Anyhow, these are the sorts of discussions we should be having in the coming years. This collection of papers is an important and valuable attempt to set them off in the right direction, containing more interesting material and analysis than I can cover here. I recommend it warmly.

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THE SEA IN HISTORY

B. CUNLIFFE: *Facing the Ocean. The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC–AD 1500*. Pp. viii + 600, ills, pls. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Cased, £25. ISBN: 0-19-824019-1.

There is a revival of interest in the sea as the focus for the study of the *longue durée* of classical and medieval history and/or archaeology. In 2000, we saw the publication of *The Corrupting Sea* by Horden and Purcell (reviewed in *CR* 51 [2001], 99–102), which effectively presented the Mediterranean from the second millennium to the later Middle Ages. *Facing the Ocean* by Barry Cunliffe deals with the Atlantic from an earlier period through to 1500 a.d. Its approach in some ways is similar to that of Horden and Purcell: both have as their starting point Braudel's *Mediterranean World* and place a stress on the interconnection of regions and places. But, on opening the book, we find major differences: illustrations lavishly produced in colour and C.'s clear style that is aimed to include all potential readers whatever their background.

The book ranges from South-West Morocco northwards via Portugal, Northern Spain, Brittany, and Cornwall to Ireland and Wales, and then on up to Scotland, finally stopping at the Shetland Islands. Much of the first two chapters are spent discussing the unity of this arc of land on the edge of the Ocean. Through the use of maps, C. breaks down our perceptual geography, based often on the modern nation states of Europe and North Africa, to create a fluid cultural zone with two core regions: a southern one based on the entrance to the Mediterranean and a northern one associated with the entrances into the Irish Sea and the English Channel. Tides, navigation, and archaeological evidence all combine to show that there is an interconnectivity of the Atlantic, which will surprise those who see a uniqueness of such a phenomenon in the Mediterranean. Once this region is set out, C. defines its interconnection with the Mediterranean via rivers and new structures, most notably roads, built by Rome to overcome the geographies of distance and isolation of the Atlantic seaboard from other routes. The argument here is convincing and points to an alternative manner in which to approach the geography and cultures of North-West Europe during the Roman period.

When we turn to the central chapters dealing with the classical period, we find a compelling explanation of difference across the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire. This is done in terms of routes and modes of contacts between the 'barbarian' cultures and Rome. There is one route to Britain focused on the Rhine, notably connected to the Po by a road built by the emperor Claudius, and another route that led to Britain from the Loire to Cornwall, the Bristol Channel, and Ireland. The latter, distanced from Rome or the Rhine armies, points to a different mode of contact and interaction between the West and Rome, and in consequence a distinctiveness to its material cultures when compared with South-East England, whose contact with Rome focused on the Rhine.

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.100 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Debates are presented with clarity: for example, the usage of Celtic linguistic studies to define contact along the Atlantic coast, rather than to utilize the Celtic language to define distinctive ethnicities (p. 293). The relationship between Ireland and the Roman province of Britannia is discussed in terms of trade (p. 415), with Roman finds in Ireland clearly mapped. C., as ever, is cautionary about the use of 'brief anecdotes left by classical writers', but will use Strabo, Eutropius, and other authors to elucidate a point that cannot be shown in a similar fashion from 'the rich body of archaeological evidence' (pp. 272–3). From both these types of evidence, he sees the relationship between the peoples of the Atlantic and those of the Mediterranean as quite different from the modern colonial experience of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Instead, he presents the case for mutual benefit through cultural exchange, but leaves room for invasion and the consequences of direct contact with Rome's armies.

The impact of Rome on 'barbarian' Europe is a theme for C. What he makes clear, though, is that the Atlantic route is beyond the Roman frontier in many ways. North-West Spain is integrated into the Roman world by land routes for the exploitation of gold (p. 374). Moving north, parts of western Britain (Cornwall and Wales in particular) and certainly Ireland remain beyond the major cultural influence of Rome, with the retention of pre-Roman building practices into the second and third centuries AD. This is contrasted with South-East Britain, which was in contact with Rome via the Thames–Rhine route. Hence, the nature of cultural change, or 'Romanization', it is argued, depends on the nature of the contact and the strength of that contact. The Atlantic route did not have the strength of connectivity with the Roman commanders and their armies on the Rhine, or for that matter with Rome itself.

When turning to late antiquity, the book is disappointing. The explanatory line here is removed from that of routes and instead views the events of barbarian invasion and settlement as 'a natural biological readjustment' due to the disintegration of the 'rotten core of the empire' caused by a decline in the birth rate to a 'dangerously low level'. The explanation of the migrations is over-simplistic and depends on the collapse of Rome without any explanation of its continuing significance throughout the period of study, particularly in the fourth century. Significantly, the text does not have as many references to material culture as the earlier chapters on the Roman impact displayed. However, there are good points, notably the use of material culture to demonstrate the integration of coastal regions. For example, the plotting of interaction across the Irish Sea via Ogham stones in Dyfed and Ireland during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., or the use of the Atlantic sea and river routes in relation to the foundation of Irish monasticism in North-West Europe. But, often, there is a reliance on the traditional narrative of invading barbarians and a Rome in decline.

This book is a stimulating read for anyone wishing to venture from the relative security of Mediterranean history and raises numerous questions to challenge our current understanding of key concepts, including cultural change or 'Romanization'. Rome recreated and interconnected geography through road building, yet the existing routes from the Mediterranean were enhanced rather than redirected. The *longue durée* explains the overall continuity, which ebbs and flows, but we are left with specific questions that the approach may not consider or answer. Not least, how did settlements with much in common in the eighth century B.C., such as Quanterness on Orkney and Rome, become so different within a relatively short period of two to three hundred years? Such issues of specific changes are lost in the ebb and flow that is the *longue durée*.

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