



September 2020

The Celtic Queen Boudica as a Historiographical Narrative

Rachel L. Chenault
Hendrix College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Recommended Citation

Chenault, Rachel L. (2020) "The Celtic Queen Boudica as a Historiographical Narrative," *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*: Vol. 19 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj/vol19/iss1/6>

This open access article is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

The Celtic Queen Boudica as a Historiographical Narrative

Abstract

The story of Boudica, the Iron Age Celtic queen, has been echoed through multitudes of historical narratives, stories, poems, novels and even movies. Boudica led a rebellious charge against Roman colonists in Ancient Britain, and was eventually defeated. Now she stands as a woman who fought back against one of the most powerful empires in the world, during a time in which women had little to no place in history at all. Contemporary Roman historians Tacitus, born approximately around 56 or 57 C.E., and Dio, born around 150 C.E., both recorded the events of Boudica's rise and fall, in retrospect to her defeat. These two Classical sources laid the foundation for the development of her history from the Renaissance up until the 21st century. Now, archaeological research in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries has shed light on the truth of Boudica, an event which occurred over a thousand years before, in 60 or 61 C.E. Boudica as a historiographical narrative can show trends in historical authorship since the Classical sources were written. Boudica became a model of the 'useable past,' and often was a venue for historians to communicate their own political opinions. It is in this way that she serves an important purpose of showing historiographical trends, but using modern schools of thought does not always provide the full truth in what happened during Boudica's life. This paper will evaluate Boudica as a useable character in the past, and what that means for historiographical study today through the lens of ancient historiography, gender in history and post-colonialism.

Keywords

Celts, Classics, Tacitus, Dio, women, Boudica, queens, historiography

The Celtic Queen Boudica as a Historiographical Narrative

By Rachel Chenault

Introduction

The story of Boudica,¹ the Iron Age Celtic queen, has been echoed through multitudes of historical narratives, stories, poems, novels and even movies. Boudica led a rebellion against Roman colonists in Ancient Britain and was eventually defeated. Now she stands as a woman who fought back against one of the most powerful empires in the world, during a time in which women had little to no place in history at all. Contemporary Roman historians Tacitus, born approximately around 56 or 57 C.E., and Dio, born around 150 C.E., both recorded the events of Boudica's rise and fall, in retrospect to her defeat.² These two Classical sources laid the foundation for the development of her history from the Renaissance until the twenty-first century.

¹ There are multiple different spellings of her name, the three most common being Boudica, Boudicca, and Boadicea. The versions of her name vary based on language and time, although it is generally accepted that the Celtic version of her name is 'Boudica.' For the purpose of clarity, this paper will spell her name as Boudica. Richard Hingley and Christina Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), xviii.

² Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 43, 52.

Archaeological research in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries shed light on the truth of Boudica, a woman who lived over a thousand years ago in 60 or 61 C.E.³ Boudica's life as a historiographical narrative revealed trends in historical authorship dating back to Classical sources. Boudica was a model of the 'useable past' and often a tool for historians to communicate their own political opinions. Consequently, she served to expose historiographical trends, but using modern schools of thought does not always provide the full truth in what happened during Boudica's life. This paper will evaluate Boudica as a useable character in the past, and what that means for historiographical study today through the lens of ancient historiography, gender in history and post-colonialism.

Background

In a book review on Boudica's past, author C.T. Mallan aptly stated that "[i]t may be reasonably said of Boudica, that never has so much been written by so many about someone whom we know so little."⁴ From the past five centuries of research there is a generally accepted account of Boudica's revolt against the Romans. First, it is important to have a grasp of the initial Roman invasion that prompted the revolt. According to Dio's account of

³ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 4.

⁴ C.T. Mallan, "Review: Caitlin C. Gillespie, *Boudica: Warrior Woman of Roman Britain. Women in Antiquity*" (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*.

the invasion and recent archaeological findings, the Romans first landed on the isle in 43 C.E., either in present day Kent or Sussex.⁵ During the invasion, the native Britons, whom the Romans viewed as barbaric, varied in their willingness to fall under Roman control, with some cooperating easily and some resisting violently.⁶

The earliest written contact with Boudica's tribe, the Iceni, was in 54 B.C.E., when Julius Caesar recorded the 'Cenimagni,' which can be broken down into 'Iceni magni,' possibly suggesting that the Iceni tribe was vast and strong.⁷ The Iceni tribe of Boudica's time were later reached by the Romans in 47 or 48 C.E., although there is some debate over whether this is the same tribal group that led the revolt in 60/61 C.E.⁸ A conflict with the Roman governor of Britain, Ostorius Scapula, forcibly disarmed the Iceni and they lived under the rule of Prasutagus, puppet-king of the Iceni and husband to Boudica.⁹ This introduced a series of major events that lead to Boudica's fame as a Celtic woman warrior.

The Roman Historiography

The accounts of Boudica's rebellion by Dio and Tacitus must be carefully analyzed and critiqued. Given the fact that the

⁵ E. W. Black, "Sentius Saturninus and the Roman Invasion of Britain" (*Britannia* 31, 2000), 1.

⁶ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 19.

⁷ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 26.

⁸ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 26.

⁹ D. F. Allen, "The Coins of the Iceni" (*Britannia* 1, 1970), 2.

two authors chiefly lived in different centuries, the texts should be evaluated independently of one another, and then together in the context of 1st and 2nd century Greco-Roman thought. It is these stories of Boudica that remain the closest to primary sources a historian can find.

Publius Cornelius Tacitus, or Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, was one of the most prolific Roman historians from antiquity. Many of his works covertly attacked the Roman Empire and critiqued the early Roman autocracy due to his personal skepticism of the motivations of those in power. Tacitus's *Annals* was the fullest account of Boudica and was the primary document for historiographical literature of her life. Tacitus recorded the beginning of the Boudican rebellion by describing the death of King Prasutagus of the Iceni. Following his death, the Roman legate, Suetonius Paulinus, took the land of the Iceni that had been intended for Boudica and her daughters. Tacitus described this event writing:

Kingdom and household alike were plundered like prizes of war, the one by Roman officers, the other by Roman slaves. As a beginning, his widow Boudicca was flogged and their daughters raped. The Icenian chiefs were deprived of their hereditary estates as if the Romans had been given the whole country. The king's own relatives were treated like slaves.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 43, 46, 47.

On the surface, Tacitus represented the Romans as violent and barbaric, an image contrary to popular Roman thought. He communicated a dissatisfaction with the Roman Empire and sympathy for the Britons.

Conversely, Tacitus described the rebels' destruction of the Roman settlements, Camulodunum and Londinium: "For the British did not take or sell prisoners, or practise other war-time exchanges. They could not wait to cut throats, hang, burn, and crucify."¹¹ Such violent imagery portrayed Britons with less sympathy. For this reason, Tacitus's goals in writing this history remain unclear. However, Boudica's story in the *Annals* was one of the most detailed and foundational accounts that shaped her legacy.¹²

The other story of Boudica came from Cassius Dio, a Roman historian who lived later than Tacitus, approximately 150 C.E. to 235 C.E.¹³ Due to the gap of time between the event and his account, he most likely consulted Tacitus's writings.¹⁴ However, deviations from Tacitus's version indicate that Dio likely acquired information from other early Roman sources that did not survive.¹⁵ The foremost difference in the two texts is Dio's

¹¹ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 49-50.

¹² Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 43, 46, 47.

¹³ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 52.

¹⁴ Stephanie Lawson, "Nationalism and Biographical Transformation: The Case of Boudicca," *Humanities Research* V, XIX, no. 1 (2013), 104.

¹⁵ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 52-53.

treatment of Boudica. He made no mention of the abuse that Boudica and her daughters suffered from the Romans, and he explained that the sacking of the Roman cities “was brought upon the Romans by a woman, a fact which in itself caused them the greatest shame.”¹⁶ Dio was less sympathetic than Tacitus, which indicates an alternate purpose for Dio’s text. Unlike Tacitus who criticized the Empire, Dio retold Roman history with the goal of glorifying the Romans. However, the speech that he attributed to Boudica betrayed his own political beliefs. After proposing violent resistance to the Roman Empire’s oppression, she was recorded doing the following:

When she had finished speaking, she employed a species of divination, letting a hare escape from the fold of her dress; and since it ran on what they considered the auspicious side, the whole multitude shouted with pleasure, and Boudica, raising her hand toward heaven, said: ‘I thank thee, Andraste, and call upon thee as a woman speaking to woman; for I rule over no burden-bearing Egyptians as did Nitocris, nor over trafficking Assyrians as did Semiramis, much less over the Romans themselves as did Messalina once and afterwards Agrippina and now Nero (who, though in name a man, is in fact a woman, as is proved by his singing, lyre-playing and beautification of his person).’¹⁷

¹⁶ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 53.

¹⁷ The divination employed in her speech is likely to emphasize the difference between Romans and Celts in social institutions, like religion. This was a mode of ‘othering’ the Celts for Roman audiences. The hare imagery also becomes very significant in Boudica’s iconography.

Due to the improbability of Boudica having extensive knowledge about the Egyptians and other distant nations, Dio possibly inserted these details for Roman relevancy.¹⁸ This exemplifies Boudica's story as a useable past. Similarly, his critique of Emperor Nero through Boudica's speech was a nod towards the general Roman disapproval of the former emperor. Dio also implied in his story that, unlike the Romans, the Iceni did not have colonies or conquer other territories.

Dio's and Tacitus's depiction of Boudica were the chief sources for the revival of her story by Europeans during the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. Despite the discrepancies between the two Roman texts including the final battle between the Britons and the Romans, or Boudica's death, they remain the most reliable contemporary sources for the story of Boudica. The revival of these texts established Boudica's role in British history. Through various interpretations of her story over the following five centuries, modern historians observed the shifting attitudes towards gender and how influential ancient figures shaped subsequent historiography and nationalism.¹⁹ Ancient historians changed the details of history to fit their political agendas, warping later

Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 55.

¹⁸ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 55.

¹⁹ Lawson, "Nationalism and Biographical Transformation: The Case of Boudicca," 109.

research that relied on these sources. Roman historiography, although biased, remained the foundational evidence for Boudica's life and prompted centuries of stories.

Ancient Historiography

In order to make a comparison between ancient and modern historiography, one must address the characteristics which constitute an 'ancient' historiographical account. Ancient Greek and subsequent Roman historians preferred a successive history to a synchronic history, meaning that the historians told history in chronological succession to formulate a teleological explanation of events.²⁰ All major historical events center on Roman success. This narrative was prominent in Tacitus's histories, where he exhibited anxiety about the condition of the Roman Empire and tried to resolve it by crafting a successful past.²¹ Ancient historiography developed this way because of the Greek and Roman historians who chose events based on greatness—the events that *should* be remembered.²² The brief history of Boudica indicated the Roman victory over the barbaric Celts and reclamation of Briton was the part of the event that should to be remembered.

Historian Timothy Howe noted that “ancient historiography balanced the reporting of facts with shaping and guiding the

²⁰ Arnaldo Momigliano, "Time in Ancient Historiography." *History and Theory* 6, (1966): 17.

²¹ Momigliano, "Time in Ancient Historiography," 17.

²² Momigliano, Arnaldo. "Time in Ancient Historiography," 14.

political interests and behaviours of its audience.”²³ This was evident in the stories told by both Dio and Tacitus as they guided readers to sympathize to Boudica, but also eventually turn against her as an enemy of Roman progress; Roman progress was the expansion of the empire. In another example, Dio criticized the emperor Nero through the words of Boudica, implying that there was a national disapproval of the controversial emperor. Dio wrote this long after Nero’s death, so his criticism acts as a nod toward the general Roman sentiment that Nero was a negative part of Roman history.

Ancient historians often attempted to reconcile the past with their current beliefs since ancient histories were written in the personal and political context of their authors. For example, Dio’s shame in a Roman defeat by a woman led modern readers to believe that women had no place of power in the Roman Empire. Tacitus, however, made no remark on Boudica as a woman, likely because he did not believe that it was significant to the story. In fact, Tacitus noted that the Celts were ruled by a queen because “they admit no distinction of sex in their royal successions.”²⁴ In

²³ Timothy Howe, "Foreword: Ancient Historiography and Ancient History" in *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire* edited by Timothy Howe, Sabine Müller, and Richard Stoneman, Xi-Xv (Oxford: Oxbow Books: 2017), xi.

²⁴ Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola* translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodrigg (Vol. 1. Series 10. London: Macmillan, 1877), book 1, section 16.

this comparison, Dio's and Tacitus's personal beliefs were again evident in their stories.

Perhaps the most significant evidence of historiographical change was the record of Boudica's speeches before the final battle in her rebellion. According to historian Eric Adler, long speeches before a battle were "a common element of ancient historiography."²⁵ Modern historians made no attempt to assess the authenticity of Boudica's speech and instead repeated what Dio and Tacitus recorded. In fact, Adler mentioned that, in order to understand the political mentalités of Dio and Tacitus, one must first acknowledge that the recorded speeches did not reflect what Boudica actually said; if these were her sentiments, it would be impossible to know Dio's and Tacitus's own positions.²⁶ Thus, ancient historiography was multi-faceted. First, the information ancient sources provided could support modern historical research. Second, these ancient writings were informational about the authors' social and political climates. Modern historiography, in contrast, worked to evaluate a historical source in its own context. For example, the use of mentalités in the Annales school tried to understand history through the inner-workings of a person's life.²⁷

²⁵ Eric Adler, "Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio" (*The Classical World* 101, no. 2: 2008), 177.

²⁶ Adler, "Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio," 177.

²⁷ Anna Green, and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History* (2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 111.

Boudica's Revival in the Renaissance

The Renaissance period in Europe saw the revival of many classical texts, stories, and art forms. One of the earliest revivals comes from Ludovico da Ponte in 1508, in his six-part chronicle of British history, *Britannicae Historiae Libri Sex*. In this version of the story, Boudica defeated the Romans and killed Suetonius, the Roman legate in Briton before she died of exhaustion in the Alps. Da Ponte used Dio as his main source. However, da Ponte differed in his portrayal of Boudica. Whereas Dio emphasized the shame in being led by a woman, da Ponte portrayed Boudica gloriously *defeating* the Romans. As the sixteenth century progressed, a variety of stories concerning Boudica were published in Europe.²⁸

Playwright John Fletcher produced 'Bonduca' in 1609, which was repeatedly adapted until the nineteenth century.²⁹ This story portrayed Boudica as an irrational, incompetent military leader. Feminist historians have challenged this portrayal of Boudica by contextualizing it in the years after Elizabeth I's reign and the accession of James I.³⁰ According to literary expert Julie Crawford, Boudica's portrayal was made subordinate and

²⁸ Carolyn D. Williams, *Boudica and Her Stories: Narrative Transformations of a Warrior Queen* (Newark, NJ: Rosemont Publishing and Printing, 2009), 19, 40.

²⁹ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 129.

³⁰ Julie Crawford, "Fletcher's 'The Tragedie of Bonduca' and the Anxieties of the Masculine Government of James I," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39, no. 2 (1999): 358.

subversive after the death of Elizabeth I. Once again, Boudica was used as a historical tool by the majority of her authors.³¹ Fletcher most likely used Dio as his main Classical source, since Dio criticized Boudica as a woman much more than Tacitus.

Thomas Heywood was a seventeenth century historian who described Boudica's story in *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World* (1640).

Historian Martha Vandrei described Heywood as “a staunch and eloquent defender of women at a time when the shortcomings of the female sex were the subject of serious polemic,” which contrasted many contemporary male authors.³² Heywood elevated Queen Boudica, describing her in battle as “casting aside the softnesse of her sex, she performs in person all the duties of a most vigilant and diligent Chiefetaine.”³³ Hingley and Unwin posited that Heywood's image of a beautiful queen should be evaluated in the context of changing views of womanhood in Early Modern England.³⁴ The changing views of women were likely connected to Elizabeth I's powerful and successful reign. In the three centuries after the Renaissance, authors like Fletcher and

³¹ Crawford, "Fletcher's "The Tragedie of Bonduca" and the Anxieties of the Masculine Government of James I," 360.

³² Martha Vandrei, *Queen Boudica and Historical Culture in Britain: An Image of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2018), 58.

³³ Thomas Heywood, *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World* (Early English Books Online: Tho. Cotes, 1640), 87.

³⁴ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 136.

Heywood continued to produce Boudica's story in a way that represented their own contexts and subjectivities.

Boudica: Gender and History

Women in history did not become a major portion of historiography until the 1960s with the women's liberation movement.³⁵ Women have always existed in historical record, but it is their traditional depiction by male authors that has been addressed and subsequently redefined in recent years. For Boudica's story, it is a matter of examining how the retelling of her story over multiple generations of historians represents the changing ideas and methods in the field of history. Authors, historians and playwrights struggled with Boudica's story in reckoning a woman as a military leader with idolizing a British hero. Thus, gender and ethno-nationalism conflicted, which is apparent in the various accounts of her life.

Despite a decrease in popularity in the nineteenth century, Boudica regained her status in the twentieth century, when she was adopted as a symbol by the British suffragists.³⁶ As a result, she became a legend of success and hope for modern women. The suffragists used her story in feminist plays, such as Cicely Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Woman* (1910), and they also used

³⁵ Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History*, 2nd ed., (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 262.

³⁶ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 174.

her iconography in advertisements and protests.³⁷ This represented the fact that different groups used her for different reasons. While the suffragists used her story as an example of a strong, ancient British woman, the Welsh signified her as a Welsh patriot.³⁸ In these differing instances, Boudica was a *woman* in history, and she was a *Briton* in history. However, it was not common that she was both a British patriot *and* a woman. Her past was divided to fit the comforts of individual authors.

In the beginning, the main focuses for gender historians were gender, class and race, and the dissection of these to understand the intersectionalities of historical female subordination.³⁹ However, given Boudica's existence as an ancient figure, it is difficult to truly understand what her social standing was. Of course, historians know that she was a woman in a position of political and military power. This suggests that she was in high standing in the Iceni tribe; however, male historians who did not want a woman in power changed her story to fit their agendas. It is not Boudica herself that was subjugated by the patriarchy, but instead it is the historians during and after the Renaissance that made her into a weak or insane figure.

Gender historians are also pushing back on the attitude towards women in military positions. According to historian

³⁷ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 175-7.

³⁸ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 177.

³⁹ Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup. *The Houses of History*, 265.

Marlene LeGates, Boudica and other female warriors have long been posed simply as “women in what were regarded as masculine positions, unusual women in unusual circumstances. They were women temporarily participating in masculine pursuits.”⁴⁰ For example, Lewis Spence’s *Boadicea: Warrior Queen of the Britons* (1937) makes Boudica into a mythological figure, likely because Spence did not believe a woman could lead an army.⁴¹

Boudica: Postcolonialism

Postcolonial perspectives became a popular mode of historical thought after the decolonization of global territories post-World War II.⁴² Historians can see Boudica’s story develop in different ways *during* the actions of European colonialism. Hingley and Unwin note that as Britain followed imperialistic ambitions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British people, specifically upper-class educated people, began drawing parallels between the United Kingdom and the ancient Roman Empire.⁴³ However, this later changed when the Roman Empire was thought of as oppressive, and the British Empire was thought

⁴⁰ LeGates, Marlene. *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2001), 13.

⁴¹ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 179.

⁴² For definition, colonialism has since been identified as the spread of Europeans around the world as they conquered and exploited a large variety of indigenous cultures. Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup. *The Houses of History*, 320.

⁴³ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 147.

of as a venue for freedom, especially according to eighteenth century historian Edward Gibbon.⁴⁴ By the nineteenth century, British expansion was seen as surpassing that of ancient Rome.⁴⁵ Therefore it was at this time that Boudica became a patriotic icon—the ancient Brit who attempted to defeat the imperial Romans. Unlike the earlier Renaissance-era writings, these ideas attempt to distance British history from that of the Romans.

John Milton's *History of Britain* (1670) is an early example of colonial ideas in European writing.⁴⁶ He described Boudica as a confused woman lacking shame or modesty and attacked the Classical sources for portraying his British ancestors being led by a barbaric woman.⁴⁷ This portrayal exemplified how early authors struggled with Boudica as a *female* leader of British freedom against the Romans. In 1947 Edward S. Le Comte published a review of Milton's history called "Milton's Attitude Towards Women in the *History of Britain*," in which Le Comte was highly critical of Milton's angry and unfeeling portrayal of Boudica, saying, "Milton's male disgust could hardly have found more vigorous expression. This is history with a vengeance."⁴⁸ By the mid-twentieth century, attitudes towards Boudica had changed

⁴⁴ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 147.

⁴⁵ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 148.

⁴⁶ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 135.

⁴⁷ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 135-6.

⁴⁸ Le Comte, Edward S. "Milton's Attitude Towards Women in the History of Britain" (*PMLA* 62, no. 4: 1947), 979.

significantly. This history came out shortly after the post-WWII decolonization process, and post-colonial ideas were apparent in Le Comte's defense of the indigenous peoples of Britain.

A critical time for Boudica's historiographical development was the mid-nineteenth century, occurring during India's rebellion against British colonization. After this event, Boudica's history was written in the context of the rebellion, especially in B.W. Henderson's *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero* (1903).⁴⁹ In his history, Henderson directly compared Boudica's rebellion to that of the Indian people: "We English, too, have had to face the doom in India, which fell out of a sunny heaven upon amazed Camulodunum, and we too may know how the Romans died."⁵⁰ In this instance, Henderson sympathized with the Romans and distanced the British from the Celts. India's rebellions against the British played an important role in the development of postcolonial historiography. In the 1970s, historian Ranajit Guha suggested that historians focus on a Marxist-type theory of subaltern history, otherwise known as history of subjugated peoples.⁵¹ In his studies, he found that Indian nationalism often came from a subaltern tradition of the Indians rising up against the British colonizers.⁵² The irony was that Boudica became a source

⁴⁹ Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 157.

⁵⁰ Henderson, B.W. qtd. in *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*, 157.

⁵¹ Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History*, 324.

⁵² Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History*, 324.

of patriotism in the mid-nineteenth century going forward when the British understood her as a character who rose against imperialism, just like the development of Indian nationalism from rebellions against the English. Even after the decolonization process began in the mid-twentieth century, the British still posed Boudica as a patriotic foe to colonization.

Difficulty arises when applying the modern definitions of post-colonialism to ancient Rome's imperial actions. Historian Sviatoslav Dmitriev asked:

One of [the questions] is whether this modern theory is applicable to ancient history at all. The second question, which is closely intertwined with the first, is whether 'post-colonial theory' actually helps us to overcome the allegedly binary nature of such concepts as 'ancient imperialism' and Romanization.⁵³

The main difference between modern colonization and Roman imperialism seems to lie in the fact that there is no written record of the Romans attempting to 'civilize' native populations, as were the goals of later European colonists.⁵⁴ Instead, post-war ancient historians have noticed that the Romanization of conquered

⁵³ Sviatoslav Dmitriev, "(Re-)constructing the Roman Empire: From 'imperialism' to 'post-colonialism,'" An Historical Approach to History and Historiography." *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa. Classe Di Lettere E Filosofia*, Serie 5, 1, no. 1 (2009): 128.

⁵⁴ Dmitriev, "(Re-)constructing the Roman Empire: From 'imperialism' to 'post-colonialism,'" 146.

populations was varied depending on local reactions to Roman influence in their land.⁵⁵ Applying postcolonial critiques to ancient history had limitations and colored the history being studied with excessive modern contexts. Postcolonial theory as a means of understanding ancient Britain subtracted from the purpose of postcolonial historiography—acknowledging the adverse effects of European colonization on the colonized nations and native peoples.

Conclusion

Boudica's story once acted as a tool for historians to relay their own political beliefs in their personal contexts. Her story has been warped by many and has changed how modern historians choose to tackle her ancient history. Modern historians use the Classical sources as a foundation and are still excavating archaeological materials as evidence of the stories written by Tacitus and Dio. Furthermore, modern historians do not portray Boudica as either a woman *or* a British hero, but as a famed ancient figure who led a rebellion against the Romans. Historians and archaeologists now work towards portraying the most accurate story of Boudica's uprising in her own context through new archaeological findings over the past twenty years and a re-interpretation of the ancient texts. Boudica's historiography introduced significant questions: what does it mean to be a woman

⁵⁵ Dmitriev, “(Re-)constructing the Roman Empire: From 'imperialism' to 'post-colonialism,’” 147.

in ancient history? How can historians reconcile gender and nationalism against historical sexism? How should historians compare modern colonialism and Roman imperialism? Boudica's story can lead to answers that broaden the field of history.

Bibliography

- Adler, Eric. "Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio." *The Classical World* 101, no. 2 (2008): 173-95.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25471937>.
- Allen, D. F. "The Coins of the Iceni." *Britannia* 1 (1970): 1-33.
doi:10.2307/525832.
- Black, E. W. "Sentius Saturninus and the Roman Invasion of Britain." *Britannia* 31 (2000): 1-10. doi:10.2307/526914.
- Crawford, Julie. "Fletcher's "The Tragedie of Bonduca" and the Anxieties of the Masculine Government of James I." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39, no. 2 (1999): 357-81. doi:10.2307/1556170.
- Dmitriev, Sviatoslav. "(Re-)constructing the Roman Empire: From 'imperialism' to 'post-colonialism'. An Historical Approach to History and Historiography." *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa. Classe Di Lettere E Filosofia*, Serie 5, 1, no. 1 (2009): 123-64.
- Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup. *The Houses of History*. 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.
- Heywood, Thomas. *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World*. Early English Textbooks Online: Text Creation Partnership. Tho. Cotes, 1640.
- Hingley, Richard, and Christina Unwin. *Boudica: Iron Age Warrior Queen*. London: Hambledon and London, 2005.
- Howe, Timothy. "Foreword: Ancient Historiography and Ancient History." In *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire*,

edited by Timothy Howe, Sabine Müller, and Richard Stoneman, Xi-Xv. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017.

Lawson, Stephanie. "Nationalism and Biographical Transformation: The Case of Boudicca." *Humanities Research V*, XIX, no. 1 (2013).

Le Comte, Edward S. "Milton's Attitude Towards Women in the History of Britain." *PMLA* 62, no. 4 (1947): 977-83. doi:10.2307/459142.

LeGates, Marlene. *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society*. New York City, NY: Routledge, 2001.

Mallan, C.T. "Review: Caitlin C. Gillespie, *Boudica: Warrior Woman of Roman Britain*. Women in Antiquity. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2018." *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*. August 4, 2018.

Momigliano, Arnaldo. "Time in Ancient Historiography." *History and Theory* 6 (1966): 1-23. doi:10.2307/2504249.

Tacitus, Gaius Cornelius. *Agricola*. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb. Vol. 1. Series 10. London: Macmillan, 1877. Published online by John Bruno Hare in 2005 at Ista Flash Drive 9.0, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/tac/>.

Williams, Carolyn D. *Boudica and Her Stories: Narrative Transformations of a Warrior Queen*. Newark, NJ: Rosemont Publishing and Printing, 2009.

Vandrei, Martha. *Queen Boudica and Historical Culture in Britain: An Image of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.