in form. Similarly, terms such as 'barbarian', 'native', and 'civilized' which were used by Haverfield and his contemporaries, need not then have been imbued with the pejorative meanings which they tend to have today.

Haverfield on imperialism

Despite events in late-nineteenth-century Britain, and in spite of the fact that he wrote extensively about so many aspects of the history and archaeology of the Roman Empire, Haverfield appears to have published surprisingly little regarding the nature and form of what we know today as Roman imperialism. He had even less to say with regard to cross-imperial comparisons.⁷ Haverfield's best known utterance on Roman imperialism was made at a 1910 discussion of the recent publication of Cromer's *Imperialism*. Before this, in 1905-6, in the first edition of *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, Haverfield did draw some comparisons between the Roman experience in western Europe and the nineteenth-century colonial experience. The implications are interesting and surprising:

The west offer[ed] a different spectacle. Here Rome found races that were not yet civilised, yet were racially capable of accepting her culture. Here, accordingly her conquests differed from the two forms of conquest with which modern men are most familiar. We know well enough the rule of civilised white men over uncivilised Africans or Asiatics who seem sundered for ever from their conquerors by a broad physical distinction. We know too the rule of civilised white men over civilised white men - of Russian (for example) over Pole where the individualities of two similarly civilised races clash in undying conflict. The Roman conquest of western Europe resembled neither of these. Celt, Iberian, German, Illyrian were marked off from Italian by no broad distinction of race and colour, such as that which marked off Egyptian from Italian, or that which now divides Englishman from Indian or Frenchman from Algerian Arab.

(Haverfield 1905-1906, 186)

The implications of this assessment should be obvious. That Haverfield made so few public statements about Roman imperialism relative to its modern counterpart might be attributed to his relatively sophisticated perception of the strengths and limitations of what is now referred to as comparative history. For he believed that

the chief work of [university lecturers and teachers of history] ... is to widen the political imaginations of their audiences, and to make them realise that, quite apart from the personal factors of any moment, there are forces and tendencies not easily stated except in the abstract, but able if ignored, to take very concrete vengeance. I am not, be it observed, recommending the study of history on the ground that it aids us to form political prophecies or draw political analogies. It does that, no doubt. But its real value lies in helping us to realise the existence and the true character of various forces ... with which we, like our predecessors, have to deal in our everyday politics.

(Haverfield 1910, 105-106)

To reiterate the point, it is striking just how Haverfield failed - or refused - to make comparisons of phenomena of the Roman Empire with, for instance, that of the British Empire. Indeed one gets the strong impression that he was largely uninterested in what was going on around him at Oxford at this time. In this respect, his most profound observation on the Roman Empire, seems to have been the following:

Of this empire, I shall assert, for most of its life and over most of its lands, that it merits praise from the most uncompromising foes of despotism ... The Empire of the second and third centuries wrought ... more happiness to more of the known world than any age till the French Revolution, and that happiness was not confined to a dominant race or to an upper class.

(Haverfield 1910, 105-106)

This was a sentiment he was to repeat elsewhere. Whilst I suppose one might see in this comment a tacit encomium to the benefits of imperial rule, I prefer to take this assertion at face value, given the absence of any detailed exposition, defence, or even analysis of imperialism elsewhere in Haverfield's work. The passage does, however, serve to emphasize Haverfield's tendency to draw parallels from more recent European history in order to illuminate his arguments.

Some of the views articulated in his 1910 address were repeated in a paper delivered in 1916 to the Leeds branch of the Classical Association. A number of interesting features are evident in this later paper. Whilst the *raison d'être* for the piece was '...some observations on certain aspects of the Roman Empire, to which I have recently noted frequent incidental references in our current literature' (1916, 2-3), the first part of the article criticizes the curtailing of archaeological investigations in Britain as a consequence of the First World War. Underpinning the paper is a comparison between the Roman Empire and nineteenth-century Europe, a comparison which Haverfield made on the basis on the era of (relative) peace which characterized both periods. The comparison goes no further and contains no reference to contemporary colonial empires. Again we can attribute Haverfield's commonsense approach to the question to his enlightened understanding of the nature of the Roman Empire. This was an understanding which emphasized the nature of the constituent contents before placing these in the totality of an empire.

Haverfield's 'failure' to make explicit comparative references to British imperialism, or to see any association between the Roman and British Empires, could be attributed to a lack of interest in such comparisons on his part, especially given the 'mission' he had set himself. There is some evidence that this might have been the case, particularly if we recall Haverfield's opinions on the purpose of the study of history. However, there may be more to his reticence.

Haverfield frequently alluded to the overbearing dominance of the teaching of Greek and Latin in British Universities (*Freeman forthcoming*). His criticisms were aimed at the way that the traditional approach to Classical languages had stupefied the study of ancient history and had negated the potential of archaeological evidence. But as we have seen, Haverfield wrote at a time when the Classics formed an important part of the training of prospective colonial administrators. One or two surviving anecdotes imply that Haverfield was involved - albeit with some reluctance - in the preparation of colonial administrators, and as such was expected to teach material suited to those ends. Thus in 1910, Haverfield reported that he had once had to give a course of lectures which considered '...various likenesses and unlikenesses of the Roman provinces to British India'. Despite a couple of well-documented public statements about Roman history and the British Empire, none of this material seems to have survived. There are certainly very few allusions to India in Haverfield's published work.⁸ In the course of the same anecdote, Haverfield recorded that

At the end, one of the audience came up and asked if he might put me a question. 'You seem' (he said) 'to know something about India: can you advise me which would be the best province for me to choose if I get into the Indian Civil Service'.

(Haverfield 1910, 106)

The key to understanding this passage is to appreciate that Haverfield used it to illustrate how the teaching of history, and its reception by young minds, can distort its significance. We have already seen what Haverfield thought to be the duties of lecturers and teachers. He continued:

Young students of ancient history do not, I think, always recognise this. They know - in general - little of the institutions of their own land or age - far less probably, than their predecessors 80 years ago - though they know much more of the personalities, in all sense of that word. Though they often possess a good knowledge of ancient history, a comparison between Greece and Rome and the things of their own day has little meaning for them.

(Haverfield 1910, 106)

These two episodes could be taken to suggest a possible reluctance on Haverfield's part to see his teaching directed to the training of potential colonial administrators. Placed in the context of Haverfield's repeated failure to discuss British imperialism and the Roman Empire, this reluctance may reflect a broader unhappiness with British imperialism. This would not be at variance with Haverfield's pan-European outlook.

In summarising Haverfield's commentary on imperialism, it may be suggested that his most frequently quoted (and indeed only) substantial statement on comparative imperialism was made in his 1911 *An inaugural address delivered before the first annual general meeting of the [Roman] Society*.⁹ In this Presidential address to the Roman Society, Haverfield offered the opinion that

The methods by which Rome incorporated and denationalised and assimilated more than half its wide dominions, and the success of Rome, unintended perhaps but complete, in spreading its Graeco-Roman culture over more than a third of Europe and a part of Africa, concerns in many ways our own age and Empire ... Even the forces which laid the Roman empire low concern the modern world very nearly...

(Haverfield 1911, xviii)

Hingley, taking this statement at face-value believed that this '...is the logic behind the academic study of Roman Britain as it developed in the first half of the twentieth century' (1991, 91). But we must keep a sense of proportion when considering the wider implications of Haverfield's statement. Hingley is perhaps reading too much into an innocent public declaration. In the first instance, the comment formed part of a public address to a Society which, in its advertisement for members, had called for men of learning as well as for patriots. This does not deny that Haverfield was alert to the validity of cross-empire comparisons, nor is it in dispute that he also made reference to the lessons of Roman history relative to the issues facing the British Empire. But he made as many references to the lessons of more recent European history. And in all such cases, the analogies he drew were intended to elucidate points rather than to confirm facts. And, in general, Haverfield seems to have been dismissive of such comparative attempts, as shown in his criticism of Mommsen's attempt to compare the Hohenzollern monarchy with the Roman Principate (cf Haverfield 1916, 12-13). This view is in accord with Haverfield's 1910 opinions about the function of history.

Taking Haverfield's work as a whole, it is difficult to discern any political agenda in his scholarship. Time and again the extant material reiterates a commitment to European scholarship and to the development of Romano-British studies through archaeological investigation. Consistently absent from his work is any preoccupation with imperialism, with the 'civilizing'

benefits of colonial administration, or with detailed comparative analysis.

What, then, was the undercurrent of his work? In short, it was to improve the quality of work on the archaeology of Britain in the Roman period until it reached a stage where the subject could be integrated into the university curriculum. It is not insignificant that Haverfield concluded his address to the Roman Society with the wish:

If our Society can do anything to bring about a good understanding between workers in the Universities and workers up and down the county, we shall not have formed it in vain.

(Haverfield 1911, xx)

Haverfield spoke elsewhere of the relatively slow progress of Romano-British archaeology as an academic discipline (Freeman *forthcoming*). He attributed its progress in the nineteenth century to developments on the continent. The subsequent growth of the subject in Britain he attributed to developments in religion, to the Victorian trend for forming societies, and to the impetus given by the (temporary) ‘antiquarian zeal of the early Victorian age touch[ing] all classes’ (Haverfield 1924, 82). Haverfield certainly did not believe that the universities had helped the cause: on the contrary, their emphasis on Latin had produced a pseudo-sense of superiority among historians (cf Haverfield 1911a). Coupled with this problem was another which he believed to be a peculiarly British phenomenon; the poor, unanalytical publication of archaeological material. The situation was changed by a combination of mutually supportive elements:

- (i) A more rigorous (re-)cataloguing of museum collections and the reporting of recent work, publicized in keynote publications, of which the *Victoria County History* series was but one element.
- (ii) The fostering of close relations with foreign colleagues and institutions as well as creating a familiarity with their work and methods (eg the Limeskommision).
- (iii) The promotion of a number of ‘big’ excavation projects (eg at Silchester and along Hadrian’s Wall), which were to improve standards of excavation and publication.
- (iv) The creation of a group of ‘students’ to execute this programme and to continue it in the future (Freeman *forthcoming*).

Other than his statements on these priorities, I can find little else concerning Haverfield between 1890 and his death. If anything further is to be said on Haverfield and imperialism, therefore, it must be based on the absence of evidence or on the testimony of silence.

Conclusion

The preceding paragraphs have attempted to place Haverfield’s work in the context of late Victorian intellectual society. In identifying his part in this world, the question to be addressed is the extent of Haverfield’s participation in the debate on the standing of Oxford, and in turn Oxford’s relationship with the empire, which informed Jowett’s nineteenth-century reform of the University curriculum. Haverfield certainly held strong opinions about the

overbearing influence of the teaching of Classics - a prop, as we have seen, for the teaching of administrators. This, taken with his work towards improving standards in Romano-British archaeology, suggests that Haverfield would not have been favourably disposed to the 'new Oxford' of the late-nineteenth century.

Haverfield's views on imperialism do not, then, appear to have been strong enough to impinge in any substantial fashion upon his extant work. Finally, although the occupant of one of the leading Chairs in the University, it is significant that Haverfield played very little role within University politics. The impression is almost that he was an outsider in this respect.

To what extent is the popular outlook of an age to be interpreted as predetermining a writer's work? Did this outlook constitute the message of his work, or are we merely seeing the sub-conscious coming through? Simply because a particular popular mentality existed, is it fair to 'identify' that mentality in the non-specific outpourings of historians? It is likely that Haverfield shared many of the values and prejudices of his contemporaries concerning the world order but it is difficult to say that these consciously shaped his work in the way that generalized assessments of late-Victorian/early-Edwardian scholarship might imply. I would suggest that such an approach tends to dehumanize and certainly to decontextualize individuals such as Haverfield. A better approach would be to see these individuals in the context of their era and of their peers (Freeman *forthcoming*), as closer study of the lives of William Warde Fowler (Coon 1934), RC Bosanquet (Bosanquet 1938) and even George Grundy (Grundy 1945) demonstrate. I do not deny that Haverfield used some parallels from the past to strengthen his views about the Roman past and vice-versa, but he referred more often to the *recent* European past. He did this, as did others, in order to demonstrate a continuity in European history which ultimately stretched back to the Roman Empire. I have argued elsewhere that a full appreciation of Haverfield's work is only possible if one looks at the contacts he enjoyed with Europe and European scholarship (Freeman 1991, 1993). Many of the associations Haverfield drew with Europe reflect the opinion - evident in his Roman writings - that Britain had to be seen as part of the continuum of European history.

Footnotes

- 1 This is a substantially rewritten version of the paper given at the Leicester meeting. It has been redrafted as a result of the comments raised at that time as well as those made at a subsequent meeting at the University of Bristol (*An Exemplary Empire? British and French Perspectives On Rome*: November 1994). I am grateful to Nick Cooper and Jane Webster for the invitation and to Catherine Edwards and CR Whittaker at Bristol for their criticisms. Steve Driscoll and Fiona Atken have attempted to correct the core of the discussion. Richard Hingley, whilst not in agreement with all that follows here, has again provided cause for thought and reconsideration.
- 2 The skeleton of Haverfield's career can be sketched out swiftly. To his contemporaries he was the 'father of Romano-British studies'. Elsewhere he was affectionately known as 'the Pope of Roman Britain'. Born in Shipton-on-Stour in 1860, Haverfield went up to New College Oxford in 1879, graduating in 1883. In 1884 he accepted a Sixth Form Tutorship at Lancing College. In 1892 he became Senior Student at Christ Church, Oxford. In 1907, following the death of the incumbent Henry Pelham,

Haverfield was elected to the Camden Chair of Ancient History, a position he held until his death in 1919. Haverfield's death was the occasion for widespread mourning. The recorded acclamations were a result of his seminal part in the evolution of the study of Romano-British archaeology (Macdonald 1919-1920, 245). His reputation continues largely unchallenged today, and it has recently been said that 'Haverfield effectively set the agenda for Romano-British studies for more than sixty years' (Jones 1987, 87; cf Boon 1974, 28; Frere 1987, 1; and Todd 1989, xi). Where there has been criticism, it has been with respect to his fieldwork. The only negative assessment of the man's influence was made by Wheeler, who observed that 'Haverfield's work was not merely a monument, it was a tombstone' (1961, 159). I take Wheeler to mean that with Haverfield's death a phase of Romano-British studies had reached its end, even if subsequent generations of workers did not realize it.

3 Most recently this approach underlies Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

4 See Warde Fowler in Coon 1934, 239-246 for an assessment of Pattison and Jowett

5 See Kendle 1975, xiii:

The Round Table movement was founded by a group of men who believed in the inherent superiority of British civilisation and in the Englishman's duty to carry the fruits of that civilisation to humanity. They believed this duty could be best discharged if the British commonwealth were politically united in one world state. They were not abashed by their fervent pan-Anglo-Saxonism: in fact they gave it little thought. Their beliefs were commonly held and generally accepted in the England of their day, and they rarely had need to question them. For them the British race was a definable entity with an important mission to perform; the only questions worth considering were how and when this could best be done.

See Etherington 1984, 206 for those (modern) historians associated with the 'Table'.

6 His other major work was *The Grandeur That Was Greece*. The passage cited by Hingley is

'He (the Englishman) is a citizen of an Empire now extremely self-conscious and somewhat bewildered at its own magnitude. He cannot help drawing analogies from Roman history and seeking in it 'morals' for its own guidance. The Roman Empire bears such an obvious and unique resemblance to the British that the fate of the former must be of enormous interest to the latter'.

(Stobart 1912, 3)

In the preface to the original edition, Stobart (1934, vii) was to note '...I fully admit my obligations to Gibbon and Mommsen (as well as Dill, Pelham, Bury, Haverfield, Greenidge, Warde Fowler, Cruttwell, Sellars, Walters, Rice Holmes and to Mrs. Strong)'.

7 It has to be said that the quantity of information available to help form an opinion on what Haverfield 'thought' is disappointing. To date I have been unable to track much of his 'personal' papers (Freeman *forthcoming*). For this reason his published work assumes an even greater significance.

8 I am grateful to Richard Hingley for bringing to my attention Haverfield's views about the fort at Ambleside, and the parallel he drew for it with north-west India (Haverfield and Collingwood 1914). I would add that this was a public address to a (semi-) lay audience and was made before Collingwood proceeded to describe the progress of the recent excavations there. Furthermore, this example is an exception. In other situations where Haverfield could have made comparisons, he failed to do so (eg Haverfield 1920). In editing Henry Pelham's *Essays* (1911) Haverfield did work up in more detail some observations Pelham had made about India (eg 201-202; 323-324).

9 For a contrary reading of the same address, see Hingley, this volume.

References

- Alcock, SE 1989 'Archaeology and Imperialism: Roman Expansion and the Greek City', *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, 2, 87-135.
- Boon, GC 1974 *Silchester. The Roman Town of Calleva*. London.
- Bosanquet, E 1938 *Robert Carr Bosanquet. Letters and Light Verse*. Gloucester.
- Brunt, PA 1964-1965 'Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism', *Comparative Studies In Society And History*, 7, 267-288.
- Cain, PJ and Hopkins, AG 1993 *British Imperialism. Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*. London.
- Coon, RH, 1934 *William Warde Fowler: An Oxford Humanist*. Oxford.
- Etherington, N 1984 *Theories of Imperialism: War, Conquest and Capitalism*. London.
- Freeman, PWM 1991 'The Study of the Roman Period in Britain: A Comment on Hingley', *Scottish Archaeological Review*, 8, 102-104.
- Freeman, PWM 1993 'Romanisation' and Roman Material Culture. Review of M. Millett's *The Romanisation Of Roman Britain. An Essay In Archaeological Interpretation*. Cambridge 1990', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 6, 438-445.
- Freeman, PWM (forthcoming) Haverfield, Collingwood, and Richmond.
- Frere, SS 1987 *Britannia: A History of Roman Britain* (3rd edit.). London.
- Gooch, GP 1952 *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (2nd edit.). London.
- Grundy, GB 1945 *Fifty-Five Years at Oxford. An Unconventional Autobiography*. London.
- Harris, WV 1979 *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*. Oxford.
- Haverfield, F 1905-1906 'The Romanization of Roman Britain', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1905-1906, 185-217.
- Haverfield, F 1910 'Ancient Imperialism: Introduction: Roman Empire', *Classical Review*, 24, 105-107.
- Haverfield, F 1911 'An Inaugural Address Delivered Before the First Annual General Meeting of the Society 11th May 1911', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 1, xi-xx.
- Haverfield, F 1911a 'Roman London', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 1, 141-172.
- Haverfield, F 1916 'Some Roman Conceptions of Empire'. *Occasional Publication of the Classical Association No. 4*. Cambridge.
- Haverfield, F 1920 'The Provisioning of Roman Forts', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* (NS), 20, 127-142.
- Haverfield, F 1924 *The Roman Occupation of Britain (The Six Ford Lectures)*, (revised by G. Macdonald). Oxford.
- Haverfield, F. and Collingwood, RG 1914 'Report on the Exploration of the Roman Fort at Ambleside 1913'. *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* (NS), 14, 433-465.
- Hingley, R 1991 'Past, Present and Future - The Study of the Roman Period in Britain', *Scottish Archaeological Review*, 8, 90-101.
- Jenkyns, R 1980 *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*. Oxford.
- Jones, RFJ 1987 'The Archaeologists of Roman Britain', *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology*, 24, 85-97.
- Kendle, JE 1975 *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union*. Toronto.
- Macdonald, G 1919-1920 'F. Haverfield 1860-1919', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 9, 475-491.
- Majeed, J 1994 'Comparativism and allusions to Rome in British Imperial attitudes to India', paper presented at conference *An exemplary Empire? British and French perspectives on Rome*, University of Bristol, November 1994.
- Pelham, HF, 1911 *Essays By Henry Francis Pelham* (Haverfield, F (ed)). Oxford.
- Stephens, WR 1895 *The Life and Letters of E.A. Freeman*. London.
- Stevenson, G 1922 'Some Reflections on the Teaching of Roman History', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 12, 192-206.
- Stobart, J 1934 *The Grandeur That Was Rome*. London.
- Symonds, R 1986 *Oxford and Empire*. London.
- Todd, M 1989 *Research on Roman Britain 1960-80*. London.
- Turner, FM 1981 *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. Yale.
- Turner, FM 1989 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain?', in Clarke, GW (ed) *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenistic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, 61-82. Cambridge.
- Warde Fowler, W 1920 *Roman Essays and Interpretations*. Oxford.
- Wheeler, REM 1961 'Review of the Journal of Roman Studies lx.1960. Jubilee Volume', *Antiquity*, 35, 157-159.

which the British economist J. A. Hobson had published in 1902 in London and New York. Explaining the connections between imperialism and its basic economical peculiarities, Lenin stated the famous definition of imperialism as "concentration of the financial capital and then of the monopolies"2. "A specific stage of the development of world capitalist economy"3, will say then Paul M. Sweezy.4 Following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the legacy of the Roman Empire is followed by two new imperial formations: while "the Greek and Christian Roman Empire revives in the form of a Turkish and Muslim Empire"15, thus generating "the last hypostasis of Rome"16, Moscow becomes the "third Rome", because, as written by Benedict XVI, "it founds a self-Patriarchy on the. Discussions of the Roman Empire and of Roman imperialism tend to work at three, often interrelated, levels; (i) On an assumption of what the Roman Empire was/is. Dialogue occurs within a framework of what the Roman Empire was/is in the eye of the beholder, and it is striking how few writers have defined what they understand the Roman Empire to be.5 In an article entitled Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism, Peter Brunt (1964-5) helped to perpetuate the impression that "modern"6 historians of Rome often tended to slip into this form of analysis, although he concluded that such comparisons between the two empires "were in fact always rather forced; there were more points of contrast than of likeness"7 (1964-5, 267). "The Roman Empire [...] was the post-Roman Republic period of the ancient Roman civilization, characterized by government headed by emperors and large territorial holdings around the Mediterranean Sea in Europe, Africa and Asia.8 Global empires such as those of the British, Dutch and Portuguese Monarchies came thousands of years after the collapse of the Roman Empire, representing a kind of 'second wave' of Imperialism - Colonial Globalism. Colonisers and Natives.9 Imperialists are subjects of an empire who subscribe to imperialism as a doctrine and the moral supremacy it implies. Empires are defined by a ruling ideology, a defining identity that separates its subjects from the outside 'savages' that it needs to 'civilise' or the violent enemies it needs to 'heroically defeat'.