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Caratacus, The Remembered Warrior: The Legacies of Caratcaus in Roman Histories and the British Victorian Era

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Introduction

Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Napoleon, and George Washington. These are known individuals, introduced to many of us in our elementary classrooms and social studies textbooks. They are faces we recognize whose stories that we can regurgitate, if not in entirely, at least partly. At the least, we can answer where they are from and where or when they lived. These individuals are vehicles by which we first learned certain histories, and they become a part of common knowledge and culture. Their faces are on the statues downtown, coins, and bills, and their names are on street signs, high schools, and parks. When deconstructed, the idea of historical figures is a strange one- a very few select individuals, humans not gods, whose names are seemingly permanently etched into a canonical human history. No longer individuals, they become "figures", historical figures. Their new status as "figures" rather than men, women, or person marks transformation that occurs once an individual is regarded as prominent in a historical narrative.

There have been many philosophical debates discussing the concept of a historical figure. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher of the early 19th century, is remembered most for his philosophy of history; he proposed that history is a story of progress, rather than one of repetition as the saying "history repeats itself" endorses. Within his complex argument, Hegel argues that the "world-historical individual", synonymous to the historical figure, is an instrument of a consistent human progress throughout time. The historical figure is unconscious of their pivotal role in history; Hegel states that "without clearly being aware of it, they are sacrificed" for the greater

humanity.[1] Historian Thomas Carlyle's work, published later in 1841, strongly pushed back against the notion of a passive historical figure. Famously, Carlyle wrote that "the history of the world is but a biography of men".[2] He sees the historical figure as a great individual, cognizant of their potential effect, whose great deeds create history. He believes that including historical figures in the telling of history is remarkably important given their integral role in it. This central role of historical figures in history, supported by both Hegel and Carlyle though argued differently, is rejected by Herbert Spencer just decades later in 1884. Spencer takes offense to the intense focus on historical figures in traditional history claiming that "the thing it really concerns us to know is the natural history of society". He applauds the novel historians of his time who practiced the emerging trend of focusing "on the welfare of nations rather than of rulers". [3] The influence of Spencer's philosophy can be seen in the discipline of history today as social and cultural history thrive.

The historical figure has remained powerful despite some pushback to framing only historical figures as agents in historical narratives. An individual's transformation into a historical figure allows them to be used as a symbol for something greater than just their identity. Take George Washington, for example. George Washington was a military general turned politician, remembered primarily as the first president of the United States. As the first president, George Washington has become a symbol of the United States as a whole and other tradition values of the country associated with its founding: freedom,

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[1] Robert C. Tucker, "The Cunning of Reason in Hegel and Marx," *The Review of Politics* 18, no. 3 (1956): 269–95., [270].

[2] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (Harvard University Press, 1841), [47].

[3] Herbert Spencer, *What Knowledge Is of Most Worth* (J.B. Alden, 1884), [53].

democracy, revolution, bravery. After his transformation and establishment as a historical figure, the historical individual is somewhat secondary to historical figure, an idealized and immortalized icon. The historical figure's power shows when used to propagate the ideologies or meaning that it has come to stand for. Hundreds of statues of George Washington decorate the U.S., and thousands of parks, plazas, streets, and schools bear his name. His image and his name have become a symbol of the United States and an American. He is no longer a husband, a friend, or even a leader. As a historical figure, he becomes an idea.

As demonstrated with George Washington, individuals-turned-symbols can have great communicative potential. Most notably, historical figures are utilized in the political and educational sphere. A recent example of the political comes to mind from the 2020 U.S. Presidential Campaign; when referencing his political and policy successes, former U.S. President Donald Trump often invoked Abraham Lincoln, claiming that he was better than or only upstaged by Lincoln. Typically, Lincoln is remembered as one of the great presidents in United States' history, and his image and name have come to stand for presidential success, honesty ("Honest Abe"), and advocacy of civil rights. No matter the historical accuracy or nuanced nature of these associations, Lincoln is a useful tool for Trump when attempting to create an image for himself as a capable and honorable leader.

Historical figures also have tremendous use in education. Historical figures are used as rivets in the historical timeline; they are an easy way to center curriculum for students and give them a starting point when learning about a new era or society. Additionally, historical figures are often offered as aspirational role models for children;

a child to be the characteristics that a historical figure has come to represent, such as Washington's leadership or Lincoln's honesty. The introduction of a nineteenth century children's history reader from England sums up this idea well: "As children are more interested in personal actions than in great national movements, much of the book is taken up with personal history- with tales of noble and heroic deeds, with stories of human fortitude and suffering, and with noteworthy incidents in the lives of famous men."[4]

Caratacus, the subject of this study, is another example of historical figure, an historical individual transformed. A British king of the Silures tribe in Britannia, Caratacus was a leader in the resistance against the Roman campaigns in Britannia in the first century AD. He is mentioned in two Roman histories, one by Tacitus and the other by Cassius Dio, both written decades after the events of his life. In these sources, Caratacus is depicted as a strong and courageous leader who is defeated by the Romans and taken back to Rome as a captive where he is admired for his bravery, pardoned, and released. Written years after Caratacus' capture, Tacitus and Cassius Dio's work is based on a generalized story of Caratacus. Also, the practice of history writing in Rome involved a certain amount of fictional storytelling to create an entertaining, almost poetic, piece of writing. These ancient sources, though the closest textual evidence to a primary resource available, already begin Caratacus' transformation into the historical figure.

The historical figure Caratacus finds itself repurposed to fit other contexts and serve other populations as time continues. Primarily, the British Empire reclaims

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[4] Thomas J. Livesey, *English History Readers: Stories from English History*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1881), https://www.google.com/books/edition/English_The_Granville_history_readers/PYcDAAAAQA AJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=raleigh+history+readers&pg=PA65&printsec=frontcover, [vi].

Caratacus as a symbol of innate strength and bravery of the British to incite national pride. The retelling of his story from Roman histories makes appearances in educational materials for students in Britain as a primary historical figure of the ancient Britons. The quantity at which this is done in this subsect of literature calls for an investigation.

This study will explore the origins of the historical figure of Caratacus and analyze its reception in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. My work will begin by providing an overview of Caratacus' context in the first century in Britannia. Then, looking at the reception of Caratacus, I will start chronologically by analyzing the portrayal of Caratacus in the ancient sources of Tacitus and Cassius Dio. As the first textual evidence of Caratacus, this will provide insights into Caratacus' history and the origins of Caratacus' transformation into an icon of Roman and British history. My work will then continue by analyzing receptions of Caratacus in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British school readers. I will examine how Caratacus was portrayed to the younger readers of the British Empire and will offer a hypothesis as to why Caratacus was an attractive historical figure to spotlight for the given audience

Chapter 1. Ancient Caratacus

An Overview of the History of Caratacus

The ancient sources containing information about the Roman campaigns in Britannia in the 1st century, the time of Caratacus, are limited. By closely reading Roman histories, a few other textual sources, and archeology, such as coins, historians have been able to create a plausible historical timeline. Though the work of ancient historians always involves some degree of guesswork, it is vital to stay rooted in textual evidence.

The first Roman campaign of Britannia occurred under the leadership of Julius Caesar in 54 BCE. Beginning in 58 BCE, Caesar set out on extensive military conquests of Gaul. The conquests were justified by the perpetual threat of the North, as well as Caesar's motivations of prestige, wealth, and benefit of obtaining a loyal personal army.[5] The unconquered North was wild, threatening, and barbaric in the Roman imagination; expansion was seen as a method of reinforcing the borders of the growing Roman world from own known threatening regions. Caesar' expeditions led him to explore both Germania and Britannia. His explorations and conquests brought Caesar fame and respect that would aid him in his victory in the Roman Civil Wars of the 40s. His invasion of Britannia, in particular, was an achievement of great status because of its geography. The early Greeks believed that the world was surrounded by a large river called Okeanos, or Ocean. Though the understanding of the world's geography had improved by Caesar's time, Britannia's geography as an island in the middle of the

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[5] J.B. Rives, "Introduction," in *Agricola and Germania* (Penguin Classics, 2009).

Ocean still brought with it mythical associations. Because of this, Caesar could claim that by conquering Britannia, he had reached and conquered lands at the end of the Earth.

Caesar's conquests in Britannia did not result in Roman rule, though they left an influence, particularly in the southeastern region of the island. Some tribes established alliances with Rome during Caesar's conquests that would influence the future events of Roman campaigns there. The Roman emperors to come after Caesar focused little on conquering or ruling Britannia. There is evidence that Augustus, Caesar's successor, understanding the beneficial prestige that a campaign in Britannia would provide, might have considered a renewed invasion; although, he seems to have only dealt with Britannia through diplomatic means. [6] His expansion efforts were directed more towards Roman developments in Germania. Succeeding Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula both focused very little on expansion into Britannia.

In contrast, the reign of Claudius (41-54 CE) brought a new era of Roman campaigns to Britannia. Claudius, similar to Caesar and Augustus, needed military accomplishments to strengthen his public image as a successful and capable leader. Taking inspiration from his predecessors, Claudius turned to Britannia. Only two years after his accession, the invasion, led by governor Aulus Plautius, began. Four legions were employed, and the emperor himself joined for the first two weeks on the invasion. The first entry occurred at Camulodunum, the main town of southeastern Britannia. The area was weakened by the recent death of Cynobellinus (or Cunobelinus). Cynobellinus was a primary leader the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni tribes located in eastern Britannia

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[6] Ibid.

north of the Thames. This initial conquest of Camulodunum earned Claudius the nickname Britannicus.

After taking Camulodunum, it seems the expansion of Roman control in this region of Britannia was quick. By A. Plautius' retirement of his governorship in 47 CE, the large portion of southern and eastern Britannia was under Roman control. Many veteran colonies were settled, and Rome established additional alliances with local leaders. Efforts were made to establish alliances with the Briton tribes outside of the southern and eastern regions in order to protect the Roman territory from anti-Roman rebels. Through these alliances, Briton leaders were granted kingship, backed by the Roman Senate, over their land and tribe(s). Plautius succeeded in obtaining this border control in the north with Queen Cartimandua of Brigatia, present-day Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is assumed that the creation of similar relationships with leaders in the West was attempted, yet the unfamiliar mountainous terrain and strong anti-Roman sentiments in that area were probable obstacles.

Caratacus was one of the three sons of Cynobellinus, the late leader of many Briton tribes in southeastern Britannia, and a leader of the anti-Roman movement. After Cynobellinus death around 40 CE, the region under his reign broke under the tensions between pro-Roman and anti-Roman communities. Togodumnus, the eldest son of Cynobellinus, took his father's throne while Caratacus invaded land south of the Thames. Documented by Cassius Dio, both Caratacas and Togodumnus were involved in the resistance against Claudius and Plautius' invasion in 43 CE, giving them both a

widespread reputation for being passionately anti-Roman.[7] Caratacus' imaginably

charismatic and courageous character and anti-Roman stance made it easy for him to

make allies of other anti-Roman tribes in the south and in the west, present-day Wales. In

a short span of time, he acquired a kingdom and there is archaeological evidence of his

issuing of coins.[8].

During the governorship of Plautius after his defeat in 43 CE, Caratacus engaged

in the silent recruitment of tribes to join the rebellion movement against the Roman

occupation. Plautius' military strategy and placement of the Roman legions supports that

he was very much aware of the threat that Caratacus' and his developing rebellion posed,

yet the occupation of already invaded areas was not strong enough to hold its own

without enforcement of Roman troops.

The transition of governship between Plautius and Publius Ostorius Scapula in 47

CE enabled Caratacus to come out of the shadows. When Scapula first took power,

Tacitus writes that Caratacus was wreaking havoc and causing disturbances.[9] Though

there is no evidence to determine what the havoc was, historians believe that this could be

referring to the anti-Roman movement led by Caratacus, in particular, his developing

alliances with the tribes of the south, the Dobunni. Scapula quickly sent cohorts to break

up the rebellions, but the threat of Caratacus' force became an ever-increasing worry.

Scapula struggled with the same conflict that plagued Plautius- how to squash the

[7] Lucius Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Clay (Harvard University Press, 1914), [60.33].

[8] Graham Webster, *Rome against Caratacus: The Roman Campaigns in Britain, AD 48-58.*, (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1982), [15].

[9] Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. T.J. Woodman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), [12.31].

rebellion and protect the occupied land with a limited amount of military power. Tacitus includes an interesting remark that Scapula was "fixed as he was in his design not to engineer new achievements without consolidating the earlier".[10] Despite the opportunities to earn prestige that his new governorship provided, he was determined to squash Caratacus' rebellion before moving further with any other ambitions. He and his Roman counterparts devised a plan that can be broken up into four important factors that ultimately defeated Caratacus and his rebellion.

The first of these factors was a disarming of Britons in areas of which rebellion was strongest: "our side of the Trisantona (Trent) and Sabrina (Severn)" rivers.[11] A Victorian scholar, Dr. H. Bradley, was the first to decipher this possible meaning from the unclear description in what is preserved of *The Annals*. Under Roman rule, only soldiers or officers were allowed to carry arms. Though, it can be assumed that many Britons, untrustworthy of the Romans, kept arms hidden in case needed for protection. Knowing this, Scapula instructed his soldiers to march into suspected local towns and demanded that concealed arms be surrendered. It is not likely that Scapula cared very much about the obedience of the Britons to this law. Yet, this demand revealed anti-Roman individuals or families who were unwilling to surrender their arms. Those who defied or protested Roman soldiers would be punished publically. It is possible that an entire town would have been punished if enough individuals refused to obey Roman orders. This disarming strategy provided an effective method of weeding out any

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[10] Tacitus, *The Annals*, [12.32].
[11] Ibid., [12.31].

individuals or communities that were in support of the rebellion and scare those who were willing allies of the rebellion into submission.

The second, more preparatory, factor in Scapula's plan was an attack on the people of the "Decangi", or Deceangli, located in present-day Flintshire. Tacitus writes that the Deceangli avoided participating in open battle and defended themselves using guerilla-like tactics.[12] A possible reason for this attack was to continue instill fright in the tribes of the area, quelling any growing rebellion that was stirring. Another possibly reason, proposed by Graham Webster, is a geographic reconnaissance mission.[13] The southwestern region of Britannia was largely unknown to the Romans at the time. Webster also suggests that this was an attempt to silence the rebellious groups in Brigantia who were located in an area (present-day Yorkshire and Lancashire) that could provide aid to Caratacus in the event of a battle. A result of Scapula's attack was the successful deconstruction of rebellion efforts from many of the Brigantes. Their attack weeded out leaders of the rebellion in that area, who were then captured and killed. The killing of these leaders severed the communication ties between anti-Roman groups of this northern region and Caratacus' and his greater movement. The action of the Brigantes rebellion leaders would have typically resulted in a more generalized punishment of the tribe, yet due to Scapula's narrow focus to quelling rebellion and his good relations with Queen Cartimandua whom ruled over the tribe.

The third factor of Scapula's plan provides a solution for the lack of Roman troops to both defend occupied land and fight the rebellion. It was common practice for

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[12] Ibid., [12.32].

[13] Webster, *Rome against Caratacus*, [22].

older soldiers to be removed from the legion before a significant campaign or battle. These newly retired soldiers, along with other veterans living in veteran colonies around Britannia, were called to create a colony in Camulodunum to protect the town. Camulodunum was of particular worry because of its high level of anti-Roman sentiment, inspired by its previous ruler Togodumnus, Caratacus' brother. The veterans were to keep watch over the locals and insight an impression of strict control. It is hard to imagine that this solution would have entirely solved Scapula's problem. Scapula needed at least half of his troops in Britannia for his campaign against Caratacus. Even with Camulodunum under the watch of veterans, the removal of that many troops would have left large areas of Britannia unoccupied. There is a proposed theory that client kingdoms, ally kingdoms in Britannia established by Caligula during his reign, could have provided the necessary support to reinforce Roman rule during the absence of British soldiers. [14]

All of these factors lay the groundwork for the final piece of Scapula's plan- the battle against the Silures. Caratacus' canvasing across Britannia for supporters of the anti-Roman movement came to an end in the land of the Silures people, a tribe located on the north shore of the Bristol Channel, in 50 CE. Tacitus describes the Silures as courageous people; "neither fright nor clemency could change the race of the Silures".[15] Caratacus redirected the battle to the land of the Ordovices, a tribe located in now northern-Wales. This tribe also supported Caratacus and aided him in his final battle. Despite the increase in numbers that the Ordovices tribe added, it was little competition to the estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Roman troops.[16] The familiar rough terrain of the area

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[14] Webster, *Rome Against Caratacus*, [24-25].
[15] Tacitus, *The Annals*, [12.32].
[16] Webster, *Rome against Caratacus*, [30].

gave Caratacus' men some advantage, though trained Roman engineers could navigate sufficiently. It seems the Romans overpowered the Britons with military organization and superior military equipment.

It is unlikely that Caratacus was confident this battle would be a success. Up against the Romans, the Britons had very little chance of dominating. The battle did diminish some of Scapula's numbers and demonstrated a strong commitment to defiance on the side of the Britons. Post-battle, Caratacus set out on a two-part plan. First, many of his supporters continued to follow Roman troops as they returned to central and southern Britannia. They implemented guerilla-like warfare tactics to surprise Roman troops with unexpected and violent attacks. The second part was diplomatic. Caratacus attempted to get the support of Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes, a proud ally of the Romans. Many of her subjects were supporters of Caratacus, and she may have been willing to support Caratacus to keep her subject happy with her. This part of Caratacas' plan failed, and Cartimandua turned him in to the Roman authorities. At the time, she had a strong hold on her region with no dire need to please her subjects to secure her authority. Her power was strongly linked to Roman power; in choosing to act as a Roman ally and turn in Caratacus, she was better securing her own position.

Scapula earned great honors for his defeat of Caratacus and Claudius welcomed Caratacus' capture as a moment for boasting. A triumph parade was organized on Caratacus' arrival. The parade included other Briton captives, Caratacus and his family, and other spoils from war. Tacitus attributes a speech pleading for mercy from Claudius in front of the emperor and the Senate. Though it is safe to assume that the speech itself was of Tacitus' creation, it is plausible that Caratacus did give a speech like it. This

speech would have added to the public spectacle, promoting Claudius' image as a merciful and fair ruler. According to Roman histories, Caratacus and his family were freed and allowed to continue living their life in Rome. The capture of Caratacus was celebrated as the end of the conquests in Britannia, but the Briton's resistance to Roman rule was far from over.

Tacitus' *The Annals*

Tacitus was born in either 56 or 57 CE and may have lived past the reign of the emperor Trajan which ended in 117 CE. He was a prolific government official, serving as a senator, consul, and governor of Anatolia (Asia) during his time. To modern historians, he is best known as a historian and writer of many significant ancient sources. His first historical works, published close to one another in 98 CE, are the *Agricola* and *Germania*, both shorter pieces. *Agricola* is a bibliography of sorts of Tacitus' respected father-in-law but includes descriptions of Britain during the Roman conquest. Germania's purpose is not completely understood but provides a persuasive argument for the importance of Roman expansions. Then, Tacitus' primary historical works were published, *The Histories* and *The Annals* respectively. The Histories covers 68-96 CE. Then, Tacitus returns to earlier history with The Annals that cover 14-68 CE. Though parts of The Annals have not survived, the preserved work is an invaluable source for this significant period in Roman history.

The Annals is the most dependable source for events that occurred in the Roman empire within this period. Tacitus begins his account at the end of Augustus' rule and documents the early years of the Principate, established by Augustus. The successors of Augustus' had a tall task at hand- to further establish the new structure of Roman

government and continue providing the peace and prosperity that Augustus had famously brought to the empire. This decisive moment saw the flourishing of the empire under the guidance of talented and curious emperors. Tacitus' approach to history follows similar norms of previously written Roman histories. Skillful historical writing at the time was considered an art just as much as a science. Though historical "fact" was remarkably important in Tactitus' construction, he also relied on a certain element of artistic license to create entertaining stories that seem to take inspiration from the epic poems. They were patriotic and moralistic, with a role not just to educate the reader on history, but also psychology, geography, and philosophy.[17] With this in mind, Tacitus' creativity and lessons of non-historical concepts must be understood to analyze the work as a whole.

In Tacitus' *The Annals*, Caratacus is featured as a primary figure. It is one of the only textual sources that preserves the story of Caratacus. Tacitus describes Caratacus as the leader or king of the Silures, a tribe located on the north shore of the Bristol Channel that became the main enemy of the Scapula and the Romans.[18] His account of Caratacus begins at Caratacus' last battle and follows his capture and return to Rome where he is presented in front of the emperor at the time, Claudius, in 50 CE. Interestingly, Tacitus portrays Caratacus in a positive light, complimenting him for his military prowess, leadership skills, and strong character.

In Tacitus' telling of the final battle between Caratacus and Scapula's men, Tacitus describes Caratacus' battle strategy. The battle is by no means depicted as an easy win for the Romans. Caratacus is depicted as a pillar of military strength; Tacitus writes

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[17] Michael Grant, "Introduction," in *The Annals of Imperial Rome* (Penguin Classics, 1956).
[18] Webster, *Rome against Caratacus*, [17].

that the Silurian soldiers "relied on the strength of Caratacus, who had been elevated by many equivocal and many successful encounters so that he towered over the other commanders of the Britons". Tacitus introduces Caratacus as a force to be reckoned with without mentioning his identity as a "barbaric" Briton or foreshadowing his loss. The reader is left with the image of a formidable and successful leader. The positive portrayal of Caratacus continues as Tacitus describes his battle strategies. Caratacus manipulated the battle to take place in the territory of the Ordovicae, another local anti-Roman tribe. The territory is mountainous, bounded by mountains, rocks, and a stream, and "everything would be unfavorable to us and for the better to his own men". [19] Though Caratacus' battle strategy did not result in his victory, Tacitus applauds him for his military genius and ability to create an advantage.

Tacitus' history of that last battle also emphasizes Caratacus' impressive leadership and ability to rally his soldiers. Tacitus mentions the detail of the leaders of the Briton soldiers encouraging their soldiers and reminding them of what they are fighting for and what their rewards will be. He includes more specific details of Caratacus' encouragement, crying out that "this the battle which would be the start either of the recovery of their freedom or of eternal slavery". Caratacus continues by invoking their ancestors that had defended themselves from Caesar years before. These details of Caratacus' leadership bolster the image of a strong and clever enemy. Tacitus also includes the effect of Caratacus and the other leaders' successful encouragement writing that "their eagerness stunned the Roman leader". [20] This demonstrates an almost curious

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[19] Tacitus, *The Annals*, [12.32-33].
[20] Ibid., [12.34-35].

idolization of Caratacus and his ability to motivate his soldiers. This curiosity is intensified when compared to Tacitus' description of the Roman leader "terrified by the stream barrier, the additional rampart, the looming ridges" and his courageous and boisterous army. The opposition is drastic, painting the Caratacus in a positive light and the Roman leader, Scapula, in a rather negative one. Though Tacitus is known as pro-Roman expansion, after reading this sequence the reader is left impressed by Caratacus and his army.

As Tacitus' account of Caratacus continues, the Romans win the battle and capture Caratacus, and his wife, daughter, and his brothers. The captured are brought to Rome to be presented to Claudius, the Roman emperor at the time. Here, Tacitus includes a fictional speech of Caratacus asking the emperor to release him and his family after being paraded through the city as a spoil of war. In this setting, Caratacus is positioned opposite the rest of his handcuffed companions; where they are overcome with dread, he seeks pity "with neither abject look nor language".[21] Tacitus adorns him with a humble and noble character even when in an unfavorable position. Caratacus' fictional speech to Claudius also conveys a similar tone. He offers to be an "eternal example of your clemency" arguing that to kill him would do the emperor no benefits, but to save him would bring the emperor fame and stand as a testament to the emperor's mercy. Caratacus' plea reveals his cleverness, but again a humble nature, willing to surrender for his family's life.

Along with his portrayal of Caratacus' character as a warrior and a man, this section of *The Annals* provides evidence for his place in public knowledge. His success in

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[21] Ibid., [12.36].

defending Brittania for almost nine years and his eventual and dramatic defeat at the feet of the emperor was enough to make him a nameable figure in Tacitus' account. Tacitus further justifies his inclusion of Caratacus when writing that "his fame carried beyond the island [Brittania], spread through the neighboring provinces, and was celebrated even across Italy, and people craved to see who it was who for so many years had spurned our might".[22] Tacitus paints Caratacus as a contemporary celebrity of the Mediterranean world and establishes him as an important historical figure. Because of Caratacus' fame, "the fathers said many magnificent things about the capture of Caratacus" and declared it as brilliant as other moments of powerful opposition leaders surrendering to Roman authority in Roman history.[23] In Tacitus' mind, Caratacus had achieved a level of greatness and historical significance to be compared to other famous surrenders.

It must be asked why Tacitus would choose to portray Caratacus in such a positive light given that he was the enemy of the Roman empire. Given that Tacitus wrote *The Annals* to provide a factual history of a portion of the Roman empire, we can suppose that Tacitus was of the understanding that Caratacus was indeed a man of great might and character and therefore should be described that way. Another answer to this is the possible desire of Tacitus to present the defeat and capture of Caratacus as a most triumphant and impressive feat. By portraying Caratacus with the military prowess and strong leadership that he does, Tacitus makes Scapula's defeat a more notable accomplishment. The great pride felt by "the fathers", the senators, for the capture of Caratacus supports the idea that the greater the captured, the greater the accomplishment.

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[22] Ibid., [12.36].
[23] Ibid., [12.36].

There are moments where Tacitus' balances out the compliments for Caratacus with more negative descriptions, calling the Britons "barbarians" and noting their lack of proper armor.[24] Though, this very well could be insignificant given that the term "barbarian" did not have a strictly demeaning connotation, but an identifier.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History*

Cassius Dio (c.150-253) was a Roman politician and historian, best known for his 80-volume *Roman History* that provides an overview of Roman history from Rome's foundations until 229 CE, written originally in Greek. His work is the most detailed account of the reign of Augustus and the Principate until 229 CE when Dio himself retired from Roman politics.[25] Much of the work is lost or only in fragments, yet books thirty to sixty remain in good form. Scholars often rely on *Roman History* because his history is the only one that follows Rome's political institutions for more than a thousand years. Despite modern historians' reliance on his work, Dio is most commonly perceived as a mediocre historian. It is known that Dio based his work on histories written before his time, those of Fabius Rusticus, Cluvius Rufus, and Pliny the Elder.[26] But, modern scholars such as Carsten Hjort Lange argue that if Dio is considered a politician primarily, rather than a historian, one comes away with a different impression. Weaved throughout Dio's historical narrative is a study of the idealized monarchial government.[27]

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[24] Ibid., [12.35].

[25] Carsten Hjort Lange and Jesper Majbom Madsen, "Between Politics and History," in *Cassius Dio: Greek Intellectual and Roman Politician* (Leiden; Brill, 2016), [1].

[26] J. G. F. Hind, "A. Plautius' Campaign in Britain: An Alternative Reading of the Narrative in Cassius Dio (60.19.5-21.2)," *Britannia* 38 (2007): 93–106. [93].

[27] Lange and Madsen, "Between Politics and History", [2].

When using *Roman History* as an ancient source, it is important to take note of Cassius

Dio's political identity and the effect that this might have on his historical narrative.

Caratacus is first mentioned in *Roman History* as Cassius Dio tells of A. Plautius'

advance past Gaul to continue their campaign against Brittania. Dio explains that the

Romans arrived unexpectedly, and the unprepared Britons scrambled to assemble, hiding

in the swamps and forests near the Romans' landing points and scaring them away, a

successful method during the British campaigns of Julius Caesar. Dio admits to Plautius

having some difficulty finding them in their hiding places, yet eventually does and

defeats them. He writes that "he [Plautius] first defeated Caratacus and then

Togodumnus, the sons of Cynobellinus, who was dead".[28] The account of Plautius'

expedition across Britannia continues as they have two large battles by two different

rivers, one nameless and the other the Thames. Citing Togodumnus' death as a reason for

the renewed fervor in the Britons, Dio writes of Plautius needing to call the emperor

Claudius himself as instructed if he faced strong resistance.

Reading this account as if it is written in chronological order, as many scholars

did until recently, poses problems. There is the question of how the two river battles

would have been able to take place after the death of two of the primary leaders of the

resistance and kings of the fighting tribes, Caratacus and Togodumnus. Also, the renewed

fervor of the Britons in honor of Togodumnus' death seems out of place given that his

death occurred much earlier before the two battles. In 2007, scholar J.G.F. Hind proposed

that the mentioning of the death of the two king brothers at the beginning of this sequence

in Dio's history was a foreshadowing, "a headline sketch of the geographical and political

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[28] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, [60.20].

situation".[29] Hind explains that this headline sketch technique was common among

ancient historians, even Dio himself in his explanation of the Boudica rebellions.[30] When

reading the introduction of the two brother kings as Hind suggests, the two river battles

can be interpreted as separate instances associated with one of the kings. This reading

also solves the confusion that the death of Togodumnus and its effect on the Britons side-

by-side caused in the timeline.

Though Dio's initial reference to Caratacus does not provide anything in terms of

his character or significance as a historical figure, Dio provides Caratacus' family

connections that are not included in any other source. His father, Cynobellinus, or

Cunobelinus in Greek sources, is a known king of southeastern Brittannia from 10-42

CE. There is archeological evidence of his rule and textual evidence in Suetonius

mentioning him as the "king of the Britons" in his biography of the emperor Caligula.[31]

Caractacus' brother, Togodumnus, is also a subject of some historical discussion. Hind's

article explores the possibility of Togodumnus not dying at the end of the battle at the

Thames, but only him being lost or injured. Translation errors could explain the

discrepancy.[32] Hint hypothesis that if Togodumnus did indeed survive these initial battles

of 43 CE, there is a possibility that he is the same person as Cogidumnus, a compliant

royal figure of Brittania mentioned in Tacitus' *Agricola*.[33] Hind presents the similarity in

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[29] Hind, "A. Plautius' Campaign in Britain", [95].

[30] Ibid., [95].

[31] "Cunobelinus | British Ruler," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cunobelinus.

[32] Hind, "A. Plautius' Campaign in Britain", [97].

[33] Ibid., [99].

name, as well as some additional textual and archaeological analysis to argue that this very well might be the case.

Dio's *Roman History* includes one other direct reference to Caratacus. Though volume sixty-one only exists in the form of an epitome, a fragment mentions Caratacus:

> "Caratacus, a barbarian chieftain who was captured and brought to Rome and later pardoned by Claudius, wandered about the city after his liberation; and after beholding its splendour and its magnitude he exclaimed: "And can you, then, who have got such possessions and so many of them, covet our poor tents?"[34]

Here, Dio emphasizes Caratacus' identity as an outsider and an 'other', labeling him as a barbarian and creating a juxtaposition between him and the splendor and magnitude of Rome. Caratacus provides a perfect vehicle to compliment Rome in comparison to its surrounding lands. The exclamation of Caratacus works similarly, complimenting Rome for its possessions and luxury. It also includes an interesting perspective on Roman expansion as being unnecessary. Whether this is only a fabricated opinion of Caratacus' or an inclusion of Cassius Dio's political commentary is unknown, but worthy of consideration.

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[34] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, [61.33].

Chapter 2. Caratacus and the British Empire

The next half of this study will explore how Caratacus is remembered in the imagination of the British, often drawing from the two Roman accounts of Caratacus. Despite both Tacitus and Cassius Dio being Roman, their accounts present an admirable image of Caratacus as a strong and proud warrior of the Britons. The British of the Victorian and Edwardian Era continue to portray Caratacus similarly, as a warrior of the ancient Britons. The nineteenth century saw the height of the British Empire and British imperialism, making the promotion of a strong national identity of utmost importance. In need of historical figures to propagate national identity and pride, Caratacus was an ideal choice for the British for a variety of reasons. First, the lack of historical evidence on the identity of Caratacus makes him a relatively malleable historical figure. With little known facts about him due to the lack of primary resources documenting his existence, interpretations of him and his story were somewhat unlimited. Second, his place in the history of the Roman Empire had immense value. The classical world held a high status in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The setting of Roman Britain in Caratacus' story allowed for the inclusions of classically inspired pro-imperialistic rhetoric in addition to efforts to promote national pride. In many nineteenth and early twentieth century historical readers for English school-aged children, Caratacus is a featured historical figure. In these readers, his story is a work of propaganda, promoting the English identity and the ideologies of the British Empire to the youth of England.

In order to understand the role of Caratacus in modern Britain, it is necessary to layout the relationships between classics and the British Empire and classics and British Education.

Classics and the British Empire

Within the context of the British Empire, imperialism and the discipline of classics were both prominent discourses. The mid-eighteenth to the early-twentieth century saw the British Empire rapidly increase in both size and population. By 1900, it practiced authority over a quarter of the world's population and had claims to a fifth of the Earth's land surface area.[35] This expansion brought about the intense conversation of Britain's national identity and character, as well as conversations and debates regarding imperialism. At this same time, the discipline of classics featured heavily in the imaginations of the British citizens. Classics, the study of the history, language, and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome, dominated many aspects of British society: education, theatre, politics, archeology, architecture, et cetera. References to Ancient Greece and Rome were embedded into the culture and identity of the British Empire.

Though the developments of these discourses were formally independent, British imperialism and classics came to develop a complex, interwoven, relationship. The language and rhetoric of classics became an integral part of arguments for British imperialism, and, on the flip side, the discipline of classics was transformed by its significant development and exposure during the Age of Imperialism.[36]

In analyzing Britain's use of the classics during the British Empire, it is necessary to ask first, why classics? With other past histories at their disposal, why was Ancient Graeco-Roman history the chosen history of the British? There can be no definite answer

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[35] Mark Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain." In *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (2010), edited by Mark Bradley., (Oxford University Press), [128].

[36] Mark Bradley, "Introduction: Approaches to Classics and Imperialism", *In Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (2010), edited by Mark Bradley., (Oxford University Press), [11-12].

to this question, only hypotheticals., yet one possible answer lies in the prestigious

position that classical scholarship has always held in Europe. Given the geography of the

classical world, classical history acts as an origin story of the Western world and provides

the pillars for arguments of European exceptionalism.[37] Classics' prestigious position, in

Britain specifically, was reinforced by its commonplace within elite education. In the

introduction of her often-cited work, *Classics and Colonialism* (2005), Goff writes that

"Latin and Greek language and culture were so inseparable from the elite's vision of

itself that they come inseparable from the vision of the imperial role."[38] In Europe, the

classical historical figures and narratives earned their title of "Classics", as they indeed

did become the definition of classic.

Another approach to answering the question of "why classics?" is considering

Britain's unique relationship to classical history. The Roman conquests and rule of

Britannia directly link British history to Roman history. The influence of Roman rule on

British civilization, or romanization, was often emphasized by British historians and

politicians of the Imperialist Era as a positive transformation for early Britons.[39] History

textbooks of this era, especially, express gratitude to the Romans for introducing their

technology, such as aqueducts, roads, or larger cities. Imperialist Britain also found pride

in the fact that some of the earliest written records of their history were written by the

great Roman writer, Tacitus, who was widely read and celebrated in Britain.[40] In a review

of a talk by Sir George Macdonald on Tacitus' *Agricola, The Times* wrote "English and

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[37] Ibid., [12].

[38] Barbara Goff, *Classics and Colonialism* (2005)., (Bristol Classical Press), [12].

[39] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [134].

[40] Ibid., [152].

Scotsmen may now feel prouder than before that it fell to two great masters [Caesar and Tacitus] to be the first to introduce Britain into the history of the world."[41] Britain's position as the conquered, rather than the conquered, within this history does significantly complicate Britain's relationship to the classical world. Yet, this too was framed positively; as the conquered, Britain could be argued as the true continuation of the British Empire in the modern world.

Given the significant association between classics and imperial Britain, the British used this relationship to shape and justify their position in the world as an imperial power. Due to the British Empire's status as a liberal empire, the British Empire's authority could be questioned more easily and there was a need to constantly justify their rule to their conquered populations but also to anti-imperialists at home. Both Greek and Roman history and their historical figures, each in their own ways, influenced the British thoughts on their empire and helped build their sturdy justifications for imperialism.

In his study of Classics and Britain's authority in India, Vasunia (2013) begins by identifying the influence that Alexander the Great had on British expansion, particularly in India. Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), King of Macedonia and Persia, was a profound military leader of the ancient world, remembered most notably for his campaigns across Asia and Northern Africa that established the largest empire in the Ancient Mediterranean of his time. His empire was a melting pot of cultures; it allowed for the extensive spread of Greek culture as well as Greek's exposure to the cultures of the conquered peoples. Because of the extent and success of Alexander's campaigns and the ancient historical sources that preserve his narrative, Alexander the Great has often

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[41] Ibid., [152].

been a figure of great importance in conversations of empire.[42] Alexander served as a figurehead that Europeans could glorify, identify with, and claim to be following in the footsteps of, in justification of their imperialist actions.[43] In the case of the British's rule of India, Alexander was of particular use given his interactions with ancient India. British rule in India marks an interesting meeting point of histories. The British, self-identified reincarnations of the ancient Greeks and Romans, were repeating Greek history in their modern interactions with India.

Though Alexander provided a role model for expansion and exploration for the British, Alexander's narrative lacked details necessary to accurately mirror the British Empire's vision of imperialism. Alexander is known to have promoted a hybrid between Greek and foreign cultures, unlike the British Empire that believed in promoting the ways of the West and centered their justifications for Empire on a declaration of progress, civilization, and modernization.[44] More significantly, perhaps, Alexander did not have a long-term strategic plan or a developed theory of colonial administration for his empire. The British had to look elsewhere for a historical reference that could supply a precedent for their vision of imperialism.

Here enter the Romans. While still carrying the same social and intellectual currency as the ancient Greeks, the Roman Empire was repeatedly and most commonly framed as a parallel to the British Empire. The Roman Empire (27 BCE - 476 CEA) at its height spanned all regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea while priding itself on a

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[42] Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), [33].

[43] Ibid., [27].

[44] Ibid., [27].

centralized government through the city of Rome. A key feature of the Romans'

interaction with its conquered was their mission to civilize and conduct imperial

reconstruction.[45] Generally, Romans had fervent national pride fueled by a desire to

"romanize" the land and people it conquered, introducing their culture, religion,

engineering, and language.[46] The British had similar imperialistic goals, fueled by their

own developing national identity and pride. Three of the primary pillars of British

imperialistic thought in the mid-Victorian age were the ideas that (1) the British, as white

people, were superior to the inferior dark races, (2) the darker races are incapable of

ruling themselves, and (3) the rule of this structure requires democracy at home, yet

despotism outside.[47] The Roman example of ruling over those that are "other" and doing

so in a despotic manner, rather than offering those regions democracy, offered the

classical historical precedent and role model that the British needed to validate their

empire.

The use of the comparison between the Roman Empire and the British Empire

was obsessive. There is an extensive list of scholars, writers, teachers, and politicians of

the eighteenth to twentieth century who have explored or invoked the relationship

between the two empires with names such as Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone,

Rudyard Kipling, Lord Curzon, and Arthur Balfour.[48] Many expressed their knowledge

of classical history and culture in speeches or writings, sometimes representing

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[45] Ibid., [130].

[46] Rama Sundari Mantena, "Imperial Ideology and the Uses of Rome in Discourses on Britain's Indian Empire," in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. Mark Bradley, Classical Presences (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), [58].

[47] Vasunia, Classics and Colonial India, [143].

[48] Ibid, [119].

themselves as Roman, to explicitly draw the connection between classical antiquity and British imperialism.[49] Their obsession with classics, specifically the Roman Empire, during the Victorian and Edwardian Eras gave Graeco-Roman antiquity a prominent position in the British tradition of imperialism and the British national identity.

Classics and British Education

As discussed, during the Victorian and Edwardian Eras in Britain, classics was deeply embedded in the social fabric of imperialist Britain. The discussions of classics and imperialism were intricately connected, working together to both rise to the forefront of the British identity. The tone in which classics was discussed reinforced British imperialism while the discussions of imperialism, using classics to justify, increased the value of classics in British society. Arguably, the most significant mechanism in the dominance of classically inspired imperialist rhetoric was education.

Long before the nineteenth century, classics was a popular study in British institutions; therefore, those to which high-level education was accessible- wealthy, elite, British males- were familiar with the classical world and their languages, Greek and Latin. The nineteenth century, considered the heyday of the British Empire and British imperialism, brought new pressures to increase the focus of classics in the British classroom. On one hand, classical education was used to define the elite and upper class. With high-level classical education, particularly classical languages, restricted to certain classes, the possession of the knowledge was a confirmation of elite status.

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[49] Ibid., [8].

Simultaneously, classical education was also given a major role in building a British national identity and promoting imperialistic thought in the upper and middle class.

In the early nineteenth century, high-level classical education became a marker of elite status because of its accessibility to only the male elite, the upper and upper-middle classes. This sort of education was primarily offered at 'public' (private) secondary schools such as Eton College and Rugby School.[50] Though classics was introduced in the curriculum of non-private secondary institutions in the country, as will be discussed, it was done so at a much lesser intensity. Graeco-Roman history and culture was the keystone of the curriculum offered at 'public' schools. Greek and Latin languages were also mandatory subjects for these students. The classical education that students of these schools received certified them as true British 'gentlemen' and allowed them to access a world of prestigious careers and positions unavailable to the general public.

A compelling example of this is the role that classical education played in the admissions to the Indian Civil Service or ICS. The ICS was the small administrative elite composed of the officers that imposed British rule over India. The large majority of members of the ICS were British-born and recruited, even after positions were obtainable by open examinations in 1855. The mid-nineteenth century brought reforms to the admissions process of the ICS, primarily in the form of the ICS examinations. The exams had a disproportional weight on Greek and Roman language, literature, and history intending to attract university graduates and British 'gentlemen'. Greek and Latin, in particular, were instrumental in the building of the middle-class man's obstacle to the

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[50] Margaret Williamson. "The Mirror Shield of Knowledge", In *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. Mark Bradley, Classical Presences (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), [78].

ICS, given how uncommon education in the languages of classical antiquity was outside of the prestigious 'public' schools and universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge. These curated examinations were designed to increase the number of 'gentlemen imperialists' within the ICS and inhibit other's access into this established and powerful group of elites. [51]

The evolving British nationalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century brought a new use and value to classical education. With the British Empire at its height, there was a need for a clear and strong national identity "to consolidate Britain's controversial position in the world." Changes in governmental policies provided the framework and motivation for large-scale shifts in the British education. First, the Elementary Education Act of 1870 established compulsory education for children ages 5-12, allowing education to become an efficient mechanism to quickly spread ideas of imperialism to the masses, including individuals outside of the upper class. Not long after this act, a bill was passed in 1867 that granted voting rights to all urban male household owners, emphasizing the need to educate the middle class and instill a strong sense of national pride that celebrated imperialism. [52] British schools were now given the task of preparing future voters for their civil responsibility, and educate the British youth on how to be active citizens that understand their nation's history and place in the modern world.

British education borrowed political rhetoric and debates that previously had only existed within high academia and included them in the standard curriculum.[53] The recent innovations in printing and publishing spurred a wave of production of standard readers

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[51] Vasunia, *Classics and Colonial India*, [194].

[52] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [128].

[53] Ibid, [129].

and textbooks that could be circulated throughout the British Empire.[54] The content of the standard curriculums included many discussions of comparison and connection between the British Empire and the classical world. Bradley explains that "classical texts could be considered 'safe ground' for exploring contemporary social and political issues." The world of Roman antiquity was distanced by historical time and place, yet it provided a social and government structure appropriate for the British youth to understand what it meant to be an imperial power.[55] Through this exposure via education, the world of ancient Greece and Rome entered into the mainstream and became familiar rhetoric known to both the upper classes and middle classes.

Caratacus Reborn, An Analysis of British School Readers of 19th and 20th century

This essay concludes with an analysis of history readers, for children from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century England containing the story of Caratacus. The education reforms in the late-nineteenth century created a need for new standardized school materials that promoted a strong national identity and introduced pro-imperialist thoughts to the youth of the nation. The subject of history was, and still is today, a powerful tool in creating a national identity. A history, like any story, can be framed in different ways as so to highlight what the authors want to be emphasized. When framed carefully and repeated ad nauseam, a shared national history binds a people together. It creates a common understanding of the past- their own history that highlights particular

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[54] Christopher Stray and Gillian Sutherland, "Mass Markets: Education," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 6: 1830–1914*, ed. David McKitterick, vol. 6, The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 359–81, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521866248.011, [359].

[55] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [129].

advantageous origins, triumphs, leaders, and movements. It also distinguishes one people from another. History used this way is a possessable thing.

The English history readers of focus framed British history in such a way to idealize the British land, people, and contemporary political structure. The primary readers studied were: Blackie's Comprehensive School Series: Stories from English History (c. 1882); English History Readers: Stories from English History (1881); The Granville History Readers: History of England (1882); Chamber's New Historical Readers: Easy Stories from British History (1907); and Cassell's Historical Course for Schools: The Simple Outline of English History (1884). These readers were chosen for their rhetorical use of the history of the Roman conquests in Britannia. They all dedicated their opening chapters to the "Ancient Britons" and/or "Roman Britain", and tell of this overlapping history of the Roman Empire and ancient Britain. The Victorian and Edwardian eras' fascination with the Roman Empire resulted in the employment of this shared history as propaganda for the British Empire.[56]

Four out of the five readers include the story of Caratacus within their Roman-focused opening chapters. It is obvious, given specific details, that the stories told in the readers were closely based on the Roman accounts of Caratacus of Tacitus and Cassius Dio. These readers are interesting examples of how a history and historical figure can be utilized to shape the national identity and youths' relationship to a certain era of history and their country. First, this essay will explore what can be learned from the chosen five readers regarding its presentation of the Roman Empire and the "romanization" of

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[56] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [127].

Britain. Then, the discussion will concentrate on the portrayal of the story of Caratacus and what it meant for its British readers.

Each of the selected five readers includes a section about the Roman conquest of Britain towards its beginning, titled something similar to "The Romans in Britain." The Britons are introduced as "half-naked" and "savages" before introducing the Romans in a remarkably complimentary manner.[57] The positive description of the Romans can be seen as an effort to convert young students into admirers of the Roman world and empire. One of the readers describes the Romans as "very clever" and "the best fighters in all the world that had made themselves the masters of nearly all the countries in Europe."[58] Another reader states, "these conquering Romans were stern rulers, and would allow no rebellion or revolt against their authority; but for the most part, they were just rulers too, and where they came they established peace and order and obedience to the law, so that men might be sure of living peacefully and prosperously."[59] This quote, in particular, highlights how the British glorified the Roman model of imperial rule to find historical precedent for their modern Empire in which they employed similar imperialist philosophies of civilizing those they conquered. Compliments to the Romans were also realized in descriptions of specific Roman leaders; both Julius Caesar and Julius Agricola

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[57] George Girling, *Blackies's Comprehensive School Series: Stories from English History* (Blackie & Son, 1882), https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/SYIDAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, [13]; Thomas J. Livesey, ed., *English History Readers: Stories from English History*, vol. 1, 1881, https://www.google.com/books/edition/English_The_Granville_history_readers/PYcDAAAAQA AJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, [6].

[58] Girling, *Stories from English History*, [12].; Livesey, *Stories from English History*, [5].

[59] *Cassell's Historical Course for Schools: The Simple Outline of English History* (London: Cassell & Co., 1884), https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/130DAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&kptab=overview, [16].

are presented as strong and brave leaders. Caesar and Agricola are historical figures
remembered favorable for their execution of Roman's ruling method and idealized as role
models within these stories. In providing the Roman historical figures of Caesar and
Agricola, the authors create models of good leaders that are inseparable from the context
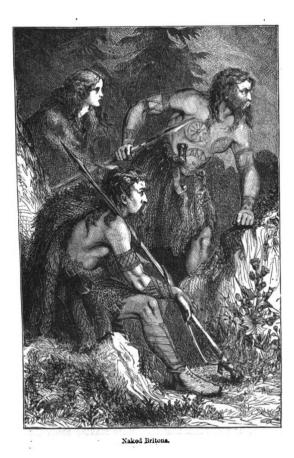of an imperialist system, affirming a positive impression of imperialism.

Figure 2.1, Naked Britons from Livesey, *English History Readers, Stories from English History* (1881), [3].

The British's perceived greatness of the Romans was reinforced by the readers'
inclusion of details of how the Roman rule in Britannia improved life for the Britons,
often called "romanization." The readers explain that the Britons began to "copy their

masters in dress and manners".[60] Quite extensively (given the simplified nature of the writing), the authors list the improvements that the Romans brought to Britannia, mentioning roads, large towns, aqueducts, classical-style buildings, farming techniques, and cloth-making methods. About the romanization of Britain, *Cassell's* says, "whenever they [Romans] came, they taught the people their own laws and language, and cause them to give up many of their national habits and customs, so that they might become Romans".[61] This statement has an uncanny resemblance to the descriptions of the British Empire's actions, specifically in India. Just as the Romans are said to have felt, the British felt they had a responsibility to bring the culture, language, and laws of Britain to India through schools and their dominant governmental authority. The readers also describe the state of Britain after the Romans' four-hundred-year rule as poor and lacking. According to the readers, the Romans brought peace to the Britons, decreasing the frequency that they fought, and causing them to struggle to protect themselves from neighboring tribes without the Romans' help. One reader states, "when the Roman soldiers all went away from this land and to their own home, the poor Britons were very unhappy".[62] Mentioning the Britons' difficult transition out of Roman rule stresses a positive nature of Roman rule and the dependency that the conquered land and people of Britannia came to have on the Roman rule. It also provides a strong evidence to support the continual British rule across the British Empire. Following the model provided by the

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[60] Girling, *Stories from English History*, [21].

[61] *Cassell's Historical Course for Schools: The Simple Outline of English History*, [16].

[62] *Chamber's New Historical Readers: Easy Stories from English History*, vol. 1 (London, Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1907), https://www.google.com/books/edition/Chamber_s_New_Historical_Readers/HV4eBFlEWg0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&kptab=overview&bsq=caesar, [12].

readers, the British would only harm those they had conquered if they were to decolonize.

These readers restate another long-held belief of British intellectuals that the romanization of Britannia and Britons was a "necessary evil" to bring about the advent of Christianity. In scholarly materials, the discussion of romanization was not as black and white as it is present in children's readers. Many intellectuals wrestled with the ethics of imperialism and how to discuss their own rule under the Romans. Though anti-imperialists twisted the history of the Roman conquests, pro-imperialists replied with an invincible argument that the education and civilization provided by the Romans primed the ancient Britons for Christianity. It fits the model of "the benevolent colonizer bringing enlightenment to the natives". [63]

The readers reflect this pro-imperialist idea simplistically, declaring that the Romans brought Christianity to the Britons. Each reader varies in the details given to support this declaration. *Cassell's* posits that the Romans only became Christians in "the later days", and then "the countries which ere subject to them gave up their heathen ways".[64] *Granville* reads: "many of the Roman soldiers were Christians" and so the Britons also became Christian. *Blackie's,* interestingly, admits to the lack of historical evidence for the Romans' involvement in the religious conversion of Britons, but hypothesizes that some of the Roman soldiers could have been Christian, despite Rome, as a nation, not being Christian.[65] Given the central role that Christianity had in the nineteenth and twentieth-century England, crediting the Romans for bringing Christianity to the Britons was a powerful action. It placed Romans on a pedestal for enlightening

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[63] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [134-135].

[64] *Cassell's Historical Course for Schools: The Simple Outline of English History*, [17].

[65] Girling, *Stories from English History*, [21].

Britons to what was considered to be the only correct belief system. This discussion of

Christianity not only teaches the child reader to thank Rome for Chritianity, but also

passively underpins the idea that being Christian was synonymous with being English.

The Romans are not the only people that the readers speak highly of; the ancient

Britons, as well, are complimented for their character. Though much work is done by the

authors to establish the ancient Britons as "savage" and uncivilized people in comparison

to the Romans, the authors do commend Britons for their innate character of strength and

bravery. *Granville* says, "the Romans were very glad to have conquered Britain. They

found the people strong, active, and industrious, and that they made very good soldiers

and servants."[66] W.S. Tyler, in his introduction to his 1847 edition of Tacitus' *Agricola,*

commented on this same phenomenon, writing that "[Agricola] saw the Britons too, in

their native nobleness, in their primitive love of liberty and virtue".[67] Placing the ancient

Britons, in addition to the Romans, in a positive light is necessary to ensure that the

readers do their job of instilling pride in British heritage and national history. If the

readers were to present the ancient Britons as only savage, children would have very little

reason to feel drawn to their own ancestors. The readers strike a balance of educating

children of the benefits of an empire, through the example of the Roman Empire, while

also providing children with reasons to be prideful of their ancestors.

Caratacus' presence in the readers further promotes a positive reputation of

Ancient Britons. Through the retelling of his resistance movement and, in particular, the

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[66] Thomas J. Livesey, ed., *The Granville History Readers: History of England, From the Roman Period to the Wars of the Roses* (London: Burns and Oates, 1882), https://www.google.com/books/edition/English_The_Granville_history_readers/0XwDAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0&kptab=overview, [7].
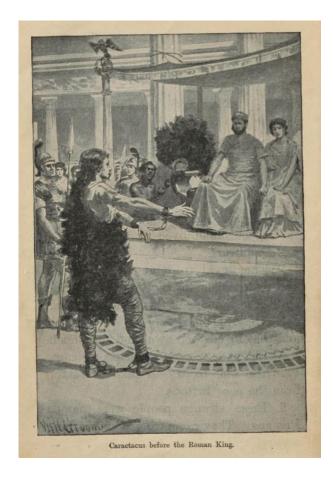
[67] Bradley, "Tacitus' Agricola and the Conquest of Britain", [141].

scene of his capture, Caratacus comes to represent the ancient Britons- a people of great strength, bravery, and patriotism. First, the authors themselves describe Caratacus as a noble character using phrases such as "skillful commander" and "brave warrior." He is applauded for his determination, fighting against the Romans for nine years, and his leadership skills. The authors continue their compliments of Caratacus through the mouth of the Romans. The accounts of Caratacus' arrival to Rome as a prisoner tell of the Roman people being impressed and captivated by the brave warrior of the Britons. The Romans are said to have been "pleased to have this noble prince in their power."

> "Everybody knew his name, all had heard of the terrible British king who had fought so many battles against the Romans, and they came in thousands to see him. But he was as bold and brave as ever, and so noble and manly did he appear that his chains were struck off him and his life spared".[68]

Even as their prisoner, Caratacus was well-respected by the Romans; even the emperor, Claudius, was so taken by Caratacus "noble words" that he granted him his freedom. Coupled with the narrative that the Romans helped transform Britannia for the better, the presentation of ancient Britons as a people with an innate noble nature supports the British claim to being a superior people and race in the modern world. The child reader leaves these stories impressed by Caratacus and fond of the ancient Britons, despite their conveyed inferiority to the Romans at the time.

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[68] Girling, *Stories from English History*, [15-16].

Caractacus before the Roman King.

2.2, **Caratacus Before the Roman King**, from *Chamber's New
Historical Readers: Easy Stories from English History* (1884),
[8].

Notably, each account of Caratacus' arrival and speech to Emperor Claudius in
the readers includes a paraphrased version of Cassius Dio's dialogue for Caratacus: "And
can you, then, who have got such possessions and so many of them, covet our poor
tents?"[69] The consistent inclusion of this quote is puzzling considering its easily anti-
imperialist interpretation. Yet, its inclusion in the readers can be understood by focusing
on what the dialogue reveals about Caratacus. After saying this, Caratacus can be
understood as not just a strong military leader, but also a clever man with eloquence.

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[69] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, [61.33].

Caratacus also shares his appreciation for the Roman world with the reader through his words. As the Romans are seen admiring Caratacus and the Britons, Caratacus is now admiring the Romans and the classical world. A child reader of these readers takeaway that both Romans and Britons deserve praise and admiration. This establishes a national pride with elements of pride for who the Britons are as well as who the Britons came to be under Roman rule.

Another worthy detail of the Caratacus of these readers is Caratacus' avid patriotism. One of the readers says that Caratacus "loved his country above all things." He is depicted as a relentless fighter against the Romans, committing nine years to continual fighting for his people. Caratacus also uses patriotism as rhetoric to encourage his fellow Britons in fighting: "The Romans were ten to one, but Caradoc drew up his men behind walls of earth and loose stones, and called on them to defined their homes, and their native land, with the last drop of their blood." [70] To a child reader, Caratacus is a role model for his strength and the admiration he received from the Romans. In making Caratacus a patriotic character, the authors encourage patriotism in the child reader. Caratacus' love of his country and people helps fulfill a primary goal of these readers- to promote a determined and prideful English national identity.

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[70] Livesey, *Stories from English History*, [8].

Conclusion

Like any historical figure, Caratacus became something other than the individual he once was. In Roman histories, Caratacus was a symbol of the strength of the Britons, created and included to increase the value of those the Romans had conquered. In the school readers of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, he was, more specifically, a symbol of British' innate strength, an important instrument in the development of a definite national identity. Caratacus was an embodiment of the relationship between the Roman Empire and the British Empire, a relationship, as discussed, that had huge implications on the ideologies of the British Empire.

Considering Caratacus, and this essay, as a case study of the condition of the historical figure, what can be said from this example about the role of historical figures in the telling of history? A history belongs to its writers; in continuation, a historical figure and their story, when used by a writer of history, also belong to its history writers. The Caratacus of the British school readers is a carefully curated character, employed for the specific purpose of promoting national identity. The writers of history use historical figures to tell the history they want to tell and will edit, twist, and emphasize points to achieve this.

Returning to Hegel and his philosophy of history, I think it possible that Hegel's model of the "world-historical individual" has some truth to it when applied to Caratacas. Hegel's belief that the historical figure is unconscious of their pivotal role in history and "sacrificed" sees itself in Caratacus. We can safely assume that Caratacus was unaware his name and a variation of his life story would be repeated by those who inhabited the same land he did hundreds of years later to support something similar to what he was

fighting against- imperialism. Though Hegel's philosophy is rooted in the effects that a historical figure has on his contemporary history, his model of the unconscious sacrifice of historical figure affecting how history unfolds finds itself true in the reception of historical figures in times beyond their lifetime.

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