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# MARKING THE NORTH. THE GREEK TRADITION AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

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# Contents

# On either Side of the Wall: The Dynamic Image of the British Isles from Caesar to the Arrival of the Anglo-Saxons

Julian Gieseke

## 1. Introduction

> [...] He [Pytheas] closely observed the entire north of Europe as far as the boundary of the world, a report no one would believe even if from Hermes.[1]

This statement by Polybius illustrates what most Greeks thought about Northern Europe in the second century BCE: they allocated it to the world of myths. Although Pytheas of Massalia had circumnavigated all of Britain and even spotted the mysterious Thule in the second half of the fourth century BCE, his tales were disbelieved by influential representatives of the learned elites such as his contemporary Dicaearchus, Polybius, Artemidorus of Ephesus or Strabo. Accordingly, few Hellenistic scholars concerned themselves with the British Isles at all.[2] Aside from personal interests,[3] the main reason why they denied the possibility of human settlement in the north was its climate: in Greek thought, the world was split into different climatic zones and most scholars agreed that the arctic zone was covered by ice and snow, rendering human life impossible.[4] How far the arctic extended southwards was a question as controversial as the number of the climate zones, but Polybius and Strabo concurred that the arctic zone encompassed all of northern Europe.[5] This model was intertwined with the theories of the pseudo-Hippocratic

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This chapter is loosely based on the paper ‘Zu beiden Seiten des Walls. Das dynamische Bild der britannischen Inseln von Caesar bis zum Ende der römischen Provinz’, which I presented at the conference *Diesseits und jenseits der Imperien* at Universität Bielefeld on 2 December 2022. My thanks go to the organisers, Malte Speich (Bielefeld) and Marthe Becker (Bielefeld), for the organisation and valuable feedback. I also want to thank everyone who participated in the discussion for their helpful comments and suggestions, especially Prof. Dr. Timo Stickler (Jena) and Dr. Alexander Sarantis (Mainz), as well as Antti Lampinen (Athens & Turku) for his help in the publication. *Alba gu bràth*.

[1] Str. 2.4.2 (Pyth. T 2 Bianchetti = F 7a Mette), quoting Polyb. 34.5.9: [...] ὁ δὲ καὶ μέχρι τῶν τοῦ κόσμου περάτων κατωπτευκέναι τὴν προσάρκτιον τῆς Εὐρώπης πᾶσαν, ἣν οὐδ’ ἂν τῷ Ἑρμῇ πιστεύσαι τις λέγοντι. Translated by Roller 2014.

[2] Prominent exceptions were Eratosthenes and Posidonius: Kochanek 2004, 64 provides an excellent overview of the various authors. For Pytheas’ fragments see Bianchetti 1998 and 2023, for Strabo’s scientific interests Aujac 1966. [Ar.] *Mund.* 393b 10-15 describes Albion and Ierne as large islands in the *Okeanos*, but its time and context are completely unclear; cf. Gregorić & Karamanolis 2021.

[3] Polybius, who sailed the Atlantic with the Roman fleet, intended to portray himself as a new Odysseus and thus had a vested interest in discrediting Pytheas: Polyb. 3.59.7–8. See Eichel & Todd 1976. Like Polybius, most authors were nobles who generally distrusted merchants; cf. the criticism that Str. 2.4.2 quotes from Polyb. 34.5.5.

[4] A tradition stretching back to Parmenides of Elea (around 500 BCE): Moretti 1992, 242.

[5] See Str. 2.3.1 on the views of Polybius, Posidonius and Strabo on the amount and habitability of the zones. While Strabo only envisaged life in the temperate regions, Rausch 2013, 136–137 demonstrates that Posidonius located the border of the habitable zone much further north, matching his positive descriptions of Celtic peoples. For Strabo, Ireland was the ultimate place in which humans could survive; see Str. 2.5.8; cf. p. 17 in the ‘Introduction’ to this volume.

work *On Airs, Waters, Places*, which explained the differing characters of *ethne* with the climatic conditions in their respective regions.[6] In this view, those humans who lived farthest to the north were living a poor and sorry life and lacked any laws or 'civilisation'. Corresponding *topoi* were initially ascribed to the Scythians and subsequently transferred to Thracians, Celts and finally Germani and Britons.[7]

Not only the observations of Pytheas conflicted with this perspective, however: there was also an idealisation of the North expressed in the idea of the Hyperboreans. Representatives of this mythological people 'above the North Wind' were characterised as enjoying eternal happiness and good health.[8] Even though Herodotus had already ridiculed the concept, their existence was defended by authorities as famous as Posidonius.[9] According to Hecataeus of Abdera, the Hyperboreans lived on an island in the *Okeanos*, beyond the lands of the Celts. Since he was a contemporary of Pytheas, this could be an implicit identification of Hyperborea with Britannia.[10] Two centuries later, Asclepiades of Myrlea, a Bithynian grammarian, claimed the cold allowed the Britons to live for 120 years.[11] No Greek author ever explicitly equated Britons and Hyperboreans, but they would all have been acutely aware of the myth of the Hyperboreans when writing about the North. In Roman literature, too, the Hyperboreans, and Thule, would become ever popular motifs for places on the edge of the world or beyond it.[12]

Until the mid-first century BCE, then, the Greco-Roman image of Britannia was dominated by mythological and climatic speculations. This only began to change when Caesar landed on the island of Great Britain in 55 BCE, but it would take another century before the Romans launched a full-scale invasion – and neither Caledonia in the north (roughly equivalent with modern Scotland) nor Hibernia in the west (the island of Ireland), would ever become permanent parts of the empire. Indeed, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius erected their respective walls to separate the province from Caledonia.[13] There was only one more attempt to subjugate Caledonia: Septimius Severus depicted his campaign in the early third century CE as a glorious victory,[14] but the Roman legions soon returned

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[6] [Hippoc.] *Aer*., *passim*.

[7] Gieseke 2023, 24, 44 (Scythians/Thracians/Celts), 410–411 (Celts/Britons/Germans). *Topoi* will be understood as the information with which categories of ethnographic descriptions were filled: e.g., for the category 'appearance' one would find the *topos* 'all Germani are blond'. To be credible, the information had to be partially true: there were probably indeed more blond Germani than blond Greeks or Romans, but as a *topos* it was generalised to such a degree that an external spectator expected *every* German to be blonde. Lampinen 2021c, xliii adequately speaks of '[...] the written expressions of stereotypical thinking [...]'. On ethnographical *topoi*, see Zerjadtke 2020 and the other chapters in Zerjadtke (ed.) 2020.

[8] Pind. *Pyth*. 10.56; Alc. F 207b (Lobel & Page) *ap.* [Plut.] *De mus.* 14 (1135f) (cf. F 207c *ap.* Himer. *Or.* 48.10–11); [Hes.] *Cat.* F 150 (M-W = 98 Most) *ap. POxy.* XI 1358 fr. 2 col. 1, l. 22. See the 'Introduction' to this volume, 12, 16, 39.

[9] He located them in the Alps: Pos. F 270 (E-K) *ap. Schol. in Ap. Rhod*. 2.675. Cf. Hdt. 4.36.1. See also Lampinen in this volume, p. 95–96.

[10] Hecat. Abd. *BNJ* 264 F 7 *ap.* Diod. Sic. 2.47.1.

[11] Asclepiades of Myrlea *ap.* Gal. *Hist. phil.* 133 (= 648 Diels, *Dox. Graec.*); cf. Rawson 1982, 162 for the fragment; also Braund 1996, 42. Tacitus would reuse the *topos* (Tac. *Dial*. 17).

[12] In detail: Webb 2018. Most famous is Vergil's *ultima Thule* (Verg. *G*. 1.30).

[13] I will speak of 'the province' when referring to the area under Roman administration, even though at times there were up to five different provinces (cf. Salway 1993, 218); for ethnographic views, these divisions hardly mattered.

[14] Cass. Dio 77.13.4.

to Hadrian's Wall.[15] While the function of the walls as military and political borders has rightly been challenged,[16] they did form an at least symbolic border of Roman control in the north and retained this role until the end of Roman Britain.

In regard to ancient ethnographic writing,[17] we can define Britannia as something like a laboratory: an archipelago with limited external influences, divided into a Roman province and an area of free 'barbarians'. This raises several questions: how did the conquest of Britannia change Greco-Roman perceptions of the island and its inhabitants? Were those who lived within the province accepted as 'Roman' after Caracalla granted all free men in the imperium citizenship? And were the two walls defined as the border between 'civilisation' and *barbaricum*? Finally, how did Romans and Greeks compare between Britons, Caledonians and Hibernians, and how important were climatic arguments in this discussion?

Concentrating on the ethnographic debate and the role of Hadrian's Wall as a frontier of 'civilisation' will allow the chapter to go beyond existing research.[18] To achieve this aim and to make it possible to detect long term developments, most relevant Greco-Roman sources from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE will be investigated. The text will be structured by the four distinctive periods in the history of Roman Britain: (1) The time of the first political contacts, (2) the years of the conquest, (3) the era of the province and (4) the century after Britain's exit from the empire. Of crucial significance for this endeavour is a new ethnographic dichotomy which appears in the Augustan period: Strabo claimed that everyone who lived under Roman rule would inevitably be 'civilised' – so strong was the influence of the ('Hellenised') Roman culture.[19] Examples from the west include the Cavari in Southern Gaul who ceased to be 'barbarians' and the previously savage Celtiberians, who would now wear *togae* and live peacefully.[20] Beyond the frontiers of the *imperium*, meanwhile, one could only find primitive 'barbarians' – accordingly, he grossly understated the extent and wealth of the Parthian Empire and promulgated the idea of the Germani as equally primitive as the Gauls had been, before they fell under Roman control and learned to enjoy laws and peace.[21] Such comparisons divided all known peoples into two categories, even if many

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[15] Oros. 7.17.7 speaks of the construction of a new wall apparently longer than the Antonine Wall, but since there is zero archaeological evidence for such a project, he can only refer to restoration works at Hadrian's Wall. Cass. Dio 77.13.4 simply informs us that Septimius returned to friendly (φίλιος) territory, implying that the Caledonians were not fully subdued. For this question see below fn. 127.

[16] Just like other *limes* fortifications, the wall was probably erected to monitor and control criminals and rebels from within the province, who could thus be prevented from seeking shelter in the vast landscapes of Caledonia. Yet, the discussion about Hadrian's Wall as a defensive bulwark is still ongoing; for an overview see Crow 2004, 130–133; Mattingly 2006, 157–159; Hingley 2012, 294–299; Symonds 2020.

[17] Ethnography as such is of course a modern concept. Since no such genre existed in antiquity, there was no defined set of ethnographical practices: instead, ethnographic descriptions were spread across various *genera* and depictions of foreign peoples could be found anywhere from historiographical texts to poems to vases. I will speak of 'ethnographic descriptions', not of 'ethnography', but these were shaped by the theories and ideas introduced above – at least in historical and/or geographical works. Cf. Woolf 2011b, 13–17; Schulz 2020, 392.

[18] Günnewig 1998, who analysed the Roman image of the Britons, ignored the wall on purpose (263), while definitive works on Roman Britain such as Richmond 1955; Braund 1996; Jones 1998 or Mattingly 2006 only included short remarks on the Greco-Roman descriptions of the *ethne* of the British Isles.

[19] Cf. Gieseke 2023, 381–383. Strabo's ideological undertone was already observed by Van der Vliet 1984, 31.

[20] Hellenised: in 4.1.5, Strabo states that Romans and Gauls were now able to learn Greek παιδεία in Massalia. Cf. Str. 4.1.12 (Cavari); 3.4.20 (*togatai*); 3.4.13 (wild *nomoi* in the past).

[21] Cf. Engels 2017 on Parthia, Str. 4.4.2 on the Germani and Gauls.

inhabitants of the empire were still in the process of obtaining Mediterranean culture. The whole concept certainly conformed to imperial ideology and will have been shared by many of his contemporaries.[22]

In the following, the analysis of the image of the British Isles will show whether such views persisted in subsequent centuries and into Late Antiquity, or if either the Britons within the province were still treated as 'barbarians' or if, alternatively, Hibernians and Caledonians became so familiar that their primitivism was eventually modified. This will allow us to see if Hadrian's Wall was consistently seen as a firm 'civilisation' border, as a physical marker between the tamed and the untamed North.

## 2. Britannia: first contact

Unsurprisingly, when Caesar introduces Britannia in his *commentarii*, he emphasises how little is known about it: even the few merchants who had reached the island could tell him nothing about the armament, political organisation, or customs of the people.[23] As a canny military commander, Caesar was primarily interested in ethnographic knowledge for its practical use. He will have studied the available Greek sources before launching his expedition, but makes no mention of them as to underline the novelty of his achievement.[24] Such exaggeration was sorely needed, for his first foray into Britain in 55 BCE had not accomplished more than the formal recognition of Roman rule by some local dynasts in Cantium (Kent),[25] and he needed victories and glory to rival Pompey's achievements in the east.[26] One year later, Caesar returned with a much larger force and managed to cross the Thames and to capture the capital of the enemy leader Cassivellaunus, but a revolt in Gaul forced him to abandon further operations.[27]

Therefore, Caesar portrays the Britons as dangerous enemies so he can explain away the impermanence of his gains: before the Romans first landed, they had already occupied defensive positions on the coastline, and during the campaign they ambushed the legions time and again while fortifying inaccessible positions in the thick forests.[28] At all times they seemed to possess excellent intelligence about the Roman movements and Cassivellaunus even forged an alliance with his erstwhile enemies against the external

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[22] External peoples were doubtlessly seen as 'barbarians' by most Romans, cf. Kehne 2000, 332 or see the example of Suet. *Vesp*. 8.4, who speaks of a 'barbarian' threat for the provinces (in this case, Cappadocia). The option to 'barbarise' internal groups still existed throughout Roman history, however, cf. Woolf 2011a for the Gauls.

[23] Caes. *BGall.* 4.20. The merchants may of course have preferred to keep their information to themselves.

[24] Günnewig 1998, 257; Roller 2006, 117.

[25] Caes. *BGall.* 4.20.1, 22.3–4; cf. Holmes 1907, 595–644 for the location of the landing. Even though some princes had already submitted to Caesar before his arrival (*BGall.* 4.21.5) and though various attacks of the Britons were repelled (4.27, 34), Caesar could do no more than concluding some favourable treaties (4.27, 36).

[26] Cf. Schulz 2024, 277. Dion 1977, 251–252 believes Caesar felt he was compelled to invade Britain as it was a continuation of Gaul and represented the end of the world.

[27] Cf. Caes. *BGall.* 5.9.7 (early success), 5.10 (loss of fleet to storm), 5.18 (great victory), 5.20, 22.3–5 (retreat).

[28] Caes. *BGall.* 4.23.2–3 (landing); 4.32.3–5, 5.15, 16.4, 19 (ambushes); 5.9.4, 21.2–3 (fortifications). Additionally, a war council is mentioned in 4.30.1. Huge fortification works such as Maiden Castle in Dorset show that the Britons were indeed well able to counter the threats of invasion; cf. the map of forts in Salway 1993, 25.

threat.[29] Without explicitly stating it, Caesar suggest the Britons thus realised how serious the situation was and showed a degree of prudence and coordination that was thought atypical for northern 'barbarians'.[30] Their most terrifying weapon were the chariots: in contrast to the scythed chariots in use in Asia, these were mobile missile platforms hitherto unknown to the Romans, who initially suffered severe losses.[31] The descriptions of the chariots will have conveyed the idea that the Britons were potent warriors, while also evoking associations with the Trojan War.[32] The Britons are thus like the Romans once were: primitive, warlike and driving chariots.

This image is reinforced by the small ethnographic excursus in the fifth book: the Britons used iron and brass rings instead of coins to pay for goods, they wore the skins of animals, mainly fed on meat and milk and wore their hair long – and each man took several wives for himself. All of these attributes were ascribed to Scythians, Thracians or Celts by earlier and contemporary authors.[33] Archaeology has proven that agriculture was already widespread in Britain before the arrival of the Romans, so Caesar overstated the backwardness of the Britons in this crucial regard, possibly to justify why he had not integrated their land into the empire, akin to his 'invention' of the *Germani*.[34] A unique custom of the Britons is to paint themselves blue, but this easily fits into the picture of primitive 'barbarians'.[35] They even called their simple fortresses in forests *oppida* and thus appear as a pre-urban society.[36] And although they possessed much iron and tin – the possible identification of Britain with the Tin Islands was a much-discussed topic in antiquity – they only mined very little of it.[37] When commenting on their character, Caesar opines that the Britons were fickle and could not be trusted, traits usually associated with Celtic peoples.[38] And just like in the case of the Gauls, Caesar speaks of *levitas* – the Greeks had used *athesia* (ἀθεσία).[39]

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[29] They knew Caesar was coming all the while (*BGall.* 4.23.2–3) and immediately noticed when he lost his fleet and supply (4.30.1). From 5.11.8–9 we learn that Cassivellaunus had been at war with the princes of Kent and Essex when Caesar arrived. Günnewig 1998, 279 argued Caesar wanted to uphold the *topos* of quarrelling Britons who only banded together in exceptional situations, but the quick reaction suggests general political wisdom.

[30] For instance, Polyb. 2.35.3 denied the peoples of Gallia Transpadana such capabilities.

[31] Caes. *BGall.* 4.24, 33.1–34.1, 5.15. Even after his defeat at the Thames, Cassivellaunus still commanded 4000 chariots (*BGall.* 5.19.1). Their role in Iron Age Britain is confirmed by archaeological evidence: Mattingly 2006, 48. In Hellenistic Western Asia, scythed chariots featured in the armies of Mithridates VI (App. *Mith.* 17–18; Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 7.4, 37.3; Memnon *BNJ* 434 F 1 *ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* 224.232a-b) and the Seleucids (Bar-Kochva 1976, 83–84).

[32] As Schulz 2012, 24 emphasises, Homer only describes the chariots as 'taxis', however.

[33] Caes. *BGall.* 5.12.4 (money); 5.14.2–4. Hdt. 4.2 and [Hippoc.] *Aer.* 18 mention Scythians living on milk, Diod. Sic. 5.34.2 treats the extensive consumption of meat by the Celtiberians and Str. 3.3.7 describes the absence of money in Northern Spain. The Gauls in Diod. Sic. 5.28.4 eat while sitting on furs and the Cantabrians in Str. 3.3.7 wear their hair long. On polygamy see Günnewig 1998, 277.

[34] Cf. Haselgrove 2001 (agriculture); Lund 1990, 75–100 (*Germani*). The exchange of iron pieces for trade is, however, attested in the material record: Mattingly 2006, 56.

[35] *BGall.* 5.14.2.

[36] *BGall.* 5.21.3. Another exaggeration, especially in this period: Mattingly 2006, 58.

[37] *BGall.* 5.12.5. The Tin Islands or Kassiterides were already mentioned in Hdt. 3.115, but the question of their identity has still not been satisfyingly answered; cf. Roller 2006, 12–13.

[38] After their first defeat, the Britons accepted peace (Caes. *BGall.* 4.27) but betrayed the agreement as soon as they heard of the destruction of the Roman fleet (4.30.1–2). At the end of the second expedition, the Cenimagni backstabbed their ally Cassivellaunus by telling Caesar how to find his capital (5.21.1–2).

[39] For the Greek view cf. Polyb. 2.32.8, 3.70.4 (Gauls), 14.8.9 (Celtiberians). Cf. Kremer 1994, 164, 173–174,

This ethnographic account mainly referred to the autochthonous inhabitants of the interior, however. In contrast, the coastal peoples were more 'civilised', for while they had previously arrived in Britannia from Belgica for raiding, they had by now permanently settled the land and lived on agriculture.[40] Of these, those dwelling in Cantium were the most advanced, because they had retained the Gallic way of life when becoming Britons. Within Gaul, Caesar had defined the southernmost peoples as the most cultivated while the Belgae were the most primitive, but also the bravest.[41] This is a common model of civilisational gradient: the further away from the Mediterranean, the simpler and the more warlike the humans.[42] And yet, Caesar claims the climate in Britannia – described here as triangular – was more benign than in Gaul, even though he was aware of the phenomenon of long winter nights.[43]

Caesar's Britain is rich in resources, cattle and men, possesses a rather amiable climate and even some cultivated peoples.[44] As the 'rediscoverer' of Britannia, Caesar basically portrays a northern version of Gaul, and at least its southern part would be a worthier addition to the empire than (western) Germania.[45] And yet, for now the conquest of this land was out of reach and this may be the reason why the more 'barbaric' aspects of Caesar's descriptions dominated Latin literature in subsequent decades: Vergil claimed Britannia was located adrift from the rest of the world, Velleius Paterculus called it an *alter orbis* and Horace vilified its wild and rude inhabitants.[46] Ovid and Propertius interpreted the custom of the Britons to paint themselves blue or green respectively as a sign of the lack of a more sophisticated culture,[47] and enumerated Britannia, Parthia and Scythia as the ends of the world.[48]

While these texts are also a product of Greco-Roman interests in *mirabilia* and the otherworldliness of the fringes of the *oikoumene,* Britannia always appears in negative opposition to the imperial centre. A positive appraisal of the archipelago in the Augustan Age can only be found in a Greek work, the *Bibliotheca* of Diodorus.[49] The Siceliote collected the information of Caesar and blended it with the descriptions of earlier, Greek authors, especially Pytheas and Hecataeus of Abdera, to create a new image of Britannia.[50]

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254, 259 for *levitas* as a central concept in Caesar's image of the Gauls; see also Ndiaye 2007; Dueck 2021, 49.

[40] Caes. *BGall.* 5.12.1–2. With this, the thesis of Günnewig 1998, 262 can be rejected that Caesar did not differentiate between various ethnic groups within Britain. On the Belgic migration: Salway 1993, 12–13.

[41] Caes. *BGall.* 5.14.1, 1.1.1–3.

[42] Similar models can be found, e.g., in the works of Strabo (11.2.4), Tacitus (*Germ*. 5.3, 46.3–4) or Polybius (cf. Gieseke 2023, 154–158).

[43] Caes. *BGall.* 5.12.6 (climate, referring to mild winters in SE England), 13 (shape and astronomic observations, including measuring the length of the shorter summer nights by water clocks: *certis ex aqua mensuris*).

[44] Caes. *BGall.* 5.12.3 (animals and humans), 5 (tin, iron, wood).

[45] Cf. Günnewig 1998, 68; Bianchetti 2014, 122.

[46] Verg. *Ecl*. 1.66; a *topos* still found in Nemes. *Cyn*. 225–226 in the third century CE; Hor. *Carm*. *saec.* 3.4.33 (savages), *Carm.* 1.35.29; 4.14.48 (isolated, cf. Hor. *Epist*. 7.7–8); Vell. Pat. 2.46.1.

[47] Ov. *Am*. 2.16.39. Prop. 2.18c.23 accordingly warns his lover to paint herself blue.

[48] Prop. 3.27.5; Ov. *Am*. 2.16.39. Catull. 11.9–12 associates them with terrible *Oceanus*. And yet, the poets could sometimes claim Britannia was being or had been conquered by Augustus, as Braund 1996, 76–79 illustrates.

[49] His account was long ignored (Braund 1996, 67), but Diodorus studies are now on the up (cf. Rathmann 2016). See also pp. 104–105 above, esp. fn. 160.

[50] Cf. Günnewig 1998, 282. Diodorus praised Caesar (cf. Bianchetti 2018, 411–413, 425–427) and used him and Pytheas (through Timaeus) as his main sources for Britain (*ibid.*, 420, 423; Bianchetti 2014, 120–121). On the role of Hecataeus' Hyperborean description as Diodorus' inspiration, see Lampinen in this volume, p. 87, 106.

On the one hand, he followed Caesar in mentioning the triangular shape of the island, the simple life of the autochthonous Britons and the use of chariots.[51] On the other hand, he went beyond his source(s) when explicitly comparing the Britons with the heroes of the *Iliad* and singling out their frugality, a forgotten virtue in the Mediterranean in his day. Even better, they lived in stable peace under various kings.[52] The idealising elements correspond to philosophical traditions and show that a Greek civilian was better able to accentuate the positive side of the Britannic *Gegenwelt* than a Roman official, for whom Gauls and Britons were still enemies in the field.[53] That his arguments were in fact more abstract is evinced by Diodorus' comment that Britannia was very cold because it was situated under Ursa Major. This statement conflicts with Caesar's empirical observations on the ground and with Diodorus' own claim that agriculture was widespread in Britain.[54] We can only speculate if Diodorus simply failed to bring his contradictory sources from different centuries in line with each other[55] or if his image of morally superior, peaceful and cultivated Britons in the frosty North was a play on the idea of the Hyperboreans.

Diodorus was also the first author to describe the people of Hibernia (here: *Iris*). He asserted they were cannibals and compared them with other 'barbarians' who had practiced *anthropophagia* (ἀνθρωποφαγία).[56] Hibernia also features in the work of Diodorus' younger contemporary Strabo of Amasia.[57] He located the island of Ierne north of Britannia and wrote that it was settled by cannibals who practiced incest in public.[58] Their appalling customs were explained by the geographical position of Ierne: for Strabo, there was no space for Hyperboreans under the arctic circle; instead, the most primordial of humans lead pathetic lives in the eternal ice and would never get to know the blessings of imperial rule.[59] His opinion of Britannia was only slightly better, however: it was not worth conquering since the Britons paid handsome customs fees on their exports into the empire and this was as much as one could get out of the island.[60] This is probably an echo

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[51] Shape: Diod. Sic. 5.21.3–5; Caes. *BGall.* 5.13.1. Mattingly 2006, 28 sees Eratosthenes as the source. See also Polverini 2008. Lifestyle and chariots: Diod. Sic. 5.21.5–6. In 5.22.1–2 Diodorus depicts the mining of tin in Belerion (Cornwall) and the transport to Ictis (St Michael's Mount). Due to constant contact with foreigners, these Britons were most advanced.

[52] Diod. Sic. 5.21.5–6.

[53] Kremer 1994, 266–278 comes to a similar conclusion when analysing Diodorus' portrayal of the Gauls. The idealisation of simple peoples was a popular argument for Cynics, Epicureans and Stoics, who searched for the elements of a lost world in which an untainted mankind had been closer to the divine; cf. Dodds 1973, 17–18. Fittingly, Diodorus' contemporary Parthenius of Nicaea included Britannia in the world of Herakles (Parth. *Narr.* 30: see Lampinen, p. 99 above). Creighton 2006, 27 thinks Diodorus' statement about the island being in peace may be largely accurate.

[54] Diod. Sic. 5.21.6 (cold), 5 (agriculture).

[55] Günnewig 1998, 285–286 emphasises that sources like Pytheas dated from a time without political contacts between Britannia and the Mediterranean. On Diodorus' problematic usage of sources: Rathmann 2016, 37–42.

[56] Diod. Sic. 5.32.3. Perhaps, like Strabo (see below), to justify that Rome ignored Hibernia: Dion 1977, 257–258.

[57] Strabo's chapters on the British Isles, too, had long been ignored: Braund 1996, 80. More recently, various authors like Bianchetti 2002, Ilyushechkina 2017 and Lozat 2019 have discussed this topic, however.

[58] Though his sources were vague, he still reports these stories; Str. 4.5.4, cf. Van der Vliet 1984, 65.

[59] See Van der Vliet 1984, 43–45, 50 for Ierne and the impact of environmental determinism on his interpretations. In 2.5.8 Strabo states Ierne was the last habitable country before the arctic zone. Bianchetti 2002, 305 is thus right that the horrific character of its inhabitants cannot be based on Pytheas, who sailed past Ireland and would have located it to Britannia's west. Cf. Dion 1977, 274.

[60] Str. 4.5.3.

of Caesar's failure, yet Strabo largely follows the dictator elsewhere in portraying the Britons as rather primitive people who lived in fortified forests, with a minority tilling the soil and maintaining gardens.[61] He adds that they fed on milk, a traditional *topos* for the Scythians especially, who were said to drink and eat the milk and cheese of mares.[62] While Strabo makes no mention of mares, he claims some Britons – quite likely those in the north – do not even know how to make cheese, an extraordinary backwardness that can only be explained by their position right under the polar region. At the same time, Strabo writes that the Britons exported gold, silver and wheat and sold their hounds to Gaul where they were used as war dogs. In return, they received jewellery, glass vessels and amber.[63]

While Strabo does not explicitly divide between inland and coastal Britons – like Caesar had done – he is clearly thinking of such a split when depicting some as successfully trading luxury goods with the empire and others yet to learn how to farm or make cheese. The geographer asserts he has seen Britannic youths on the streets of Rome who towered above everyone else. He concludes that, according to the ideas of environmental determinism, the Britons were taller, less blond, more primitive and more 'barbaric' than Gauls.[64] Strabo therefore updated Caesar's account on the basis of new information and his own observations. After the provincialisation of Gaul, economic interactions between the empire and Britannia had increased and apparently some Britannic traders were already living in Rome with their families – a few decades later, Martial and Juvenal spoke of the highly sought-after Britannic rush baskets, which had become a hit in the capital.[65] Conspicuously, Strabo alleges that many Britannic princes had already submitted to the Roman dominion, a statement which is also found in Augustus' *Res Gestae*.[66] That he directly followed the Augustan or Tiberian message would explain why he depicts the Britons as posing no military threat for Rome and why he emphasises the revenues from trade – if true, there was no reason for the *princeps* to try and conquer the island.[67] At the same time, this view confirmed Strabo's dichotomy of the world: the image of the Hibernians and northern (?) Britons proved that all people outside the Imperium were condemned to a life in misery – just like the Latin authors in his day, Strabo saw Britannia and Hibernia as an antipode to the imperial centre.[68]

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[61] Str. 4.5.1 also mentions chariots and the triangular shape and gives numbers on the extent of Britain closer to those of Caesar (*BGall.* 5.13) than Diod. Sic. 5.21.4. For Strabo's views on Caesar and his adherence to the *Commentarii* cf. Dion 1977, 252–253; Lasserre 1982, 873.

[62] See Hom. *Il.* 13.4; [Hippoc.] *Aer.* 18.4; Hdt. 4.2 and Strabo himself. Cf. 7.3.7 on the Scythians, in commenting on Homer's description. Such *topoi* were already collected in the landmark study Shaw 1982; see also Gerstacker & al. (eds.) 2015.

[63] Str. 4.5.2–3. Those who could not even make cheese could only be nomads and raiders – the most primitive lifestyle in Strabo's imagination: Van der Vliet 1977, 285.

[64] Str. 4.5.2. For the influence of environmental ideas cf. Günnewig 1998, 275; Bianchetti 2014, 122–123.

[65] Mart. *Epigr.* 14.99; Juv. 12.46, cf. Mattingly 2006, 30. The teenage Britons may as well have been political hostages (*obsides*, cf. Braund 1996, 85) or slaves (Van der Vliet 1984, 62, Creighton 2006, 24), however.

[66] Str. 4.5.3; Aug. *RG* 32. For his support of imperial ideology cf. Lasserre 1982, 876–896; Van der Vliet 1984, 77.

[67] Cf. Str. 2.5.8 with the similar arguments by Lasserre 1982, 883–884; Braund 1996, 82; Günnewig 1998, 261, 274; Mattingly 2006, 428. That Strabo still believed, like Caesar, that Britain had to be conquered eventually, as Dion 1977, 252–256 posed, thus seems unlikely. Cf. Van der Vliet 1984, 31 who thinks some lands, like Britannia, are excluded from the vision of the world empire, because of poverty, inaccessibility and so on.

[68] This interpretation also suits the idea of Ilyushechkina 2017 that Strabo formed the traditional *metus Gallicus* of the Romans into a *metus septentrionalis,* a more general fear and rejection of the North and its peoples.

And yet, interest in the archipelago and its peoples was ever growing: in a fragment attributed to Livy, the form of Britannia is given not as triangular, but as that of a *bipennis*, the Latin equivalent of the tetragonal *labrys* double axe.[69] This definition presumes knowledge of the isthmus between Firth of Clyde and Firth of Forth. Maybe, Livy had taken the idea from the (in-)famous map of Agrippa, as another fragment mentions a circumnavigation of the British Isles under Agrippa's command.[70] By the early first century CE, then, the Roman elites were becoming increasingly aware of Britannia: though Caledonia was hardly known yet, ethnographically interested authors already postulated a divide between partly cultivated coastal peoples in the south and savages in the north. Only Hibernia was seen as even more remote, its people far removed from 'civilisation'.

## 3. The age of conquest

In CE 43, Claudius began the conquest of Britain, which would lead to the establishment of a province by the end of the century. He claimed to have extended the empire beyond the *Oceanus*, succeeding where Caesar had failed.[71] The geographer Pomponius Mela wrote an account of the archipelago in the very year in which Roman troops reached the shores of Britannia.[72] He is the first author to focus on the fauna, though with a clear interest in trade, like Caesar and Strabo, who were among his chief sources: according to Mela, the triangular island was large, rich in gemstones and pearls and fertile, but more suited to the needs of sheep than of men.[73] Iuverna (Hibernia) was even too perfect for grazing sheep: if they had too much of its abundant and sweet grass, they would simply burst.[74] Such anecdotes were to evoke the image of primitive shepherds, for Mela goes on to say that the 'uncivilised' (*incultus*) Britons owned only land and sheep and were ruled by equally 'uncivilised' kings. They painted themselves blue and were continuously warring with each other, using scythed chariots (*covinni*).[75] This statement and the

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[69] Livy 105 F 36 Levene (= 33 W-M) *ap.* Tac. *Agr.* 10.3, after Reed 1973.

[70] Livy 105 F 37 Levene (= 34 W-M) *ap.* Jord. *Get.* 2.10 (cited through Tac. *Agr.* 10.5, directly after the undated Livian fragment in the previous footnote), after Reed 1973, 767–774. Such an expedition would fit the context of indirect Roman rule in Britain, cf. Juhász 2016, 145 n. 5; on indirect rule Braund 1996, 12–97; Mattingly 2006, 68–77 and Creighton 2006, 3–29.

[71] *ILS* 212.1.40, cf. Günnewig 1998, 259. In the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, a sculpture shows Claudius besting the Britannia; cf. Erim 1982; Salway 1993, 50; Lampinen 2025, 159–164.

[72] Mela 3.49. The 'ethnographical' interest of Mela was already acknowledged by Silberman 1988.

[73] Mela 3.50–51. Reed 1973, 774 presumed Mela had wilfully ignored more recent ideas on the shape of Britain, since he seems well informed otherwise: he is the first author to mention the Orcades (Orkney, Mela 3.54) and Haemodae (Shetland Islands?; *loc. cit.*, cf. Bianchetti in this volume for these islands) and may thus also have used information based on the circumnavigation of Agrippa. The islands are later mentioned by Plin. *HN* 4.30, who has 40 instead of 30 Orcades, and Ptol. *Geog.* 2.2, who both based their distances on Agrippa; Plin. *HN* 4.102; Reed 1973, 775. Oros. 1.2.78 ultimately speaks of 33 Orcades. That Mela did not follow Agrippa in his definition of Britain's shape may then be attributed to a preference for other sources. For the sources of Mela's descriptions cf. Parroni 1984, 406–407; Silberman 1988, 282–286.

[74] Mela 3.53. Mela's chief source may have been Pytheas or Philemon, who lived from *ca*. 5 to 60 CE. Cf. Silberman 1988, 286 and Haake 2011 for Philemon. Philemon claims to have learned of the measures of Ierne from merchants, which also suggests that the Romans did gather some data on the island. Cf. Philem. F 4 (Haake) *ap.* Ptol. *Geog.* 1.11.8.

[75] Mela 3.51–52.

unhistorical mention of chariots of a type common only in western Asia meant a rejection both of Diodorus' idealising image of peace and Strabo's assurance that the Britons posed no military threat.[76] Mela likely sought to vindicate Claudius' military intervention, an assumption that is confirmed by his account of Iuverna: it was impossible to grow crops on the island and its inhabitants knew neither virtue, nor piety nor discipline, in fact, they were worse 'barbarians' than any other known people.[77] Such a singularising comparison separated them from the rest of mankind and reinforced Strabo's message that no one could have an interest in ever setting foot on such a remote island – hence, Claudius was right to ignore Hibernia.[78]

A slight refutation of this perspective can only be found in the works of Tacitus, because he located Hibernia (south)west, not north of Britain – just like Pliny. Accordingly, Tacitus assumed that the climate, fertility and people of both countries were very much alike and that it could be a valuable addition to the empire.[79] Tacitus clearly argued this way because his father-in-law Agricola had planned to install a dependent ruler in Hibernia to make it impossible for Rome's enemies to flee thither.[80] It is of course characteristic for Tacitus to criticise the policy of Domitian, who had apparently denied Agricola his expedition to Ireland.[81] That will also have been the reason why he repeatedly has Britannic characters remind his readers of the failure of Caesar's attempts to subjugate Britannia.[82] He also regularly praises the bravery of the Britons and their leaders such as Boudica, while the Roman 'client' queen Cartimandua is portrayed as cruel and corrupt. On the one hand, the latter example shows that Roman nobles – and Tacitus as their representative – detested the rule of a woman, on the other hand Tacitus glorified Cartimandua's husband as a freedom fighter, just like Caratacus, and thus gives Rome's enemies a better treatment than its allies.[83] His most prominent criticism of the conditions in Rome can be found in the famous speech of Calgacus, leader of the Caledonians who fought against Agricola in the early 80s CE.[84] For Calgacus, *imperium* and *pax Romana* are euphemisms for plunder and destruction: '[…] They make a desert and call it peace.'[85] Calgacus' speech is contrasted with that of Agricola, however, who emphasises the feat of his army to have become the first to reach the end both of the world (*terra*) and of nature (*natura*).[86] Perhaps he accentuated both terms to insinuate that the

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[76] Cf. Diod. Sic. 5.21.6; Ireland 2008, 38 (chariots). That Mela ignores their agriculture also amplifies this image (cf. Silberman 1988, 283) and their internal strife makes them an easy target for invasion (Günnewig 1998, 279).

[77] Mela 3.53: *cultores eius inconditi sunt et omnium virtutium ignari <magis> quam aliae gentes* [*aliquatenus tamen gnari*], *pietatis admodum expertes*. Mela's statement (in 3.49) that Claudius is currently opening up Britannia means the contrast with Iuverna will only increase.

[78] See also the similar interpretation by Silberman 1988, 286.

[79] Tac. *Agr.* 24.1–2; he adds that a Roman Hibernia could connect Gaul with Iberia; cf. Plin. *HN* 4.30. See Soderberg 2013.

[80] Tac. *Agr.* 24.3. Furthermore, the freedom of the Hibernians motivated others to continue their resistance.

[81] Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 11.20.1 and *Germ*. 37.2 on his criticism of imperial policy in Germania, with Timpe 1996, 48.

[82] Tac. *Ann.* 12.34 (Caratacus), *Agr.* 15.4 (allies of Boudica).

[83] Braund 1996, 124–146 points out there are two different Boudicas in the *Agricola* and the *Annals*, however. Cf. Gillespie 2015, 410–418 for Boudica in Tacitus (see also De Castro 2024) and Gillespie 2018, 48–51 on the portrayal of Cartimandua.

[84] For the historical context, see Braund 1996, 166–171.

[85] Tac. *Agr.* 30.6: *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*

[86] Tac. *Agr.* 33.3–4.

Ocean beyond Caledonia was the limit between the sphere of the mortals and the realm of the dead. And while Calgacus calls his kind the last of the free, who lived at the end of the world, independent and unconquered and yet targeted by the greedy Romans,[87] for Agricola, their freedom is cowardice: like the weakest animals of the forest, they had run away instead of confronting their hunter, and now, even the Ocean was falling under Roman control and losing its terrifying aura.[88]

Tacitus' comparison between the Caledonians and animals corresponds to their reception of Calgacus' speech: they '[…] reacted to it with enthusiasm, expressed in the barbarian fashion with roaring, singing, and inarticulate cries'.[89] In some regards, the 'barbarians' of the North could be admired, but, overall, they remained a foreign *Gegenwelt*.[90] Calgacus had claimed the Romans did not know the land and relied on their Britannic, Gallic and Germanic auxiliaries who would revolt in the case of defeat.[91] And yet, Agricola's address as well as the outcome of the battle illustrate that Agricola was right.[92] As a successful official in the empire, Tacitus ultimately profited from imperial rule, so that his moral criticism of the conditions in (Domitian's) Rome did nothing to undermine his Roman identity.[93]

In any case, Tacitus composed a detailed ethnographic account of the people of Britannia, in which he noted a number of common traits: most importantly, they were wilder (*ferocia*) than the now lazy Gauls, since they had not known peace for long.[94] Like Caesar and Mela, Tacitus assumes that continuous war had reigned on the island, just like the *topoi* for Celts and other northerners would suggest.[95] And like all Celts, they followed their innate *thymos* (θυμός), which was reflected in battle: though their chariots were dangerous, only their first charge was a threat.[96] Caledonians as well as Silures, Ordovices, Brigantes and Trinovantes were allegedly only dangerous from afar: in melee,

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87 Tac. *Agr.* 30.3–6, 31.3. Because of their isolation, slavery was unknown to them, while the rest of the world had grown accustomed to it (*Agr*. 31.3, 5); this also implies more criticism of how Domitian oppressed the *libertas* of Romans like Tacitus and Agricola. In 15.4 Boudica's rebels also name Roman greed as their motivation.

88 Tac. *Agr.* 34.1–2. Cf. Clarke 2001, 100–103.

89 Tac. *Agr.* 33.1: *excepere orationem alacres, ut barbaris moris, fremitu cantuque et clamoribus dissonis*. Translation from Birley 1999**.** Besides, Tacitus and Caesar imply that most Britons primarily fought for booty and only secondarily for *libertas*, cf. Günnewig 1998, 290.

90 Timpe 1996, 47. Braund 1996, 168–169 underlines that Calgacus rightly (in Tacitus' view) criticised Roman decadence and arrogance, but Agricola was exactly *not* the representative of these, showing Calgacus' ignorance.

91 Tac. *Agr.* 32.1–4. Possibly another Roman projection based on mistrust towards the auxilia, which were confirmed by the Batavian Revolt in 69 CE, portrayed by Tacitus in Books 4 and 5 of his *Histories*.

92 In a similar manner, he claims Agricola had conquered the hitherto-unknown Orcades (Orkneys), even though these had already been described by Mela 3.54 and Plin. *HN* 4.30; cf. Tac. *Agr.* 10.4, Günnewig 1998, 266.

93 Cf. Timpe 1996, 49; Scherr 2023, 223. The same is true for the criticism in Tac. *Ann.* 12.37 and Cass. Dio 60.33.3c put in the mouth of Caratacus, cf. Braund 1996, 113–115.

94 Tac. *Agr.* 11.5. The identical comparison can be found in Strabo (4.4.2), but referring to the subjugated Gauls and the free Germani; Tacitus therefore transferred this constellation to another border of the empire.

95 Tac. *Agr.* 12.2; Mela 3.52. Caes. *BGall.* 5.9.4 mentions a forest fort built for *belli domestici* and in 5.11.9 he alludes to Cassivellaunus' past war against the coastal peoples.

96 Tac. *Agr.* 36.3, 12.1. Polyb. 2.33.3–4 had declared that the fading strength of the Celts after the first assault was one of their general weaknesses. The cockiness of the Britons is also underlined in Tac. *Ann.* 14.36 (Trinovantes and Iceni) and *Hist.* 3.45 (Brigantes). In *Ann.* 14.33, 38 he adds the Britons loved plundering (when they should have focused on farming – a sign of an overbearing θυμός). The chariots allude to Homeric times, since Boudica gives an epic speech from her chariot; Tac. *Ann.* 14.35, Braund 1996, 137.

they lost to the Romans because they lacked proper armament.[97] At the same time, Tacitus points out great differences between the *ethne*: he suspects a Germanic origin for the Caledonians due to their red hair and height, while the Silurians (in modern Wales) with their darker complexion and curly hair must have immigrated from opposite Iberia. The southern Britons, meanwhile, are like the Gauls – again, Tacitus follows Caesar.[98] Due to their geographic locations, the three *ethne* lived in different climates, which conserved their ancestral character.[99] Britannia (England and Wales) was cloudy and rainy, but never really cold, it possessed precious metals and pearls and everything but olives and vine could grow there.[100] And as long as the Britons were not exploited, they accepted their subjection.[101]

Caledonia, however, had neither fertile plains nor harbours nor mines, its swamps and forests were impenetrable – the same was claimed by Pliny[102] – it was overlaid with terrible storms and did not even turn dark at night.[103] Accordingly, the Caledonians were devious and mad. Their kinship with the Germani, too, spoke for exceptional bravery and helped to glorify Agricola's victory.[104] And although their land was surrounded by the sea, they lacked the knowledge to build ships – a sign of primitivity.[105] Yet, indomitable warriors could also be found in the south: neither severity nor clemency could convince the Silures to accept Roman rule. Like the Caledonians, they were naturally treacherous and bold.[106] When the Silures and their allies retreated to the island of Mona (Anglesey) in 60/61 CE, the governor Suetonius Paulinus was faced with a terrible sight: on the beach, Britannic priestesses in black dresses, whom Tacitus calls *furiae*, were carrying torches, while druids were seemingly casting curses on the legions. Only when Paulinus brought his soldiers back to mind, they managed to storm the island and to destroy the 'barbaric' grove in which the Silurians had performed appalling rituals.[107] Their monstrous and frightening nature justified the violent Roman reaction: they were such a huge threat for peace that they had to be destroyed.[108] Yet, even in this case Tacitus puts some blame on the Romans: the former governor Publius Ostorius (47–52 CE) had announced that he would exterminate the Silures and thus pushed them into an unstoppable frenzy – a typical

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[97] See Tac. *Agr.* 36 on the Caledonians, who are armed with missiles, swords and small *caetrae*, while Tacitus stresses the lack of armour and helmets among Caratacus' soldiers in *Ann*. 12.35. Finally, the poor armament of the Iceni and Trinovantes under Boudica (*Ann.* 14.36–37) meant they had no chance to defeat the Romans. This is similar to Polybius' statement 2.30.8 that the Gallic swords and shields were inferior to those of the Romans.

[98] At the same time, his comparative methodology is based on Greek traditions; cf. Müller 1980, 98–99.

[99] Tac. *Agr.* 11.2–3. The influence of environmental determinism is also pointed out by Perl 1990, 33.

[100] Tac. *Agr.* 12.3–5. As Manning 2004, 60–62 illustrates, the peoples in England and Wales were indeed similar.

[101] Tac. *Agr.* 13.1. On Agricola 'civilising' the Britons see Scherr 2023, 217–225.

[102] Plin. *HN* 4.30. On northern Europe in Pliny, see Zehnacker 2004.

[103] Tac. *Agr.* 31.3 (mines); 22.1 (storms in Tanaum/Tauaum, the Firth of Tay); 12.5 (night), cf. Clarke 2001, 99. Judging by *Agr.* 26.4 and 38.3, the Romans were unable to follow the Caledonians into their swamps or forests.

[104] Tac. *Agr.* 26.1 (devious), 29.4, 38.1–2 (mad), cf. Günnewig 1998, 276.

[105] The Roman fleet faced no resistance and even scared the Caledonians: Tac. *Agr.* 23.2. Caes. *BGall.* 4.25.1–2 had stated the same about the southern Britons, so Tacitus is apparently moving the *topos* to the north.

[106] Tac. *Ann.* 12.32 (severity), 33 (bold, cf. 38), 39 (ambushes).

[107] Tac. *Ann.* 14.29–30. Tacitus' human sacrifices are, however, confirmed by the archaeological evidence; cf. Mattingly 2006, 62.

[108] See further Tac. *Ann.* 12.40: The strong Roman reaction speaks for considerable losses; cf. Manning 2004, 62.

example for the ambivalence of Tacitus' historiography.[109] The great difference between the Silures and other Britons may thus simply be the result of a literary construction in Tacitus' master narrative of how the Romans conquered Britannia.[110]

The conquests of Roman troops in the first century CE helped to qualify existing ideas about the extension and shape of Britain: Pliny, Tacitus, Plutarch and Dionysius Periegetes rightly noted that the land was larger than all islands of the Mediterranean and Ptolemy defined the quadrangular form of both Britannia and Hibernia more precisely than ever before.[111] Even the name of Caledonia was now resounding throughout the empire: when the Amphitheatrum Flavium opened with a spectacular show, a Caledonian bear was the main attraction.[112] According to Tacitus, Agricola's fleet had even reached the Orcades (Orkney) and spotted the legendary Thule from afar, and Pliny, too, accepted the existence of Thule.[113] And yet, Seneca was still able to claim that Britain lay in an uncharted sea, Plutarch thought its inhabitants were wild and poor, Probus wrote it lay under an unknown sky and Flavius Josephus even asserted nothing was known about the island.[114] The old *topoi* did not fall out of use, but they were continuously moved northwards: for Tacitus, modern day England and Wales with their fertile plains, valuable raw materials and semi-cultivated peoples had the potential to be assimilated to Roman culture after the model of Gaul. This was the basis for a permanent, peaceful Roman province. In the harsh landscapes of Caledonia, meanwhile, savage warriors with an indomitable thirst for freedom continued to resist Rome and represented the opposite of Roman law and order.[115] Finally, Hibernia remained outside the *imperium*, only Agricola (and with him, Tacitus) ever considering it to be a land of some value.

## 4. The era of the Roman province

In the following centuries, Britannia became a Roman province like any other, symbolically limited by Hadrian's – and, temporarily, the Antonine – Wall in the north.[116] In the early third century, Septimius Severus undertook another attempt to subjugate the Caledonians,

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[109] Tac. *Ann.* 12.39. The portrayal of Boudica's rebellion is similar: despite all the criticism of the Roman administration (*Ann.* 14.31–32, 35, 38–39) Tacitus glorified Paulinus' victory, including the slaughter of women: *Ann.* 14.37. As Scherr 2023, 224 notes, 'civilisation' was only an instrument to bind the elites to Roman rule.

[110] Between this campaign in 60/61 CE and their conquest in 74 CE, the Silurians were ignored, another hint that they were not really that dangerous or different: cf. Manning 2004, 67 and see Salway 1993, 95 on their conquest.

[111] Plin. *HN* 4.30; Tac. *Agr.* 24.2; Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 23.3; Dionys. Per. 56; Ptol. *Geog.* 2.1–2. See Mattingly 2006, 30–31.

[112] Mart. *Spect.* 7. Sil. *Pun.* 3.597–602 praises the (alleged) conquest of Caledonia, just like Val. Flacc. *Argon.* 1.7–9, calling the North Sea 'Caledonian Ocean'.

[113] Tac. *Agr.* 10.6, Plin. *HN* 4.30. Finally, Pytheas' testimony could be believed, cf. Dion 1977, 279.

[114] Sen. *Apocol.* 12.13; Joseph. *BJ* 3.1.2 (4); [Prob.] *Comm. ad Verg. G.* 1.229; Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 23.4. On the other hand, in *Anth. Lat.* 419, 423 it is claimed Ocean has been bested.

[115] Tacitus always speaks of the inhabitants of Caledonia, not of one Caledonian *gens*, probably because he thought their volatile character prevented political cooperation, as Günnewig 1998, 279–280 observed. Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.142 and Plin. *HN* 4.30 use Caledonia as a metaphor for the wild, remote North.

[116] Cf. Hanson 2004, 136–137 for the end of the Roman occupation of the Scottish Lowlands. Mattingly 2006, 122 emphasises that the Antonine Wall may still have been used as a line of demarcation after it had been abandoned.

however (208–210 CE).[117] The two contemporary authors Cassius Dio and Herodian, who largely followed Dio,[118] both included ethnographic passages in their accounts of Severus' campaign. It is striking that the two Greek authors use the name Britannia only for the land outside Hadrian's Wall.[119] According to Dio, these Britons consisted of two peoples (*genos*, γένος), the Maeatae, who dwelled directly beyond the wall, and the Caledonians, who were located further north.[120] Their land consisted of barren mountains, swamps and forests, in which the Romans were unable to force them to fight them for they were excellent swimmers.[121] Herodian adds that they did not care about the dirt, because they were not wearing clothes anyway as they wanted everyone to see their tattoos![122] Dio claims they usually lived in tents, but could bear any form of hunger, cold or exhaustion: the nude Caledonians often stayed in the swamps for days, feeding on roots and only holding their heads above water.[123] Otherwise, they preferred fruits, cattle and game. They were in fact so primitive that they did not even eat the abundant fish in their country and possessed neither fields nor walls nor cities.[124] The only things they ever carried with them were torques of iron – which they valued as much as other 'barbarians' valued gold – spears, swords and small shields.[125] Dio also mentions fast ponies and the well-known chariots.[126] The Caledonians never fled, but lured the Romans into traps: as insidious 'barbarians', they repeatedly placed their sheep flocks within sight of the Roman forces so they would follow them into the Highlands where the staggering number of 50 000 Roman soldiers was allegedly killed by ambushes and the harsh climate.[127]

The Maeatae and Caledonians thus only impress with endurance, simplicity and underhandedness.[128] Doubtlessly, Dio and Herodian followed Caesar, who mentions iron

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[117] The war was preceded by repeated raids from Caledonia into the province. Cass. Dio 72.8.2; Salway 1993, 157; Hanson 2004, 139. Cf. Mattingly 2006, 122–124 for the course of the war.

[118] Cf. Chrysanthou 2022.

[119] Hdn. 3.14.4, 6; Cass. Dio 77.12.1.

[120] Cass. Dio 77.12.1. Both groups appear as political confederations, which could have formed in reaction to fighting the Romans, similar to what happened in Germania: Hanson 2004; 156, Mattingly 2006, 431–432. Mattingly 2006, 124, 435 locates the Maeatae in Fife and Tayside and the Caledonii in Moray and the Grampians.

[121] Hdn. 3.14.6; 10; Cass. Dio 77.12.1.

[122] Hdn. 3.14.7. The tattoos usually portrayed animals. Tattoos were ascribed to, and actually borne by, Scythians (cf. Cunliffe 2019, 92, 377, 396) and Thracians (cf. Tsiafaki 2015 and her chapter in this volume).

[123] Cass. Dio 77.12.2, 4; cf. the same said about the Slavs (who even breath through straws while waiting underwater) in Maur. *Strat.* 11.4. Did the Caledonians inspire the famous scene in *Apocalypse Now*? They also ate a special food the size of a bean that satisfied their hunger for days – possibly alluding to porridge, or perhaps even haggis? Moffat 2000, 13 suggested that Dio meant the heath pea, since dried heath peas (*Lathyrus linifolius*) were consumed in pre-modern Scotland.

[124] Cass. Dio 77.12.1–2, evoking Tacitus' comment that they built no ships despite lying in the Ocean; above, p. 204.

[125] Hdn. 3.14.7–8; Tac. *Agr.* 36.1. Tacitus speaks of large swords (*ingens gladius*) and Herodian implies they are straight (*xiphos*, ξίφος), while Cass. Dio 77.12.3 has them use daggers (*enkheiridion*, ἐγχειρίδιον). Hence, for Tacitus the swords of the Caledonians are too big, for Dio they are too small.

[126] Cass. Dio 77.12.3. By now, chariots seem to have become an inevitable part of every ethnographic account.

[127] Cass. Dio 77.13.1–3; and yet, Septimius Severus advanced to the very end of Caledonia to observe the moon. In 77.12.4, Dio notes that their footmen were very fast and never broke. He had already reported in 73.8.2 that invading Caledonians had defeated a Roman army and in 76.5.4 that they betrayed a peace deal to support the Maeatae – Celtic *athesia* and the dexterity of their warriors being underlined.

[128] This is also illustrated by an anecdote in Cass. Dio 77.16.5: the empress Julia Domna asks the wife of the Caledonian chieftain Argentocoxus how Caledonian women could have such free intercourse with men. The

rings as a currency, and Tacitus, who introduced Caledonia as a dangerous Highland.[129] And yet, even Caesar's Britons were closer to 'civilisation' and Tacitus' Caledonians at least wore clothes. The third century Caledonians are therefore strongly contrasted with the inhabitants of the province, who have become Romans, as is also claimed by the imperial biographies of the *Historia Augusta*.[130] After the edict of Caracalla, the Britons thus became Roman citizens and were increasingly integrated into the empire, while the abandonment of the northern conquest meant the Caledonians were confirmed as external 'barbarians'.[131] Once again, the sources mask the real state of affairs, as the empire continued to exercise influence beyond Hadrian's Wall.[132] Archaeological excavations at sites such as Traprain Law (East Lothian) demonstrate that Roman coins and ceramics were still used in the territory between the two walls, suggesting continued diplomatic and commercial relations.[133] Yet, Rome's impact on the developments of the societies of modern Scotland remained remarkably low. Though Roman authors exaggerated the gap between the province and Caledonia, there were indeed marked differences.[134] The borders between those areas strongly shaped by Roman role models and those that were not did not run along Hadrian's Wall, however: large parts of northern England, all of Wales but the southeast, Cornwall and other parts of the West Country, too, were hardly urbanised, only occasionally used Roman coins and rarely imported Mediterranean products.[135] The authors of the extant texts were external observers and they reduced the complex heterogeneity of the island to a dichotomy between the lands north and south of the wall. They did so partly because of ignorance, partly to legitimate Roman rule and its spatial restriction.[136]

This is certainly also true for Dio, but his account of Boudica's rebellion leaves the reader a small hope that even the Caledonians might yet become Romans. After all, the Britons of the first century had been primitive tribes who shared their wives, elected the bravest men as political leaders, knew no luxury and lived in quasi-democratic societies. In the most famous passage, Boudica criticises Roman imperialism like Calgacus

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'barbarian' replied that the Caledonians would sleep with the best, just as nature willed it, while the Romans only slept with the vilest – and in secret. A typical moral lesson from the 'noble savage'.

129 Caes. *BGall.* 5.12.4; Tac. *Agr.* 31.3.

130 According to SHA *Hadr.* 11.2, Hadrian built a wall to separate Romans from 'barbarians', while SHA *Ant. Pius* 5.3 mentions 'barbarian' incursions and SHA *Prob.* 18.8 that the inhabitants of the province had received the right to grow wine. cf. SHA *Hadr.* 16.3 on harsh Britannic winters.

131 Cf. Bianchetti 2014, 126. On the outcome of the campaign cf. Kehne 1989, 130 against Mattingly 2006, 124.

132 Cf. Mann 1992; Esmonde Cleary 1989, 51.

133 Hanson 2004, 140–143. The settlement at Edinburgh Castle was another such case; see *ibid.*, 147. On Roman forts north of Hadrian's Wall cf. Esmonde Cleary 1989, 51 and fig. 10 (49). Jewellery from the empire became particularly popular and often marked higher status, cf. Hanson 2003, 153–154 with fig. 9.6. At Traprain Law, in Ballinrees (Co. Derry) and in Ballina (Co. Limerick) hoards of hacksilver have been found, possibly presents to friendly or dangerous princes: Esmonde Cleary 1989, 99; Warner 2020. There was also an active slave trade (Foster 1996, 101) and Roman influences on Pictish burial rites (Halsall 2013, 128) and symbol stones (Foster 1996, 78).

134 Foster 1996, 56–64; Hanson 2004, 157.

135 Higham 1992, 28–42; Haselgrove 2004, 20–26. Northern England was probably kept under martial law to ease supply of the garrisons at Hadrian's Wall: Mattingly 2011, 222–223.

136 Further reasons are discussed by Günnewig 1998, 265, 269–270 and Mattingly 2011, 35–36 (with tab. 1.4), who singles out the desire to degrade Caledonians (Cass. Dio 76.15–14) and Silurians (Tac. *Ann.* 12.39) as enemies.

had done in Tacitus' *Agricola*, though the Roman perspective is (again) obvious.[137] A remarkably intelligent woman with glaring eyes and a terrifying voice, she had claimed to fight for the freedom of all Britons, against the greed of Rome.[138] The manly female leader indirectly compares herself to the effeminate emperor Nero.[139] And though the Britons lacked chainmail and walls, they knew every corner of their mountains and swamps, which they often crossed nude, and could easily bear hunger and cold – their remote position is thus the source of their strength.[140] And yet, Boudica's huge army is roundly defeated by Suetonius Paulinus.[141] The parallels to the Caledonians in the accounts of Tacitus and his admirer Dio are all too apparent. Dio may underline the fight of a simple people for their freedom, but they remain culturally inferior. The trust of Boudica in her army's strengths is nothing but the typical ostentation of northerners – Celts in particular – since the 'barbarians' end up losing, just like a Roman audience expected them to.[142] We learn nothing about Boudica's role as a woman and leader, but much about the savagery of the Britons and the faults of Nero's ignorant policies, which had led to the brutal uprising in the first place.[143] And yet, these same Britons had become Romans by Dio's time, so maybe there was still hope for the Caledonians, too – in some far future.

Not long after the reign of Caracalla, Gaius Iulius Solinus described the British Isles in his paradoxographic work *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (also known as *De mirabilibus mundi*).[144] He states the province is rich in metals and coal and the landscape dominated by large rivers. Most of its inhabitants were 'barbarians', however, for they painted themselves from childhood.[145] This statement comes as a surprise, but at the same time Solinus stresses that the island Tanatus (Thanet in Kent) was very fertile and its people healthy.[146] That the best portion of Britain can be found in Cantium shows that Solinus is (indirectly) following his source Caesar, which would explain why he calls the Britons 'barbarians'.[147] In the same vein, he repeats Mela's anecdote on the exploding sheep in Ireland. Solinus' Hibernians, too, are uncouth 'barbarians', and they like to drink the blood of their enemies – like Herodotus' Scythians – or paint themselves with it.[148] This is a creative mash-up of the old Herodotean *topos* and the body-painting of the Britons

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137 Cass. Dio 62.2.1. Dio chose the monstrous Boudica of the *Agricola*, not the idealised woman of the *Annals*, cf. Braund 1996, 144–145.

138 Cass. Dio 62.2.2–3 (Boudica); 62.3.1–4.3 (freedom/slavery); on Tacitus see above p. 202–203. On the outward appearance of Boudica and its significance cf. Günnewig 1998, 273, 276; Gillespie 2018, 70–72.

139 Cass. Dio 62.6.5. Dio also meant to criticise Roman elite women this way: Gillespie 2015, 419. See Porucznik above, p. 118–120.

140 Cass. Dio 62.5.3–6.

141 Cass. Dio 62.8.2 (number of warriors), 62.12 (battle), cf. Günnewig 1998, 259.

142 This *topos* can be found, e.g., in Pos. F 274 (E-K) *ap.* Str. 4.4.5 and Polyb. 2.29.7–8. The boasting is motivated by their *hybris*, which is equally characteristic for northerners, cf. Gieseke 2023, 204–205.

143 Cf. Günnewig 1998, 279–281; Gillespie 2015, 419–427. Significantly, Dio frames the episode within Nero shaving off his beard (Cass. Dio 61.21, 62.1.1) and the emperor's love life (62.13.1).

144 Cf. Brodersen 2013, 186–188 for the dating of author and work. On Solinus, see Ilyushechkina's chapter.

145 Solin. 22.10–11(18–19) on landscape, 22.12(20) on locals painting themselves.

146 Solin. 22.8(10). For the identification of Tanatus cf. Merrills 2005, 263.

147 See above p. 198. Solinus may have been born in Rome, which could explain his disdain for provincials, cf. Baier & Brodersen 2014, 7, or he was following Pliny, through whom he may have read Caesar: Brodersen 2016.

148 Solin. 22.2–3; Mela 3.53; Hdt. 4.64.1. In contrast to Herodotus, Solinus does not offer a more positive context. The negative traits of the Irish in the early eight-century *Cosm. Aeth.* 25 may be party based on Solinus.

that serves to frame the Hiberni as the most 'barbaric' of all northerners. The same is true for the claim that their sons are born on the swords of their fathers to dedicate their lives to war, which may allude both to Herodotus' Scythian sword cult and Aristotle's stories about how the Celts expose their children to the cold from early on.[149] Once again, these phenomena are grounded in the environment, with Hibernia lying in a rough and distant sea, which the 'barbarians' crossed in small boats made of wickerwork and cow hides – these were already mentioned by Solinus' source Pliny.[150] Such a surfeit of boldness is typical for northern 'barbarians'. Solinus also implicitly compares between the Britons in the province and the Hibernians to evocate the well-known opposition: while the Britons put paint on their skin, the Hibernians used blood, and while the soil of Tanatus allegedly killed dangerous snakes, the dust of Hibernia drove (the useful) bees away.[151]

Like Tacitus (and Pliny), Solinus also singles out the Silures.[152] Allegedly, they used no coins and retained their pre-Roman customs and religious beliefs.[153] While Roman coinage was indeed uncommon in Wales and its social structure relatively unaffected by Roman rule, there is one area that is an exception: the southeast, the very homeland of the Silures.[154] Solinus may have had concrete knowledge of Roman Wales, but in following Tacitus' account of the Silures, he applied them to the wrong people. He goes beyond earlier authors when discussing the north and states Odysseus had erected a Greek shrine in Caledonia, which still stood *in situ*. This is his only remark on the Scottish mainland, and it is not necessarily in conflict with Dio's account of the country because their common role model Tacitus had related that Odysseus had founded a town in Germania.[155] Of great significance are Solinus' passages on the Scottish islands, which before him had only been mentioned, but not described by Pliny.[156] Solinus writes that the five Ebudes (Hebrides) stand under the rule of a single king, who, by law, possesses neither women nor riches.[157] In fact, the whole land of the kingdom was in the hands of the community. The diet of the Ebudians, meanwhile, consisted only of fish and milk, for they were ignorant of grain.[158] Such a seemingly paradoxical combination of idealising and degrading elements was common in ethnographic texts and served to both entertain and provoke the reader, evoking images of the Golden Age of early humanity.[159] Maybe the Hebrides were so far away and so little known that they were the perfect setting for the

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149 Solin. 22.3(4); Hdt. 4.62; Arist. *Pol*. 1336a. On sword worship, see also p. 86 above.

150 Solin. 22.4(6), Plin. *HN* 4.30, cf. Brodersen 2016 for Pliny as the source. This may be an allusion to the Egyptian boats of acacia wood in Hdt. 2.96–97, whose existence has recently been proven (Belov 2019), but similar wicker boats were once widespread in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, so that the reports of Pliny and Solinus may be based on empirical facts. Cf. McGrail 2014, 9; 186.

151 Solin. 22.3(5) on Hibernia; 8(10) on Tanatus. Hibernia, too, knew no snakes (22.3) – this, however, is true.

152 As observed by Richmond 1955, 23 and disputed by Günnewig 1998, 302, who argued the peoples in Wales and Scotland were not described differently from the southern Britons during the first century CE. It is striking that Solinus still highlights the Silurians in the province, however, and even Günnewig admits that Dio marked the Caledonians as more dangerous. Plin. *HN* 4.30 locates Siluria between the rest of Britannia and Hibernia.

153 Solin 22.7(9). Like Tanatus, Wales is wrongly defined as an island.

154 Cf. Higham 1992, 36–37, 41–42.

155 Solin. 22.1; Tac. *Germ*. 3.1. My thanks go to Antti Lampinen for the observation.

156 He only gave their number; Brodersen 2013, 189. Plin. *HN* 4.30.

157 Solin. 22.9(13–16).

158 Solin. 22.9(12–13).

159 Cf. Gieseke 2019 for the example of the Gauls in Posidonius and Diodorus.

half-mythological *mirabilia* Solinus was interested in, and the positive elements parallel the idea of the blessed Hyperboreans. Solinus adds that the yet smaller and more distant Orcades (Orkney) were unsettled and did not even have trees.[160] Beyond them lay only Thule: this was the end of the world.[161]

All these accounts raise one further question: did the Britons under Roman rule share such views towards Caledonia and Hibernia? Unfortunately, there are no extant texts from Latin authors who were born in Britannia during the period of Roman rule. Though we do have material evidence, not a single 'northern barbarian' appears on the mosaics of Roman *villae* in Britannia, for instance.[162] The only safely identifiable depiction of a Caledonian can be found on a bronze statue of Caracalla from Volubilis in North Africa. The unarmoured warrior wears typical Celtic trousers with a tartan pattern akin to those of his descendants, while oval Celtic *thyreos* shields lie beneath his feet.[163] In Britannia itself, several tombstones feature Roman horsemen who ride down naked Gallic looking 'barbarians'. Most of the illustrations date to the period of conquest and portray the (southern) Britons naked, bearded and protected by *thyreoi* – common visual *topoi* about Celts.[164] Some of the stelae depict enemies with the small, rectangular shields, however, and may represent Caledonians – Tacitus had already spoken of small shields.[165] They reflect actual differences between the Caledonians and their southern neighbours.[166] Such realistic images remain rare: one of the Vindolanda tablets asserts that the cavalry of the Caledonians – diminutively termed *Brittunculi* – lacked armour, swords and javelins and only impressed with their number: typical 'barbarians'.[167] And an undated inscription from Hadrian's Wall speaks of the victory of a Roman cavalry patrol over *barbari*. Yet, there is also a dedication from Camulodunum, erected in the time of Severus Alexander (r. 222–235 CE), by a Lossio Veda, who calls himself grandson of Vepogenus, a Caledonian.[168] Apparently, the image of dangerous *barbari* beyond the wall could be used by the soldiers on the ground whenever it suited their aims, but peaceful encounters with Caledonians were part of everyday life as well.

At the same time, the material sources confirm that the province of Britannia had gained a genuinely Roman character. Dedications to the *genius* of (the province of)

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[160] This is correct, however: trees have not grown on the Orkneys since pre-Roman times: Castleden 2002, 33–34. On the character of his work and his interests see Baier & Brodersen 2014, 7–8.

[161] Solin. 22.9(17).

[162] Even the mosaics of the Rudston Villa in Yorkshire, which show dark-skinned foreigners, are a clear imitation of a scene from the Zliten mosaic in Libya; cf. Dunbabin 1999, 120–121; Beeson 2022, 41–42.

[163] 'First tartan' on Roman statue, 4 December 2012, BBC News: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-20579219. It was already described by Boube-Piccot 1966.

[164] *RIB* 121, *RIB* 201, *RIB* 551, *RIB* 3185. They are similar to Hellenistic stelae of Galatians: Kistler 2009, 38–65.

[165] Tac. *Agr*. 36.1. The so-called Bridgeness Slab (*RIB* 2139) is the best example, since it was dedicated by men of the Legio II Augusta who were constructing a section of the Antonine Wall near Bo'ness in 142/143 CE.

[166] Cf. Hunter 2009, 796. The Birsay Stone, a Pictish monument from Orkney (*ca*. 700 CE), features three warriors with very small, rectangular shields (Morris 2021, 602) and the Clonoura Shield from Co. Tipperary – used by Hibernians (Rafferty 2005, 147) – is also somewhat similar. *RIB* 550 from Chester suggests rectangular shields may also have been common in Wales. That the southern Britons preferred the oval *thyreos* is attested by the Battersea Shield and by the coins of the Catuvellauni and Cantiaci; Evans 1864 pl. II, 9; VIII, 6–9. Why the Caledonian from Volubilis uses a *thyreos* is a matter of debate, it could just be a *topos* for Celts.

[167] Tab. Vindol. 164. Horsemen in the Caledonian army were already mentioned in Tac. *Agr.* 35.3.

[168] *RIB* 946, *RIB* 191.

Britannia can be found as early as the second half of the second century CE, when a centurion of Legio II Augusta placed an altar at the Antonine Wall.[169] The cult was popular among the garrisons at the walls, who would have venerated the protector goddess because they saw themselves as the defenders of the ultimate border of the *imperium*.[170] In a similar vein, the province appears as the goddess Britannia, in the style of Athena/Minerva or Roma, on coins from the second and third centuries CE. Her shield is fitted with a rare, thorny shield boss, which is exclusively known from eastern Germania.[171] Perhaps, the important role of Germanic auxilia in the conquest of Britain can explain its inclusion.[172] Since the time of Hadrian, Britannia is shown as sitting on a pile of rocks, just like Trajan's Dacia – both new acquisitions after the Augustan period.[173] Hadrian thus built on the military legitimation of his predecessor and chose Britannia because of his commitment to the island and the erection of his wall.[174] Later emperors depicted the Britannia similarly, with two exceptions: a series of sesterces of Commodus from 184 CE portrays Britannia in the pose of the *fides publica*, but armed.[175] According to Lajos Juhász, the emperor chose this motif after a Caledonian raid had triggered a mutiny among the Roman troops in Britannia. Commodus altered his Britannia in a bid to refer to the *fides publica* of the province, as he could not laud the *fides* of the legions.[176] By ascribing such *fides* to the Britannia, he acknowledges her *Romanitas*. The emissions of the usurper Carausius one century later send an even clearer message: Britannia is shaking his hand, and on one coin she is even crowning him with a laurel wreath above an altar.[177] This Britannia is equal to Roma: the province has chosen Carausius as emperor of the Romans. Such an iconographic language could only work if the *Romanitas* of Britannia was widely accepted.[178]

The material evidence, both from Britain and the imperial centre, thus fits the dichotomy found in the literary sources – though the extant objects mostly represent the view of the military, the same is true for most of the (Roman) men who wrote about Britain. The last century of Roman rule did little to alter their views: in a panegyric for Constantine from 310 CE, it is claimed that Constantine's father Constantius I (*ca*. 250–306 CE), who had died in Eboracum, had only come to Britain in the first place because its position on the boundary of the world allowed for a smooth passage into the after world. That Constantius actually marched north to repel the Picts does not matter for the audience.[179] The author describes Constantius' journey in several phases: from Eboracum, he moved past Caledonians and Picts, along Hibernia and then Thule to reach the Isles of

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[169] The inscription was found at Langmuir, Kirkintilloch (East Dunbartonshire): *RIB* 2175.

[170] Cf. Juhász 2016, 146–147. *RIB* 64 was even erected by an imperial freedman called Nikomedes.

[171] Juhász 2016, 147–151; Kontny 2008, 108, 122–126.

[172] There is no discussion of this issue in existing scholarship. Other solutions are possible, such as a general association with the North and thus perceived similarities between Britannia and Germania.

[173] Juhász 2016, fig. 2 and fig. 3 compares the two images.

[174] Cf. Juhász 2016, 149.

[175] *RIC* III 437; *LIMC Britannia* 11; *MIR* 18.648.

[176] Cass. Dio 78.8.1–10.1; SHA *Pert.* 3.5–6. See Juhász 2016, 153–154.

[177] Juhász 2016, fig. 12; *BRI*-4/1–3; *RIC* V/2 774–776. On Carausius, see Casey 2005.

[178] Another Carausius coin featured a quote from Virgil: Higham 1992, 32; Bédoyère 1998.

[179] *Pan. Lat.* 6(7).7.1–2, cf. Enenkel 2000, 107–108.

the Blessed and finally Jupiter himself.[180] While Eboracum is in Roman lands, Caledonia is *barbaricum* and Hibernia lies before the gates to the underworld. It is worth noting, however, that the *topos* of remoteness is still being applied to all of Britannia: though the province was a valuable part of the empire, it would never be one of its core territories.[181]

Ammianus Marcellinus (*ca.* 330–400 CE) then describes one last major war against the peoples of Northern Britain. Their constant attacks had shattered the province, an important grain producer, in the 360s CE.[182] At this point, the Caledonians, whose name is gradually replaced by that of the Picts, [183] the Scoti, who were immigrating to western Scotland, the Attacotti, possibly another Caledonian group, and the Saxons formed a great 'barbarian' conspiracy against Rome.[184] Research has proven the magnitude of the threat – Ammianus did not exaggerate.[185] The invaders annihilated two Roman armies, which prompted Valentinian I to send the *comes* Theodosius to Britain.[186] At the end of the world[187] he faced various savages, who were such a bad influence that many Roman soldiers and citizens had joined them in pillaging the land. While the Romans had 'civilised' the native Britons through exemplary *mores*, the northerners were so depraved that they had the opposite effect and 'barbarised' Romans.[188] Latinius Pacatus Drepanius adds that Theodosius pushed the Scoti back into their swamps (*paludes*).[189]

The sources of the third and fourth centuries illustrate that the division of Britannia into a Roman province and a Caledonian 'barbaricum' was commonly known and accepted.[190] By degrading the free and militarily potent groups beyond the wall to 'animalistic' raiders, they kept legitimising the (symbolic) borders of the empire. Fittingly, Hibernia, which had remained far away from Roman rule, is hardly referred to

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[180] *Pan. Lat*. 6(7).7.2–3. Possibly based on traditions of locating end-myths in the Atlantic: see Lampinen in this volume, p. 180–181.

[181] A slightly earlier panegyric emphasises Britannia's exports: *Pan. Lat*. 8(5).8.11.

[182] Amm. Marc. 26.4.5 (incursions); 17.2.3 (grain). Amm. Marc. 23.6.88 speaks of the pearls of Britannia, a topic that had been treated by Tac. *Agr.* 12.6–7, Plin. *HN* 9.116, Suet. *Iul.* 47 and Solin. 53.28. On the date of the *barbarica conspiratio* see Blockley 1980, on grain exports Witschel 1999, 371.

[183] Amm. Marc. 27.8.5 on the Picts being made up of the Verturiones and the Dicalydones, who must be identified with the Caledonii. On the localisation of both groups cf. the reconstructions of Foster 1996, fig. 1b (12) and Halsall 2013, fig. 3.4 (43). The first mention of the Picts is in *Pan. Lat*. 8(5).11.4 from the late third century.

[184] Amm. Marc. 26.4.5. The phrasing in 27.8.5, however, sounds as if the Saxons (supported by Franks) had only invaded Gaul, not Britain. As for the Attacotti, Esmonde Cleary 1989, 50–51 has them in Scotland, Mattingly 2006, 437 in southern Ireland. On the immigration of the Scoti from Northern Ireland cf. Johnson 1980, 63–68. For Ammianus' sources, including Solinus, see Feraco 2011.

[185] Cf. Johnson 1980, 94–100; Mattingly 2006, 232–233.

[186] The father of the later emperor; cf. Amm. Marc. 27.8.2–3 for the events. Ammianus states in 27.8.1 that they had killed the *comes* Nectaridus and captured the *dux* Fullofaudes – this sounding like two separate battles.

[187] The *orbis extrema* (27.8.6) may only refer to Bononia (Boulogne) in northern Gaul – what was Britannia, then?

[188] Amm. Marc. 27.8.9–10 (natives and deserters); 28.3.1–2 (Roman successes). This also corresponded to Ammianus' narrative, in which the reign of Theodosius I, during which he was writing, was a darker epoch than the period of the Constantinian dynasty; cf. Wijnendaele 2022, 222–223.

[189] *Pan. Lat*. 2(12).5.2–4. However, as early as 383 CE, Scoti and Picts returned – this time being stopped by Magnus Maximus (*Chron. Gall*. *452*, c. 6–7 Gratian, fourth year – and in the 390s Stilicho fought them, too, cf. Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 2.247–255.

[190] Aurelius Victor emphasised the value of Britannia (Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 20) and archaeological research paints the picture of a stable province where, like in other northwestern provinces, pre-Roman traditions blended with Roman influences in specific forms which should not be equated with poverty or isolation: Witschel 1999, 362–374.

during the second half of Roman rule in Britain. Only two writers mention it at all: the Christian historiographer Orosius surprisingly points out that Hibernia, though smaller than Britannia, was more fertile and richer due to the weather and the soils. The same was true for Mevania (Isle of Man), which was equally settled by Scoti.[191] The remaining description of the world, including the passages on Britain and Gaul, is strikingly sober.[192] Perhaps Orosius knew of the early Christian communities of Ireland and wanted to motivate his colleagues in Hispania to carry their Christian beliefs to lands beyond the merely political borders of the empire.[193] In the so-called *Orphic Argonautica* around 400 CE, Ireland appears under the old name Ierne as the last stop on a trip from the mortal world to the underworld, similar to its role in the Constantine panegyric.[194] In difference to Caledonia, Hibernia remained a quasi-mythical place and not even Orosius really cared about the actual conditions on the island.[195]

Around 410 CE, the empire finally lost control over Britannia. Writing about a century later, the pagan historian Zosimus states that the province, which he – like Ammianus – describes as an important exporter of grain,[196] had suffered greatly under Saxon raids.[197] When its inhabitants eventually prevailed, they decided to live after their own laws. According to Zosimus, Honorius (r. 393–423 CE) acknowledged their independence in a famous letter.[198] The reality was certainly more complex, with threats on other fronts and regular usurpations from Britannia, but there can be no doubt that Britain ceased to be part of the Imperium.[199] The sources analysed here show that the Romans saw Britannia as a valuable province and accepted the majority of the Britons as proper Roman citizens.[200] The Caledonians remained in opposition to these Romano-Britons,

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191 Oros. 1.2.81, 82.

192 Oros. 1.2.63–67 (Gaul); 76–78 (Britannia), cf. Janvier 1982, *passim*. Ó Corráin 2017 postulated Orosius must have been a Briton who had spent time in Ireland. Since Avitus of Braga calls Orosius his *compresbyter* in Bracara (*Ep.* in *PL* 41.806), a Lusitanian origin for Orosius is usually assumed. Against that view, Ó Corráin asserts Orosius only became a priest in Bracara after his flight from Hibernia: Ó Corráin 2017, 117–130.

193 Oros. 1.2.71 states the lighthouse of Brigantia connects Iberia with Britannia; he also was well informed about the Scoti and the Orkneys (cf. Janvier 1982, 230–231, 242), while monasticism did exist in Ireland from the fifth century (Brown & Herren 2002, 30–37). This explanation seems more realistic than inventing an Irish background for Orosius. Soon, Irish authors adopted his idea of their Iberian origin (cf. MacNeill 2020, 51).

194 *Arg. Orph.* 1166, 1181: νῆσοι ἰερνίοι. Cf. Vian 1987a and Schelske 2011 for this text. The Argonauts then sail to the islands of Demeter (1189) and Circe (1207). These Iernians may have been inspired by the image of the Hyperboreans once again. Schelske 2011, 366 (cf. Vian 1987b, 258) suggested that the whole of the British Isles could be meant – possibly to make them appear more mysterious by giving them the name of Ierne?

195 The difference is exemplified by the late Roman invention that Claudius had conquered the Orcades: Eutr. 7.13; Oros. 7.6.10. That this was conceivable shows that Caledonia was not as unknown as Hibernia; cf. Braund 1996, 150 for the Flavian background. On the question of whether the Orkney islands were ever conquered cf. Montesanti 2010.

196 Zos. 3.5.2. This was an accurate statement: Witschel 1999, 371–373.

197 Zos. 6.5.2 speaks of 'barbarians' from beyond the Rhine, with Franks targeting Gaul and the Saxons assaulting Britain. His report is confirmed by *Chron. Gall. 452*, c. 61, Honorius, 16th year (409/410 CE). Halsall 2013, 81–82 points out chronological issues, so that the event can only be dated to 'around 410 CE', cf. Woolf 2003, 348–350 for this source. The old question about whether Zosimus' text mentions Britannia or Bruttium, cannot be fully answered, but with Thompson 1982 I would favour Britannia.

198 Zos. 6.5.3 (laws), 6.10.2 (letter). His source was Olympiodorus of Thebes; cf. Woolf 2003, 346–347.

199 On the end of Roman rule in Britannia see, Heather 2005, 244–245 and the re-interpretation by Halsall 2013.

200 This is at times disputed, as in Meier 2019, 374. Meier does not deny, however, that southern Britain appeared quite Roman from the third century; *ibid.,* 375. Wacher 1979, 179–180 takes a positive stock of the province's history from a Roman perspective and Mattingly 2006, 225–252 demonstrates that the province was

and once it become clear that they would never be subjugated, the Romans exaggerated their savagery even further. Frequently, they did so by reapplying or modifying existing stereotypes and ethnically framed elements from the 'ethnographic' tradition. Hibernia was ultimately forgotten, for it held no significance to the empire.

## 5. After the end of Roman rule

Even after the retreat of the legions, Britannia remained institutionally bound to Rome, and in 429 CE, Pope Celestine I dispatched Germanus, bishop of Autessiodurum (Auxerre), to Britain to fight Pelagianism.[201] Constantius of Lugdunum (Lyon) (*ca*. 410–500) later penned a hagiography of Germanus and portrayed Britannia in similar terms as older authors had done: he asserts it was the largest of all islands and lauds its wealth, while emphasising it lay within the stormy *Oceanus*.[202] During the short crossing, Germanus' ship was repeatedly attacked by demons whom the bishop repelled with his prayers.[203] The dangers at the edges of the world are being equated with the perceived pagan (or Pelagian) threat to Christianity, as is also apparent from the remaining text: soon after Germanus' arrival, Saxons and Picts conspired to attack the Romano-British settlements. Germanus took over command, baptised the pagans among his soldiers and led them to an unlikely victory. Constantius claims Picts and Saxons panicked, threw away their weapons and drowned in a river. The hagiographic account ascribes God-given powers to Germanus and is probably the reason why the traditional *topos* of the northerners as excellent swimmers is being forfeited.[204] The (later) saint performs a miracle, to which the heathens have no answer. Constantius used the old *topoi* and mixed them with literary elements of hagiographic writing to form a new picture that befitted Christian doctrines.[205]

Around the same time, a teenage slave boy arrived in Ireland who would eventually become known as Saint Patrick.[206] Patrick/Patricius hailed from the former Roman province, and Hibernia was initially alien to him.[207] This designation elevated the dimension of his personal sacrifice, for he emphasises that, soon after he had finally secured the long-desired return to his family's home, he crossed over to Hibernia once

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not in decay in the years prior to 410. Instead, there would have been great local differences between lowlands and uplands, as Higham 1992, 25–42 has illustrated. Halsall 2013 stressed the decay of the province's urban culture as a result of internal collapse rather than external raids.

[201] Prosp. *Chron.* c. 1301 (429 CE); cf. *C. Collat.* 21 ; Const. Lugd. *De Vit. Germ*. 3.12.

[202] Const. Lugd. *De Vit. Germ*. 3.13 (storms); 14 (size); 18 (wealth). For Constantius' dates cf. Hoare 1995, 75; Esmonde Cleary 1989, 165 suggests Constantius wrote in the 480s. On the sources of Constantius cf. Halsall 2013, 79. Prosper of Aquitaine also underlined the archipelago's remote location (Prosp. *C. Collat.* 21.2).

[203] Const. Lugd. *De Vit. Germ*. 3.13. His second trip to Britain a few years later went more smoothly, cf. Const. Lugd. *De Vit. Germ*. 3.25. Wood 2004, 435 suggests based on possibly near-contemporary evidence that it did probably take place.

[204] Const. Lugd. *De Vit. Germ*. 3.15–16. Joint raids by Saxons and Picts are not impossible (Johnson 1980, 116), but Halsall 2013, 80 sees it as a construction that combined the two classical enemies of the Romano-Britons.

[205] The historicity of the voyage, if not the battle, is accepted: Wood 2004, 433–434; Esmonde Cleary 1989, 166.

[206] Celestine had sent another Gallic bishop, Palladius, to Hibernia, two years after Constantius' voyage, but information on him was often mixed up with that on St Patrick; cf. Prosp. *Chron.* c. 1307 (431 CE). The 'Two Patricks Theory' goes back to O'Rahilly 1942. On Patrick's arrival in Ireland cf. Patr. *Conf*. 1.

[207] Patr. *Conf*. 23, 43 (origin), 11 (end of the world), *Ep*. 1 (foreigner in a non-Roman land).

more to fulfil God's mission.[208] To illustrate his plight, he uses ethnographic *topoi*: in the harsh and barren land, he had to live among the heathen Scoti, who were as evil as Picts.[209] Patricius also compares the Scoti to wolves and claims they lived off raiding – and yet, he had managed to convert many of these creatures to the Christian faith.[210] Like earlier authors, he strongly distinguishes between Britannia and Hibernia. In his case, however, the strategy did not primarily serve political or religious goals: Patricius glorified his own doing, as he had defied the dangers of Hibernia, far removed from the 'civilised' world as it was, and fulfilled the will of God instead of choosing a pleasant life in Britannia. His account of the British Isles somewhat resembles that of Constantius. The classical *topoi* were framed within a Christian context but still retained their old force and effect. Since Scoti and Picts remained permanent enemies of the Latin elites of Britain, there was no reason for the latter to challenge the established dichotomy.

Further insights into their views are provided by the writings of the monk Gildas (*ca*. 500–570 CE).[211] Even though a Romano-Briton himself,[212] he, too, locates the archipelago on the fringes of the world. He writes that it possessed 28 cities, being fertile and welcoming, and once luxury goods had been imported via the Thames and the Severn.[213] This state of happy trade only referred to the time when Britannia was a Roman province, however – before the arrival of the Romans, the Britons had been faithless, warlike and rebellious. The empire had given them laws, and when its legions departed, so did order and morale.[214] The double reference to Britannia's pasts (before and during Roman rule) makes the period of the Roman province a Golden Age within a history of constant 'barbarian'[215] menaces. After its end, the Romano-Britons were at the mercy of their enemies: Picts and Scoti, whom Gildas, too, often combines into one group, would crawl from their holes like worms as soon as there was an opportunity to strike. They would often attack across the water on leather boats – the coracles described by Solinus – and fight naked: only two grand walls contained them.[216]

It is remarkable that a Britannic author unreservedly follows the view of past Roman elites and even identifies the still-standing Hadrian's Wall as the border between 'barbarians' and 'civilisation'.[217] As the Scoti had begun to settle in Argyll and other parts of western Scotland since the late fourth century CE, it is not surprising that they are

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[208] Patr. *Conf*. 23 (return to Ireland), 41 (the first to convert them – although Palladius has to be credited with this feat, as Johnson 1980, 117 and Thompson 1999, 51–52 can show), 43 (the mission counts before anything else).

[209] Patr. *Ep*. 2. Cf. *Conf*. 16 on the climatic conditions in Ireland.

[210] Pat. *Ep*. 12 (wolves), 13 (raiding). While the comparison is not explicitly made, it is obvious: just like wolves rob the sheep of peasants, the Scoti rob Christian men and their possessions. Cf. *Ep*. 3.

[211] On his birth year cf. Stenton 2001, 3, on the chronology further Halsall 2013, 53–54.

[212] He may have been born in Strathclyde (Stenton 2001, 4), but his strong identification with Rome suggests he grew up within a Latin milieu. On the usage of Latin in post-Roman Britain cf. Woolf 2003, 355–356, 368–373.

[213] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 3. Imports from the Mediterranean are still attested after 410: Foster 1996, 67–70.

[214] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 4–6 (before the Romans), 13 (after the Romans). Apparently, Gildas was thinking of Magnus Maximus' crossing to Gaul in 383 CE, for he mentions two more Roman expeditions to Britannia before an indication to Honorius' famous letter in chapter 18. In chapter 20, finally, he writes the Romano-Britons unsuccessfully appealed to Flavius Aëtius for help – Rome still appeared as the only saviour. Cf. Heather 2005, 346–348.

[215] He uses the term, for example, in *Exc. Brit.* 20.

[216] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 14 (*gentibus transmarinis*); 15 (walls, cf. Johnson 1980 111 for the interpretation); 19 (worms, nudity, coracles – Gildas uses *curucus*); 21 (localisation of Picts and Scots).

[217] Many parts of Hadrian's Wall continued to be used and its forts often became castles; Halsall 2013, 121–122.

being equated to the Picts,[218] but at the same time, both Patrick and Gildas will have done so to emphasise the universality of the pagan, 'barbarian' threat beyond the wall and the sea. Even though Irish monks had been active in both Ireland and Scotland for decades at this point, like a typical, late Roman author, Gildas has the Britons eventually defeat the invaders because God stood on their side.[219] In the flush of victory, they gave in to luxury and sin, however, and God punished them by letting the Picts and Scoti return once more. In their desperation, the Britons now invited the Saxons for their defence. In retrospect, Gildas condemns this decision as a mortal error: the Saxons, he writes, were hated by all men and by God himself, and by welcoming them into their middle, the Britons had brought wolves into the Christian flock. The inevitable betrayal followed and Gildas compares the resulting destruction with the Assyrian invasion of Judaea.[220] Similar to Ammianus or Sidonius Apollinaris, he uses *topoi* popularly attributed to Caledonians, Hibernians and Germani to introduce the Anglo-Saxons.[221] The Christian allegories further underline the enormousness of the danger, for Gildas' own lifetime had been shaped by the fight against the newcomers.[222] Though there had been a great victory in the year of his birth, at Mons Badonicus, Britain was now, in the middle of the sixth century, ruled by godless tyrants, who exploited the land and waged unjust wars.[223] The Picto-Scottish threat had been exacerbated by the presence of the Anglo-Saxons and endless civil wars, which Gildas must have interpreted as a divine punishment for inviting the Saxons in the first place. In difference to earlier epochs, the one and a half centuries after the end of the province therefore provide us with written sources from Britannia itself. They unanimously reinforce the old dichotomy between the 'Romans' and the northern 'barbarians'. Since they were Germani, pagan and enemies, the Saxon newcomers were assigned to the second group; we are seeing, in effect, one more reapplication of the inherited Greco-Roman package of northernness.

On the continent, meanwhile, few followed these developments: not a single Frankish author of the fifth or sixth centuries CE took an interest in the British Isles. There is one important exception from the Imperium itself: Procopius of Caesarea composed an excursus on a war between the Germanic Varini and the Angles of the island Brittia in the sixth century CE.[224] He was aware of the island's Roman past, its size and remote location and explains that it was divided between the realms of the Angles, the Frisians and the Britons.[225] These peoples were allegedly so numerous that, each year, they sent emigrants

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[218] Broun 2001, 161.

[219] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 21, cf. Brown & Herren 2002, 30–37 on early Irish monasticism and Johnson 1980, 118 on Scotland.

[220] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 21–22 (return of Picts and Scoti), 23–25.

[221] For Roman views of the Germani cf. Timpe 2006, 19–113; 358–428. Sidonius Apollinaris called the Saxons the wildest of all enemies, who cruelly ambushed their victims after having sworn oaths not to do so: Sid. Apoll. *Epist*. 8.6.14–15. The comparison with wolves can, of course, already be found in Patr. *Ep*. 12.

[222] Cf. Jones 1998, 8–107 on the arrival and land grabs of the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth and sixth century CE.

[223] Gild. *Exc. Brit.* 26–27. Stenton 2001, 2 dates the book to the years immediately prior to 547 CE. For a reconstruction of the confusing chain of events cf. Wood 2004, 435–440. See also Halsall 2013, 166–168 on the belligerents at Mons Badonicus.

[224] Procop. *Bell*. 8.20–58. Procopius speaks of an island Brittia and a country Britannia to its west (8.20.4–5). Thompson 1980, 498–502 showed that Britannia can only refer to Brittany, whose name was probably changing from Aremorica in this period. This shift will have been due to Frankish practice, and Frankish envoys in Constantinople are the likeliest source for Procopius' report.

[225] Procop. *Bell*. 3.1.18 (size), *Anecd*. 19.13 (location), *Bell*. 8.20.6–7 (Angili, Frissones and Brittones). Cf.

to Britannia, by which he means the former Aremorica, modern Brittany.[226] Apparently, Procopius knew that Germanic groups were living on the archipelago, but he missed that they were recent immigrants and largely pagan, and that this was the reason why many Christians fled to Aremorica.[227] In the following, he describes the battles between the Varini and the Brittians and asserts that the latter's valour surpassed that of all other 'barbarians'. They exclusively fought on foot, since they knew horses only from Franks and Romans, and they had to row their boats since they lacked sails.[228] He is using the mitigated form of a *topos* often applied to the Caledonians – while Tacitus' Caledonians did not know how to build ships at all, Procopius' Angles only lack the knowledge of sailing.[229]

Procopius adds that, in a distant past, the men of Brittia had erected a wall, which divided the island into west and east: while the well-watered east possessed a moderate climate, grain and fruits in abundance and, accordingly, a large population, the west was completely hostile to life. It teemed with snakes and other dangerous creatures, and every human or animal who crossed into the west would fall victim to the poisonous air within half an hour and die.[230] This is a rather bizarre contortion of both the ideas of environmental determinism and of Hadrian's Wall and its function.[231] While the inhabitants of the former province are brave warriors in a fertile land, modern Scotland is so abhorrent that, in Procopius' mind, Caledonians, Picts and Scoti have ceased to exist. Inevitably, the British Isles and their Roman past fell into oblivion soon after, and it would take centuries for the Romans to rediscover them.[232]

## 6. Conclusions

The study of the Greco-Roman sources on the British Isles has shown that Hadrian's Wall was indeed deemed a political, cultural and ethnic border.[233] While gradual differences in lifestyle and development from south to north were explained by environmental

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Bianchetti 2014, 124–125 for his distances and locations. According to *Bell*. 6.6.28, the Romans had given the island to the Goths, since when it had been ruled by tyrants (*Bell*. 3.2.38) – unlawful rulers, from whom the population could officially be freed, like in Italy; cf. Brodka 1999.

[226] Procop. *Bell*. 8.20.8; see fn. 224 on Britannia and Brittany.

[227] Thompson 1980, 506–507.

[228] Procop. *Bell*. 8.20.28–31.

[229] From Procop. *Bell*. 8.20.12 we learn that the war was the enterprise of the Anglian queen – an allusion to Boudica?

[230] Procop. *Bell*. 8.20.42–46. Another mythological tale (20.47–58) is rejected by Procopius.

[231] Cf. Crow 2004, 114. Mattingly 2006, 36 speaks of a '[...] mythologized vision of Britain.' Perhaps the land of monsters lies in the west because Hibernia and Caledonia are being thrown together.

[232] Cf. Thompson 1980, 507. Of Procopius' contemporaries, Cassiodorus does not mention Britannia once, while Jordanes assembled older knowledge. He describes a triangular island dominated by moors, forest and fog, citing Strabo (Jord. *Get*. 2.11–12; Str. 4.5.2). From Tacitus, he takes the short nights, the appearance of Caledonians and Silurians and the resources and animals (*Get*. 2.13, see above 204). The information on body-painting and lifestyle is attributed to Cassius Dio (*Get*. 2.14; see above 206–208), his term for chariots, *essedae* (*Get*. 2.15) is from Caes. *BGall.* 4.33.1. His one new contribution (*Get*. 45.237–238) is the mention of a king of the Britons who assisted the Romans against the Visigoth Euric, but since the story is set long after 410 CE, it may refer to Brittany.

[233] I am therefore strongly disagreeing with Günnewig 1998, 263, who stated that Roman writers did not postulate an internal division of the islands and that Hadrian's Wall played no key role for them. Even when the wall is not mentioned, every Roman reader will have thought of it as the boundary between the empire and Caledonia.

determinism – Caledonia was described as cold, inaccessible and infertile, while what later became England was mild, flat and blooming – the wall was defined as the one crucial boundary. After Agricola had abandoned the conquest of Caledonia and Hadrian erected his bulwark, there was no aim to integrate the Caledonians anymore and they were seen as permanent enemies. Accordingly, they were portrayed as primitive, dangerous and poor, an image which in turn justified the construction of the two walls and the exclusion of the island's north from the empire. The only exception is Solinus, who has Odysseus reach northern Scotland and applies features of Hyperborea to the Ebudes. These entertaining elements of paradoxography are not, however, a serious attempt to challenge the dichotomy: after all, Solinus says nothing about the *nomoi* of the Caledonians on the mainland. Hibernia remained even more of an antipode to Roman 'civilisation', for only Agricola is recorded for ever having considered adding it to the empire. Subsequently, Tacitus relativised the solitude of the island, but in this he was only followed by Orosius. Like Solinus on Caledonia, they were outliers, and the few Romans who cared about Hibernia at all despised it.

Within the province, Solinus and Tacitus distinguished the Silurians from the more 'civilised' Britons, and their religious rites and assumed relation to the Iberians gives them a unique character. These traits can be explained by the environment: like Scotland, Wales is much more mountainous than England, and it also forms a peninsula jutting out into the sea – which made it face Hispania, according to Tacitus. Their Iberian kin were famous for their long resistance against Rome and explained the Silurian ferocity, and the topography of Wales made it a land where rebels and druids could hide from the Romans. After Solinus, however, Roman authors seemingly stopped singling out the Silurians: a primitive and warlike tribe had no place in the supposedly peaceful and cultured province.[234]

Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates that Strabo's dichotomy was indeed adopted by the majority of Roman writers. Initially, Greek discussions on the North which swung between degrading and idealising the Britons, were adopted by Roman military writers. After the major conquests, the Britons within the borders of the empire were acknowledged as Roman citizens, while Caledonians and Hibernians outside the wall would never acquire the benefits of 'civilisation'. By Late Antiquity, this contrast had become such common knowledge that it was picked up even by Christian authors from the island themselves, who defamed the northerners as pagans, despite the spread of Christian beliefs within their lands. They creatively re-interpreted the dichotomy to reinforce their own position as the heirs of Roman culture and true rulers of Britain. This was a final review of the history of Roman Britain: the Romans had tamed even the ends of the world, but only until the wall, and no further.

[234] On the dispersion of Roman culture in Wales cf. Kenney 2021, 21–23.

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