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Tales of the frontier: diasporas on Hadrian's Wall

Richard Hingley

Yet, Empire to Empire, some things
More enduring that the track
Of ancient Walls
Have stayed the same.[1]

Introduction

This paper considers how Hadrian's Wall has been utilized since antiquity to reflect on peoples who have occupied or moved through this part of Britain.[2] It explores textual and visual sources conceptualizing the significance of Hadrian's Wall since the 16th c. It stresses the contentious character of the Wall, exploring its diversity of cultures. Recent approaches to other borders, analysing the political contexts of the establishment and maintenance of frontier, have suggested that they are never neutrally positioned.[3] Those approaches address borderlands as containing multiple alternative histories. Hadrian's Wall is a suitable location for exploring diasporic identity, despite the fact that it has long been viewed as a major national monument that excludes the uninvited.[4]

In brief, the Wall was constructed during the A.D. 120s and remained almost continually in use until the early 5th c. (fig. 12.1). A substantial and complex monument, it comprised a stone rampart and V-shaped ditch running 60 miles across the isthmus from the mouth of the river Tyne to the Solway Firth.[5] It is called Hadrian's Wall today (and this name will be retained as a shorthand here) but for much of its history it was known as the "Picts' Wall".[6] The second major wall in Britain, the Antonine, was built in a broadly comparable form but well to the north, from the Solway Firth to the Firth of Forth, in the 140s. It was probably in use for some 20 years before Hadrian's Wall was re-commissioned.[7]

Fig. 12.1. The location of Hadrian's and the Antonine Wall (C. Unwin).

Despite the fact that it was a Roman imperial construction, the geographical location and genealogy of Hadrian's Wall have been used to help to define aspects of the identity of the later people of Britain. Since the mediaeval period. it has helped to identify the territorial boundaries of England.[8]

1 Locke 2006, 61.
2 For this use of archaeology, see Foucault 1989; Hingley 2008a.
3 Blain and Wallis 2004, 1; cf. Juffer 2006; Russell 2001.
4 Griffiths 2003; Shannon 2007; Hingley 2008a, 85-86; Hingley 2010.
5 Breeze 2006a.
6 Shannon 2007; Hingley 2010.
7 Breeze 2006b.
8 Shannon 2007; Hingley 2008a, 85; Hingley 2010.

From mediaeval times until the 19th c., one dominant idea suggested that Hadrian's Wall is effectively a British (or Roman and British) frontier work, built to defend the civilized occupants of the lowlands to the south from barbaric peoples, the Picts or the Scots, north of the Wall. In this way it has long acted as a spatial and physical signifier for a definition of the boundary of English identity.[9] Mediaeval and early modern interpretations of the frontier usually drew upon the writings of two early mediaeval authors, Gildas and Bede, to explore its rôle as a boundary to the province of *Britannia*.[10] This image has been a powerful one through time, since it emphasizes the geography of England as the successor to Roman Britain, excluding peoples beyond the Wall to the north and west (the occupants of present-day Scotland and Ireland) from the bounds of civilization. It was an exclusive image that tended to emphasize the Wall's continued significance in the contemporary world.[11] This was not a simple and predictable interpretation, however, since both the survival and ruination of the Wall were emphasized for particular purposes. When England and Scotland were involved in military conflict (e.g., during the late 16th c. and in 1745-46), the physical survival of the Wall as a boundary tended to be emphasized.[12] Nevertheless, from the early 17th c. onwards, with the growing unity of Great Britain, greater stress came to be placed on the ruination of the Wall. It was used to emphasize the aim of political and cultural union for the peoples lying south and north of its line.

The value of the Wall as a symbol of nationhood from the late 16th to the 20th c. has been explored elsewhere.[13] The present paper focuses more upon the erosion of its bounding of English identity that resulted from a growing interest in the international character of the Wall's resident Roman population.[14] From the late 16th c., the widespread geographical origins of the occupants of the Wall zone gradually came to be recognized as the result of the discovery and study of Roman inscriptions discovered from both the Wall zone and from Roman Britain as a whole.[15] A large number of inscribed stones provided information about the people who built the Wall and lived along its line during the Roman period.[16] The Latin inscriptions include the names and places of origin of individuals who came from across the breadth of the empire, including territories that now form parts of Europe, N Africa and the Near East. Such information eventually challenged the image of the Wall as a referent for the boundary of English identity, although it is also true that this 'English Wall myth' still lives on.[17]

This paper explores the ways in which the evidence from the Wall has been drawn upon since inscriptions began to be recorded and collected in the later 16th c. At first, the

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9 Hingley 2010.
10 Hingley 2008a, 107.
11 Hingley 2010.
12 Hingley 2008a, 89-93 and 102.
13 Griffiths 2003; Hingley 2008a, 96-101; Hingley 2010.
14 The majority of texts and images considered here date from a formative period in the construction of ideas about the identity and history of the peoples of the British Isles (Colley 1994; Colls 2002; Kumar 2003, 29-30; Young 2008). The relevance of any concrete concept of nationhood prior to the 19th c. is contentious (for discussions, see Kidd 1999, 1-6; Kumar 2003, 28-30), but it is evident from the sources referenced here that Hadrian's Wall had a particular relevance to the bounding of English space from mediaeval times, derived from its location on the northern boundary of England and from its antiquity (Hingley 2010).
15 Hepple 2003.
16 Collingwood and Wright 1995, 268-356, 368-92 and 429-639.
17 Hingley 2010.

geographical origins of Roman soldiers were noted but often without detailed comment on the significance. In the Victorian and Edwardian periods the Wall effectively became a signifier for the frontier of British imperial space, particularly the NW Frontier in India, carrying the idea of the creation of a boundary to 'civilization' across the vast span of the British Empire.[18] At the same time, some texts and images stressed what might be taken to represent the inclusive character of the Roman army, namely the involvement of soldiers from across the empire in efforts to defend it. Currently, Hadrian's Wall is emphasized more as an inclusive boundary structure, drawing people from across the Roman empire and beyond into its orbit. I shall suggest that this contemporary rôle for the Wall provides an effective context for the contemplation of political and cultural issues of domination and assimilation that resonate with empire.[19] In these terms, the Wall has a relationship to ideas of diaspora in the Roman world.

A monument to lowland British identity

Probably around A.D. 540 but possibly earlier in that century, the British monk Gildas wrote about the Roman walls in Britain in his *The ruin of Britain*.[20] He stated that, after the Romans had left Britain in the 5th c., the people of Britain were attacked by the Scots and Picts and that the British then sent a request to Rome for help.[21] According to him, Rome sent a legion to assist them and also told the British to construct a wall to link the two seas, but, since this was the work of a "leaderless and irrational mob" and was made of turf rather than stone, it proved to be ineffective.[22] The Britons again asked the Romans for aid, and the Romans built a wall of stone connecting towns along its line. Gildas mentioned that the Romans made the "wretched inhabitants" cooperate with them in the work.[23] The Scots and Picts attacked again and this time seized the whole wall.[24] Although Gildas' account may have been based largely on oral history, it had a major impact on later interpretations of Hadrian's Wall, suggesting that it was built for, and partly by, the indigenous inhabitants of Britain living south of its line.

The 8th-c. monk Bede provided an account of Hadrian's Wall that is broadly comparable. He stated that the emperor Severus had constructed a rampart made of sods cut from the earth.[25] Bede observed that, after the departure of the Romans from Britain during the early 5th c., the Britons asked Rome for help. After driving the enemy out, the Romans urged the Britons to build a wall for protection, while the legions returned home.[26] Bede notes that, because this wall was built of turf, it was useless; he also records that its remains are still visible between *Aebbercurnig* (Abercorn) and *Penneltun* (Kinneil);[27] this is the monument now known as the Antonine Wall. After further invasions, another Roman legion was

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18 Hingley 2000, 41-47.

19 Hingley 2009, 54. Discussions of 'empire' in this contribution draw upon recent works (Hingley 2005 and 2009; Willis 2007) that have explored the manner by which modern forces of globalization draw on conceptions of imperial governance that derive from the Roman past.

20 Jones 1996, 44-46.

21 Gildas 1978, 14.

22 Ibid. 15, 3.

23 Ibid. 18, 2.

24 Ibid. 19, 1-2.

25 Bede 1969, 1.5.

26 Ibid. 1.12.

27 Ibid.

dispatched to Britain, drove back the barbarians, and built a strong wall of stone along the line where Severus' rampart had been located. Bede suggests that this new wall was built at public and private expense and with the help of the Britons.[28] Bede then describes the inability of the Britons to defend the stone wall and its subsequent desertion. As in Gildas' account, Hadrian's Wall is viewed as a combined effort of the dominant Romans and subservient provincial Britons.

During mediaeval times, substantial remains of Hadrian's Wall survived. A number of mediaeval maps mark its line, while chronicles mention the wall.[29] W. Shannon has recently suggested that it remained "at the forefront of educated national consciousness", representing a "*national* monument" that played a rôle in the growth of "ideas of nation" amongst the English, and perhaps amongst the Scots too.[30]

During the 16th c., the frontier that separated the independent kingdoms of England and Scotland was subject to considerable unrest.[31] Hadrian's Wall lay in this frontier zone, although it was not located on the actual line of the frontier between the two kingdoms.[32] In the 1580s or 1590s, a proposal was made to build a new frontier work along the line of the English frontier with Scotland.[33] This drew upon knowledge of the physical remains of Hadrian's Wall and on the writings of Gildas or Bede, since the contribution of the Britons to the building of the frontier was acknowledged.[34] Increasing knowledge of the structure and nature of the Wall developed in the late 16th and early 17th c., when its remains were explored and described by William Camden, and several collections of Roman inscriptions were made along its line.[35]

A number of 18th-c. antiquarians emphasized the Wall as a particularly British monument. Although the overseas origin of various groups of soldiers who served on the Wall is mentioned, the significance of these observations is not emphasized by antiquaries until the 19th c. Wiilliam Stukeley visited the remains in 1725 and, in an account of his visit published in 1776, remarked on "the amazing scene of Roman grandeur in Britain which … will revive the Roman glory among us …".[36] The grandeur of the remains in this context reflected the contemporary Augustan greatness of England.[37] This view of the Wall as a particularly British monument reflected an 18th-c. idea, drawing upon the powerful expansion of the British Empire, that the British had inherited the imperial mantle of the Romans.[38] Stukeley emphasized that the significance of the remains of the Wall "beyond any part of Europe, scarcely excepting imperial Rome" required that "young noblemen and gentry" should visit and marvel at these national remains.[39] The antiquarian John Warburton followed a comparable line of argument in his stress on the grandeur of the remains and in encouraging young gentlemen to visit N England rather than travelling

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28 Ibid.
29 Shannon 2007; Whitworth 2000, 46.
30 Shannon 2007, 3.
31 Ellis 1999.
32 Hingley 2008a, 89.
33 Ibid. 90-99.
34 Ibid. 91, n.31.
35 Ibid. 38-39 and 93; Hepple 2003.
36 Stukeley 1776, 77.
37 Ayres 1997, 96-97.
38 Haycock 2002, 119.
39 Stukeley 1776, 67.

overseas on the Grand Tour.[40] This is a British monument for Britons to value, visit and study.

The contemporary Scottish antiquarian Alexander Gordon viewed the monument in a contrary fashion. He saw it as providing a symbol of the valour of the ancient population of Scotland who had opposed imperial incorporation — a relevant message in the context of the incorporation of Scotland into a united kingdom that was dominated by the English.[41] After this, some writings continued to reflect on the rôle of the Wall as excluding the Scots (and Irish), while other accounts reflect positively on the ruination of the Wall as symbolic of the growing unity of Great Britain.[42] In all these accounts, however, the Wall served as a referent for the spatial boundaries of English identity, emphasizing the monument as a particularly southern British structure.

International conceptions

If the accounts of Gildas and Bede focused attention on the supposed British contribution to the building of the monument, epigraphic remains derived from the Wall helped people to think about the widespread geographical origins of those who had built it and lived along its line. In these terms, the Wall was not merely a Roman, English or British monument, but one that appeared to have been populated by peoples who derived from across the Roman empire.

The widespread geographical origins of those serving on the Wall gradually became evident from the late 16th c. as a result of the recognition of stone inscriptions from the various military units which helped to build and were stationed on the Wall. The first antiquarian to provide a detailed account of Hadrian's Wall was William Camden, who had toured the remains in 1599; a succession of antiquarians subsequently visited and described the Wall.[43] However, prior to the 19th c., it is not apparent that antiquarians chose to reflect on emerging knowledge of the overseas origins of many of those who lived along its line, emphasizing instead the national conception of the monument. They seem to have recorded some of the places from which particular military individuals and units were derived without remarking in any detail on the significance. Camden, for instance, recorded Tungrians from Germany at Castlesteads, Dacians at Birdoswald, and Asturians from Spain at Chesters,[44] while Stukeley recorded Tungrians at Housesteads.[45] They took the names to represent the presence of soldiers from particular areas of the empire. The lack of archaeological knowledge of the differing regional cultures across the empire prevented any further discussion of the significance of the observations; today we are more aware of the complexity of the ways in which Roman soldiers were recruited into the auxiliaries.[46]

Detailed comments on the significance of the widespread geographical origins of soldiers who served on the Wall do not occur prior to the mid-19th c., at a relatively troubled time for the British. During the 1850s and 1860s, the publications of John Collingwood

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40 Warburton, 1753, vii; Ayres 1997, 96; Hingley 2008a, 136-37.
41 Gordon 1727; see Hingley 2008a, 123-28.
42 Hingley 2010.
43 Hingley 2008a, 5-148.
44 Camden 1610, 783, 785 and 806.
45 Stukeley 1776, 61.
46 See, e.g., James 1999.

Bruce and the excavations of John Clayton made the remains of Hadrian's Wall far more visible to visitors and the reading public.[47] In 1851, Bruce produced a full study of the evidence for the Wall, in which, as also in his *Handbook to the Roman Wall*,[48] he described the Roman inscriptions and provided a detailed summary of the relevance of this Roman frontier to his generation of Englishmen,[49] although he did not address the significance of the inscriptions in any detail. He simply mentioned the presence of Asturians at Chesters, Batavians at Carrawburgh and Tungrians at Housesteads.[50]

The evidence provided by the inscriptions seems to have inspired some of Bruce's contemporaries to think about the geographical and racial origins of those who had served. Thomas Wright's influential but problematic book, *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon* (1852), which drew upon Bruce's study, included a chapter called the "Ethnological character of the Roman population of Britain". Inquiring "Who were the Romans of Britain?",[51] Wright provided a rather complex answer. He noted that the Roman legions were recruited indiscriminately, and that "we shall have to point out officers of the legions in Britain who were natives of countries far distant from Italy".[52] Wright's exact phrasing appears to suggest a certain disdain for the idea of foreigners serving as officers in Britain. He provided a long list of people noted in the "Notitia Imperii" (*Notitia Dignitatum*) along the S and E coasts, remarking that "Along the line of Hadrian's Wall, the inhabitants of the different towns were still more varied in their races".[53] He recorded various peoples, including "Lingones from Belgium", "Asturians from Spain", Dacians and Moors; elsewhere, Wright noted people from Syria and Africa, as well as Gaul and Spain.[54] Wright seems rather confused about the identity of these settlers,[55] an issue that reflects the contradictions inherent in mid-19th c. ideas about race.[56] He suggested that these various "races" stayed in one place at their towns and stations for a long time. The "colonists of these towns were accompanied or followed by relations and friends ... they must have gone on increasing and strengthening themselves". At the same time, he suggested that they learned Latin and "became entirely Romanised".[57] There appears to be a contradiction in Wright's comments, for they suggest that people were transformed into a Roman way of life but also maintained distinct racial characteristics and lived in isolated and self-sufficient settlements. This appears to reflect the fact that Wright was using the term 'Romanised' to refer to their adoption of the Latin language, rather than addressing a total cultural transformation of their ways of life to a more Roman way of being.[58] The maintenance of their ethnic names (Dacians, Asturians, etc.) was evidently taken by Wright to support such an idea. He seems to have been struggling to fit together two rather contradictory ideas: a racism which imagined that distinct

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47 Breeze 2006a, 17-18; Hingley 2008a, 309-11; Tolia-Kelly and Nesbitt 2009.
48 E.g., Bruce 1885c.
49 See Hingley 2008a, 309-11.
50 Bruce 1851, 60-64.
51 Wright 1852, 249.
52 Ibid. 250.
53 Ibid. 250-51.
54 Ibid. 252-53.
55 Hingley 2008a, 267-71.
56 Young 2008, 43-44.
57 Wright 1852, 251.
58 The terms 'Romanized'/'Romanised' often appear to be used this way prior to the late 19th c., when it takes on a broader relevance with respect to Roman culture, in addition to language: Hingley 2008a, 318; id. 2008b.

Fig. 12.2. Painting at Wallington Hall, Northumberland (© Mary Evans Picture Library).

peoples would remain isolated and would not mix, and a transformative idea of Roman civilization which specified that all were transformed through exposure to Roman culture.[59] He had relatively little archaeological information upon which to construct the latter idea, although such an idea did become popular during the late 19th and early 20th c. in the context of the new knowledge that derived from excavations throughout Roman Britain and also overseas.[60]

Bruce's synthesis also appears to have influenced others, since it was taken to have a direct imperial relevance in the context of the troubled 1850s. In January 1857, William Bell Scott produced a painting for Wallington Hall, the Trevelyan family home near Newcastle, entitled *Building of a Roman Wall* (fig. 12.2).[61] Drawing once again on Gildas and Bede,

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59 Id. 2008a, 267-70.

60 In particular as a result of the work of Mommsen and Haverfield: Hingley 2008a, 313-25; id. 2008b.

61 My observations draw on earlier publications referenced below and on a detailed study of the painting made in August 2009.

it shows subdued Britons put to use as labourers under the control of Roman officers. It stands at the beginning of a sequence of paintings depicting local history culminating with the Industrial Revolution in Victorian England.[62] In the painting's background, the partly-naked barbarian Britons are threatening the progress of the building operations by attacking the Wall from the north. S. Smiles has suggested that events in Afghanistan and India during the 1840s and 1850s provided a context for the painting.[63] Smiles has also explored how this painting and another (now in Manchester Town Hall, showing the building of a Roman fort at Manchester) portray Victorian ideas about craniology, with the ancient Britons in the guise of working-class Celtic navvies.[64] Additional observations may be drawn. The Roman legionary officer in the Wallington Hall painting is a portrait of John Clayton, the owner of Chesters House and excavator of large sections of the central sector of the Wall.[65] The ancient Briton closest to the viewer appears to be modeled on the antiquarian John Collingwood Bruce. Smiles remarks on the apparent 'Celtic' attributes of this individual,[66] and it is true that Bruce had Scottish ancestry through his maternal grandfather.[67] The figure does not appear fully involved in his task since he is playing dice. The British are involved both in building and attacking the Wall, perhaps providing a reflection of recent colonial politics. In the painting's middle ground three male characters defend the partly-constructed Wall. One, a legionary, has darker skin and facial features that seem to suggest an African origin, presumably relating to the African or Near Eastern soldiers that Bruce and others had recently recorded as stationed in the military zone. Another has a Phrygian cap, while an archer presumably represents a Syrian. Yet rather than interpreting this painting solely in terms of racism,[68] it may also provide a reflection on mid-Victorian imperial problems, drawing upon the lesson of the mixed nature of the communities responsible for building and guarding the Wall: Rome appeared to have successfully addressed these issues, but Britain was failing. Problems of imperial subjugation and assimilation in the British Empire provided a cause of concern for later Victorian and Edwardian authors, and it would appear that the military difficulties during the mid-19th c. raised comparable concerns, leading to the representation of overseas soldiers in this painting.[69]

The British recruited 'native' soldiers to help to fight imperial wars, and the three men in the Wallington Hall painting are presumably also to be seen in those terms. In April 1857, a few months before the painting was completed, the 'Indian Mutiny' broke out,[70] casting the relationship between Britain and the native Indian troops in a new light. An anonymous note in *The Englishwoman's Review and Home Newspaper* (December 5, 1857) recorded the opening of "probably, one of the most momentous Parliamentary Sessions ever held", during the "Mutiny", claiming that "the interests of Britain, of the Empire at

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62 Trevelyan 1994, 56-57; Smiles 1994, 143-45.
63 Smiles 1994, 143-45.
64 Ibid. 146-47.
65 Trevelyan 1994, 58-59; Crow 2004, caption to colour fig. 19.
66 Smiles 1994, 146-47. Certainly, the face of this figure looks very similar to surviving photographs of Bruce. It should be noted, however, that Trevelyan (1994, 58-59) suggests that the figure immediately behind the centurion is actually Bruce.
67 Bruce 1905, 1.
68 Smiles 1994, 146.
69 Hingley 2000 and 2007.
70 David 2002.

large, and our vast dependency of Hindostan — of civilization itself — are at stake".[71] The author made reference to Rome, noting that soldiers were stationed abroad: "for instance, along the line of the Roman Wall were Spaniards, Tungrians, & c.",[72] noting the folly of letting native troops serve close to home, attributing the problems during the current troubles in India to the same issue, and suggesting that the Romans had followed a better course of action. The use of native troops is viewed as vital to the British, but in future they should be stationed well away from home so as to avoid further mutinies.

In the late 19th c., a growing interest was developing in the relationship between the peoples who settled along the line of the Wall in the Roman period and the indigenous people of this region. In one of his later works,[73] Bruce remarked:

> Since the mural garrisons were virtually stationary, it is reasonable to suppose that the troops married with friendly natives, and that they cultivated, in the seasons of tranquility, ground in the vicinity of these stations.

He suggested that their numbers were replenished partly through the offspring of the soldiers, partly by new soldiers arriving from abroad, and partly as a result of the recruitment of "Romanized natives". From time to time, new discoveries along the line of the Wall and in its hinterland helped to inform developing ideas about the identity of its former occupants. In particular, antiquarians writing about two impressive tombstones found at South Shields provide evidence for the reception of two particularly challenging items. Of the tombstone of Regina, found in 1878, Bruce noted:[74]

> Unfortunately, the face of the sculptured figure, representing, we have reason to believe, features of peculiar beauty, has been broken off ... The lady seems to be engaged in those pursuits in which English ladies of the present day occupy their leisure time.

He notes that Regina was a former slave and came from the district called "Catuallauna or Catuvallauna", which is thought to be the *civitas* of the Catuvelauni in eastern England.[75] He continued:

> Whether it was in her native home or in the camp on the Lawe [the Roman fort at South Shields] that the queenly graces of the mind and person of the British serf enchained the affections of the far-travelled Barates we cannot tell, and it matters not. The poor girl had no artificial attractions, and the fact of her being of different blood from the Palmyrene would be against her. Still she triumphed. Barates it was, probably, who gave her the priceless boon of freedom ... and one use, perhaps the first use, which she made of her newly-acquired privilege was to give a favourable response to the entreaties of her benefactor to yield her hand to him.[76]

Bruce also wrote about Barates, who was a native of Palmyra beyond the imperial frontier, noting that it is not surprising to find such a merchant at South Shields, since he will have been involved in bringing in luxuries. Bruce faces some contradictions in his account of Regina as queenly but also a former British slave. She is linked to the Victorian present by her civilized attire and homely activities. As a native of Palmyra and a trader, Barates would not appear a suitable husband for an English queen, but Regina's former rôle as a slave would explain why she would be attracted to him. The idea of 'different blood' raises the issue of the contradiction apparent in Wright's earlier writings.

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71 Anon. 1857, 241.
72 Ibid. 242.
73 Bruce 1875, xiv.
74 Bruce 1885a, 240.
75 Ibid. 241.
76 Ibid.

Fig. 12.3. Tombstone of Victor from South Shields (from Bruce 1885b).

Fig. 12.4. Henry Ford's image of the building of the Wall (from Fletcher and Kipling 1911).

In 1885, the tombstone of Victor the Moor (fig. 12.3) was found at South Shields. Bruce noted that the face had again been removed, but that:[77]

> A portion of the hair at one side of the head of the recumbent figure is, however, left, and its wooly character corresponds with the statement in the inscription that the deceased was a Moor.

He noted some errors in the Latin, arguing that:[78]

> It is quite possible that Numerianus, who erected this monument to his former servant, may have been neither an Italian nor a Spaniard, but an African, like his friend, and so but imperfectly acquainted with the Latin language.

The inaccurate Latin on these tombstones perhaps prompted the observation that these people were only partly Romanized, again suggesting that the term refers to the inadequate Latin on the inscription; in this context the author is probably not using the term "Romanized" to refer to any Roman culture by the Moor or his master.

Comparable discoveries of tombstones in the late 19th c. drove an increasingly international focus on the character of the communities who occupied the British frontier zone. In 1887, a note in *Archaeologia Aeliana* records the discovery at Housesteads of Roman altars with inscriptions in honour of Mars Thingsus, the work of a Batavian cohort. The note informed the reader that:[79]

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77 Bruce 1885b, 312.

78 Ibid.

79 Anon. 1887, 2.

> [they] greatly interest our German fellow-workers, who deem that these inscriptions may throw some light even on the political institutions of their and our Teutonic forefathers.

From 1885, a growth of interest in Germany in research on Roman frontiers helped to create knowledge of the international context of Hadrian's Wall with a focus on its Germanic soldiers.[80] The scholarly comments on the above inscriptions reflect the growth of interest in the German *limes* and a comparative lack of research into the Roman occupation of N Africa and the Near East, although Bruce's comments on the Barates and Victor memorials point to considerable interest in those two exotic inscriptions.

Several late Victorian and Edwardian writers drew a contrast between the success of the Romans and the relative failure of the British in the 'assimilation' of the colonized.[81] The Wall caused military men, politicians and novelists, including James Bryce, Lord Cromer, George Curzon, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Lucas and Robert Louis Stevenson, to reflect upon this issue.[82] In his novel *The wrecker*, Scotsman Robert Louis Stevenson compared the Antonine Wall to the E coast of America at San Francisco. Both places lay at the expanding edge of empires,[83] and he described San Francisco as a "smelting pot" of peoples.[84] In his novel *Puck of Pook's Hill*,[85] Kipling wrote of the Wall as "manned by every breed and race in the Empire". This novel, which I have explored in greater detail elsewhere,[86] weaves the various peoples who have lived in southern Britain, from the Roman period until the 11th c., into a mixed concept of biological origins for the English, as does his lecture, *England and the English*.[87] Strongly racist interpretations of the Wall and of Roman Britain continued alongside these perhaps more tolerant views. *A school history of England* (1911) by C. R. L. Fletcher, with poems by Kipling, contained some extremely racist comments about the Irish, and drew simplistic analogies between Hadrian's Wall and Britain's current imperial frontiers.[88] Accompanying Fletcher's text and Kipling's poems were illustrations by Henry Ford (fig. 12.4). A picture of the building of Hadrian's Wall shows subservient ancient Britons and upright Roman soldiers in the guise of English imperial officers.[89] The Britons appear to be almost 'Palaeolithic' in character,[90] reflecting Fletcher's racist views on the Irish. The manacled figure to the right of the picture, with long hair and tattoos, might even be intended to raise colonial parallels to the Celtic barbarians in the minds of Edwardian English boys. This image does not overtly address the international character of the troops stationed along the Wall, but another contemporary image explores this idea directly (fig. 12.5).

Later scholarly works address the issue of the mixed population resident along the line of the Wall but often without any consideration of its significance. In *The people of*

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80 Haverfield 1899; Freeman 2007, 251; Cheryl Clay, pers. comm.
81 Hingley 2000, 48-51.
82 Hingley 2007, 146; Hingley 2010.
83 Stevenson and Osbourne 1892, 118; Hingley 2010.
84 Stevenson and Osbourne 1892, 117.
85 Kipling 1906, 176.
86 Hingley 2000.
87 Kipling 1920; see Hingley 2010.
88 Fletcher and Kipling 1911, 21-22.
89 Hingley 2000, 58.
90 For the racial characteristics attributed by some craniologists to the Celtic peoples of Britain, see Smiles 1994, 147.

Fig. 12.5. R. Caton Woodville's image of the Wall (© Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans Picture Library).

Roman Britain, A. R. Birley uses the evidence of the inscriptions to discuss men who came from across the empire to serve in Britain, including Africans.[91] D. Breeze and B. Dobson consider the recruitment of soldiers from various parts of the empire,[92] while F. Graham discusses the geographical origins of the soldiers who served on the Wall although no dark-skinned soldiers are present in R. Embleton's iconic illustrations.[93] Writers often emphasize the soldiers' mixed cultural roots, shown by their religious dedications, while also stressing the relatively unified character of the military.[94]

Inclusion, subservience and empire

Over the last decade, the diverse geographical origins of the soldiers, and the idea that some may have retained elements of their original ethnic character, have been used to create an inclusive rôle for Hadrian's Wall. This has come to prominence through a political emphasis on wider access to the monument which uses the various peoples who built and occupied it to relate to the various constituencies who live close to and visit the Wall. This open agenda, which fits the focus of various agencies to encourage visitors from the urban centres of N England and from abroad,[95] is evident through the creation in 2003 of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail.

91 Birley 1979, 67-68 and 79-80.
92 Breeze and Dobson 1976, 153-54.
93 One of Embleton's illustrations (Graham and Embleton 1984, 13) shows two apparently dark-skinned soldiers involved in building the Wall, but they may well be darker because they are in the shadows.
94 E.g., Huskinson 2002, 119-20; James 1999.
95 Newman 2008, 29.

Another manifestation of the broadening access is the art project *Writing on the Wall* (2006), which projects the Wall in phenomenological terms as a multi-national monument. The introduction to the published volume stresses that the Wall has a special rôle as a place[96]

> where people of all kinds, often drawn from remote places — the Roman army itself recruited as far afield as N Africa, Romania and Turkey — have wandered, fought, loved and worked during the two thousand years.

M. Lewis remarks that the project was formed by a group of northern writers together with an international group representing some of the far-flung peoples of the Roman empire who built and garrisoned the Wall; it includes poets from Morocco, Romania, Iraq, the Netherlands and Bulgaria.[97] The individual poets reflected their own history in a multitude of ways by writing of contemporary concerns in addressing the Wall. Some found it easy to imagine life among the settlements, "especially the life of women and ordinary soldiers".[98] Asking "So who does own the Stones?", Lewis replies: "Every writer, every artist, every musician, every visitor who has stopped to wonder and to respond to this World Heritage site. This heritage is for us all".[99]

Works that stress the mixed population of the Wall in Roman times contrast with the old idea of it as a Roman military monument or as an English or imperial structure which dominated and excluded the uninvited and unassimilated. The Wall can now be viewed as an inclusive monument for all to visit and enjoy. Arising from the same project which produced this chapter, an exhibition, *The archaeology of 'race': exploring the Northern frontier in Roman Britain,*[100] has complemented this approach by attracting over 11,000 visitors as part of an ambitious educational programme.

Some of the items published through the *Writing of the Wall* initiative, however, cast a reflective gaze on issues of colonization.[101] S. Shimon, an Iraqi writer now living in London, considered his experience while visiting the mouth of the Tyne:

> I was eating fish and chips and hearing a voice telling me: 'Your
> Ancestors were working here. They were ferrymen from the Tigris'.
> I was nodding my head and saying, yes, my ancestors were slaves here.
> Slaves under the same sky.[102]

The Tigris boatmen were not slaves in Roman terms, but auxiliary soldiers. The way we consider them, however, is, at least partly a reflection of the dominant perspective in writings about the Roman empire, which views imperial assimilation, Romanization or 'becoming Roman' from a positive perspective.[103] Roman auxiliary soldiers may have been recruited in ways that exploited their own natural abilities, but they were also marginalized through the creation of an imperial system of order which worked to the benefits of

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96 O'Brien 2006, 10.
97 Lewis 2006, 16.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid. 20.
100 Tolia-Kelly and Nesbitt 2009; see Benjamin 2004 for earlier observations.
101 Cf. Isaac 2004.
102 Shimon 2006, 77.
103 van Driel Murray 2002; Mattingly 2006; Hingley 2009.

certain dominant players.[104] It is important to consider the political context in which these more inclusive ideas about the Wall are being generated, for empires, both ancient and modern, effectively enslave many.

Conclusion: Hadrian's Wall and diasporic empires

As Locke suggests in her poem quoted at the head of this paper, some aspects of empire are perhaps more enduring than old straight tracks and walls. A number of the contributors to *Writing on the Wall* draw on a broader critical tradition which arises from the characterization of borderlands in the modern world as contested landscapes. In a study of sacred sites, J. Blain and R. J. Wallis remark that boundaries and frontiers have significance as "spaces, both physical and intellectual, which are never neutrally positioned, but are assertive, contested and dialogic".[105] An approach that addresses borderlands as containing multiple alternative histories, illuminating the diverse cultures in the border region,[106] promises new perspectives on places like the Roman frontier zones in Britain, the Israeli Wall in Palestine or the USA-Mexico border.[107] Is Hadrian's Wall a Roman, Lowland British, British or World monument; a testament to the valour of the Picts or a reflection of the grandeur of ancient Roman or modern Britain (or England); an inclusive monument for walkers, cyclists and international visitors, or a warning to the West about the consequences of erecting physical borders to prevent the free movement of people? Working to make Hadrian's Wall more inclusive can be achieved by encouraging people to visit, walk and cycle its length; it can be explored through art projects, excavations, exhibitions and scholarly publications.

By addressing the complex network of forces that lie behind the incorporation of peoples into the empire, including the ways in which colonized peoples react to control and manipulation, we can construct new understandings of the Roman Wall which reflect upon the contemporary world in useful ways and thereby upon the imperial context of dictatorial government and the oppression and violence that brought this order about. Here the concept of diaspora is valuable as it focuses attention on the power and politics which lie behind interaction.

I have explored the history of the study of Hadrian's Wall in terms of the gradual change from a focus on the monument as a national frontier to ideas that emphasize a mixed resident population. Changing knowledge and new discoveries have helped inform changing ideas about the Wall and the character of its population. Yet all attempts to interpret the Wall's significance are interpretative in nature:[108] they relate to the interests of the contemporary age, and they become outdated because ideas move on, rather than because new discoveries require different understandings. *Writing on the Wall* may have been an art project, but some of the individual contributions to the published volume provide a model for the type of critical perspective that we might seek to apply to the study of Roman frontiers and the Roman empire as a whole.[109]

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104 Hingley 2009.
105 Blain and Wallis 2004. See supra n.3.
106 Vaqurea-Vásquez 2006, 703.
107 Hingley 2008a.
108 Ibid. 334.
109 Cf. Hingley 2009.

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