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ETHNOGRAPHY IN CAESAR'S *GALLIC WAR* AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPOSITION*

After long neglect, in English-language scholarship at least, the question of how Julius Caesar wrote and disseminated his *Gallic War*—as a single work? in multi-year chunks? year by year?—was revived by T.P. Wiseman in 1998, who argued anew for serial composition.[1] This paper endeavours to provide further evidence for that conclusion by examining how Caesar depicts the non-Roman peoples he fights. Caesar's ethnographic passages, and their authorship, have been a point of contention among German scholars for over a century,[2] but reading them and the rest of the text with eyes unclouded by the exhausted debate about possible interpolation reveals details

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[1] T.P. Wiseman, 'The publication of *De Bello Gallico*', in K. Welch and A. Powell (edd.), *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments* (London, 1998), 1–9; for earlier contributions to the composition debate, see M. Rambaud, *L'art de la déformation dans les commentaires de César* (Paris, 1966); H. Gesche, *Caesar* (Darmstadt, 1976), 83–7; H. Schadee, 'Caesar's construction of northern Europe: inquiry, contact and corruption in *De Bello Gallico*', *CQ* 58 (2008), 158–80, at 158 nn. 2–4; and C.B. Krebs, 'Caesar and the dates of *De Rerum Natura* and the *Commentarii*', *CQ* 63 (2013), 772–9, at 775 n. 21.

[2] The similarity between Caesar's two German ethnographies has long been seen as evidence that the ethnographic sections of the *Gallic War* did not originate with Caesar, but were interpolations by later authors. A. Klotz (*Caesarstudien* [Leipzig, 1910], 26–7) first suggested that the ethnographic excursuses were interpolations, F. Beckmann (*Geographie und Ethnographie in Caesars* Bellum Gallicum [Dortmund, 1930]), through painstaking philological examination, the opposite. E. Norden, 'Der Germanenexkurs in Caesars *Bellum Gallicum*. Die ethnographischen Abschnitte Caesars über Suebi und Germani', in D. Rasmussen (ed.), *Caesar* (*Wege der Forschung* 43) (Darmstadt, 1967), 116–37, at 118–25 (reprinted from E. Norden, *Die Germanische Urgeschichte in Tacitus* Germania [Berlin, 1920], 84–104) mostly sided with Klotz (this note), but also argued that Caesar added the Gallic and German ethnographies of Book 6 during final editing of the *Gallic War* in 52/51 B.C. G. Jachmann, 'Caesartext und Caesarinterpolation', *RhM* 89 (1940), 161–88 used an approach similar to Beckmann's, but argued that Books 1, 2 and 4 of the *Gallic War* were mostly written by late antique interpolators. T. Berres, 'Die geographischen Interpolationen in Caesars *Bellum Gallicum*', *Hermes* 98 (1970), 154–77, at 155–63, 164–70, 172–5 believed that the number of instances of repetition in the *Gallic War* was evidence for Klotz's theory, and that Caesar's initial ethnography of Gaul and his descriptions of the Rhine expedition, the British expedition and the Hercynian Forest are all the 'pseudo-Caesarlike' additions of another writer, whom Berres believed was a member of Caesar's staff in Gaul. Gesche, who collected the literature this controversy produced (Gesche [n. 1], 83–7, 259–60), wonders about Berres's theory: is it feasible to speak of 'pseudo-Caesarlike' repetitions in Caesar's writing, when those very repetitions seem to form a pattern that could be a stylistic trait of Caesar himself (Gesche [n. 1], 86)? I (like most recent students, explicitly or implicitly) side with those skeptical about interpolation, since the abrupt shifts from narrative to ethnographic and geographic excursuses in Caesar's work, while jarring, are a common feature of the Greek historical tradition, and thus no proof in themselves of interpolation. Also, as I argue, one of the primary functions of these excursuses is creating, maintaining and expanding the ethnographic framework; as such, the noticeable difference between them and the rest of the *Gallic War* only proves that they served a special purpose in Caesar's telling of his campaigns.

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that bear upon wider questions of composition. In these passages Caesar devised an ethnographic framework in order to rank against one another the levels of threat posed by different barbarian peoples, downplaying the relative ferocity of the Gauls in contrast to other groups in an effort to magnify the peril the others posed to Rome and the glory to be obtained from their defeat. This ethnographic framework is significant for understanding Caesar's method both because it provides insight into Caesar's reasons for including the ethnographic passages and because it implies that the *Gallic War* was composed in, at a minimum, four stages: Books 1–2, where the framework is first developed and used, by 56 B.C.; Books 3–4 and 5–6, where it is elaborated and extended, by 54 and 52 B.C. respectively; and finally Book 7, after 52 B.C., when Caesar, in recounting the campaign against Vercingetorix, was forced to abandon and contradict the ethnographic framework in a fashion that suggests that the earlier books were already in circulation, preventing him from adjusting them to the new circumstances of the campaign of that year.

The ethnographic framework is a literary structure with, I will argue, a political purpose. It does not accord entirely with Caesar's broader understanding of military effectiveness, which encompasses a wider set of military excellences and deficiencies than the framework admits,[3] nor even with Caesar's depictions in his narrative of Roman campaigns against non-Roman peoples and their implications for the relative strength and weakness of those peoples. As such, some barbarian tribes that should be unthreatening according to the framework turn out to be rather more threatening in reality, while others are less dangerous than expected for reasons the framework does not comprehend, such as their habitual fractiousness and fickleness or war aims foreign to Roman understanding.[4]

The Romans took up ethnographic writing slowly, as they did many other intellectual pursuits introduced to them by the Greeks. Caesar was one of the first Romans whom we know to have written in a deliberately ethnographic mode. Moreover, Caesar appears to have been the first author, Greek or Roman, to write an ethnography of the Germans,[5] the first Roman to explore Britain, and one of only a few ancient authors by his date to have written an ethnographic account of the island's inhabitants. The first ethnographic account of the Gauls written in Latin appears in the *Origines* of Cato the Elder, a work of the mid second century B.C.[6] Polybius' *Histories*,[7] written in Greek, was produced not long after Cato's work, and Polybius can be seen as Cato's successor given that he too discusses the Gauls of northern Italy.[8] It was perhaps from Cato and Polybius that

[3] J.E. Lendon, 'The rhetoric of combat: Greek theory and Roman culture in Julius Caesar's battle descriptions', *ClAnt* 18 (1999), 273–329; A.M. Riggsby, *Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words* (Austin, 2006), 73–105.

[4] On Caesar's depiction of Gallic temperament and war aims, see J.F. Gardner, 'The "Gallic menace" in Caesar's propaganda', *G&R* 30 (1983), 181–9, at 185–7; L. Rawlings, 'Caesar's portrayal of Gauls as warriors', in K. Welch and A. Powell (edd.), *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments* (London, 1998), 179–92, at 176–7.

[5] There is some speculation as to whether or not Pytheas' lost work contained a German ethnography in addition to his better-attested British one (C.F.C. Hawkes, *Pytheas: Europe and the Greek Explorers* [Oxford, 1977], 26), but there is no evidence to support this claim.

[6] J.H.C. Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy* (Oxford, 2001), 78–9; G. Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians: Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West* (London, 2011), 60.

[7] On Polybius and ethnography, see C. Champion, *Cultural Politics in Polybius's* Histories (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004), 30–66, 231–54.

[8] The intellectual relationship between Cato and Polybius is hotly contested. See C. Nicolet, 'Polybe et les institutions romaines', in *Polybe* (*Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* 20) (Geneva,

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Caesar drew inspiration for the *Gallic War*'s ethnography, since both authors described the Gauls[9] of northern Italy as being comparatively weak, but Caesar's method appears to have been his own. Cato believed that the Gauls were prone to indiscipline and overindulgence in alcohol (Cato, *FRHist* 5, F 151 = Amm. Marc. 15.12–14), but that this was simply a result of their heritage and not of external influence. Polybius thought that the Gauls of northern Italy who joined Hannibal had always been soft and averse to physical exertion (Polyb. 3.79.4), and he alludes nowhere to any earlier prowess they might have had.[10] Only later authors such as Livy, Justin and Orosius assert that the Gauls' gradual migration southward into northern Italy had a corrupting effect that brought about their slow moral and even physical decline, a major theme in the *Gallic War* and a potential sign of Caesar's influence on later historians. This means that, while Caesar was likely aware of his predecessors and their explanations for Gallic weakness, he sought to offer an explanation of his own upon which to build the ethnographic framework of the *Gallic War*, one that would allow for both Gallic weakness and Gallic strength.

Two other Greek authors probably influenced Caesar's ethnography more profoundly: Pytheas of Massalia and Posidonius of Apamea,[11] neither of whose work survives except in fragments. Pytheas is cited occasionally by Strabo and Pliny the Elder, although usually to be criticized and corrected. He nevertheless holds the distinction of having been the first Greek to circumnavigate Britain, and his descriptions of the island, its climate and the movement of the sun as seen from so far north are argued to have been the sources of Caesar's versions in the *Gallic War*.[12] Posidonius' work survives in somewhat better condition than that of Pytheas, and the remains of Book 23 of his *Histories* have been reconstructed from nine passages quoted in Athenaeus and Strabo and from possible parallel passages in Caesar and Diodorus Siculus.[13] Although Caesar does not quote Posidonius by name, their ethnographic accounts betray multiple similarities. Posidonius features many of the topoi found in other writings about barbarians in remote locations, and Caesar's ethnographic passages in the *Gallic War* are close enough to those of Posidonius that some relationship between the two works probably existed—either Posidonius and Caesar used the same topoi in their accounts, or Caesar used Posidonius as a source.[14] It is impossible to be sure

1974), 209–58, at 243–55; G. Garbarino, *Roma e la filosofia greca dalle origini alla fine del II secolo a.C.: Raccolta di testi con introduzione e commento* (Turin, 1973), 343–8; D. Musti, *Polibio e l'imperialismo romano* (Naples, 1978), 128–9.

[9] The Gauls referred to here are called Celts by the Roman Cato, the Greek Polybius and many other Greek ethnographers, but Caesar consistently calls them Gauls—although he does explain at the beginning of his work that they are called Gauls by the Romans and Celts in their own tongue (*BGall.* 1.1.1). Because Caesar is the focus of this paper, my usage will be consistent with his.

[10] Williams (n. 6), 70–9.

[11] For discussion of Posidonius' place in first-century B.C. historiography, see L.M. Yarrow, *Historiography at the End of the Republic: Provincial Perspectives on Roman Rule* (Oxford, 2006), 101–18, 161–6.

[12] Hawkes (n. 4), 25–32.

[13] D. Nash, 'Reconstructing Poseidonios' Celtic ethnography: some considerations', *Britannia* 7 (1976), 111–26, at 112. Tierney argued that all four authors are important sources for reconstructing Posidonius' writings (J.J. Tierney, 'The Celtic ethnography of Posidonius', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 60 [1960], 189–275, at 198).

[14] Nash (n. 13), 115. Norden (n. 2) first argued that Caesar borrowed extensively from Posidonius, whom Norden saw as the main source of northern European ethnography for Caesar, Tacitus and other later authors. Tierney agreed, and believed that Posidonius' work was the principal source on the Gauls for the rest of antiquity (Tierney [n. 13], 198, 201, 203). Rasmussen believed that Caesar

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about any of these potential influences, however, because the *Gallic War* only refers to other writers once, in Book 6, when Caesar gently corrects Eratosthenes and 'certain Greeks' for their pronunciation of the Hercynian Forest of southern Germany (Caes. *BGall*. 6.24.2).[15] This indicates that, while Caesar was familiar with both Greek geographers and their custom of criticizing the work of predecessors,[16] he was not eager to plunge into their controversies, keeping his mentions of other authors to a minimum and focussing on his own framework.

But the strongest evidence for Caesar's awareness of and participation in the Greek ethnographic tradition is his use of its topoi as the raw material from which he fashioned his own ethnography. These venerable topoi enabled him to do something bold for a Roman: to demote the Gauls nearest to Roman territory, Rome's traditional bogeymen and the subject of the strong and lasting Roman *metus Gallicus*—'Gallic Terror'[17]—to an inferior rank in ferocity, bravery and threat to Rome, and to elevate above them in these respects the more distant barbarian tribes of northern Europe, such as the coastal Gauls, Belgae, Germans and Britons, thus justifying and glorifying his victories over them.[18] He accomplished this by portraying the Gauls nearest to Rome as a comparatively weakened people whose inherent fierceness had been drained away by Roman luxuries—a topos of deterioration he likely inherited from the Greek tradition.[19] This image of a debased Gallic people surrounded by fiercer, more distant neighbours is the foundation of Caesar's ethnographic framework, which uses distance from the corrupting pole of Rome and the Roman province in the south-east of Gaul as the chief determinant of a barbarian tribe's fierceness and the military threat it poses. By this reckoning, the Gauls closest to Rome, whom the Romans had encountered most

'grafted' the works of other authors like Posidonius into his ethnographic excursuses, blending his own material with theirs to such a degree that his ethnographies became stylistically distinct from theirs (D. Rasmussen, 'Das Autonomwerden des geographisch-ethnographischen Elements in den Exkursen', in id. [ed.], *Caesar* [*Wege der Forschung* 43] [Darmstadt, 1967], 339–71; repr. from id., *Caesars Commentarii. Stil und Stilwandel am Beispiel der Direkten Rede* [Göttingen, 1963], 79–104). Nash was highly critical of this approach, observing that the exact contents of Posidonius' writings 'are only available through textual reconstruction from derivative authors' and that most of the supposed references and quotations attributed to him 'are not acknowledged and can be ascribed to him only by inference' (Nash [n. 13], 111). She argued rather that no concrete passages from Posidonius exist to prove that Caesar's ethnographic passages are effectively plagiarized, and that Caesar's work was more likely unique to Caesar, the result of his extensive experience in Gaul and beyond (Nash [n. 13], 115–19).

[15] Generally, on the degree of Caesar's engagement with the ethnographic tradition: E. Allen-Hornblower, 'Beasts and barbarians in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* 6.21–8', *CQ* 64 (2014), 682–93, at 685 n. 20; Nash (n. 13), 124; Woolf (n. 6), 80. On ethnographers correcting and criticizing their predecessors: Woolf (n. 6), 37; J. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, 1992), 5. On the potentially subversive uses of ethnography in Caesar—points closer to my own—see Rawlings (n. 4), 173; Riggsby (n. 3), 58.

[16] S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998), 108–9, 131; Woolf (n. 6), 37.

[17] H. Bellen, *Metus Gallicus – Metus Punicus: Zum Furchtmotiv in der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart, 1985) argues for the historical power of the *metus Gallicus* from early times by citing the *tumultus*, a special declaration by the Senate that allowed for all military-age men—even priests and the elderly—to be levied for defense against a dire threat, usually an approaching Gallic host (9–15). He also notes a correlation between crises and the practice of human sacrifice, which the Romans performed only in times of great duress in 226, 216 and 113 B.C., twice (in 226 and 113 B.C.) when threatened by the Gauls and once (in 216 B.C.) after Cannae (43).

[18] Schadee (n. 1), 170–1; Rawlings (n. 4), 180–1; Riggsby (n. 3), 101–2.

[19] P.S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton, 1999), 100–1; Allen-Hornblower (n. 15), 686–7; Romm (n. 15), 47; Woolf (n. 6), 54.

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frequently in the past, are the weakest of the barbarians, while other Gauls—the Belgae and other peripheral Gallic tribes—along with the Germans and the Britons, are further away and correspondingly stronger and more threatening. Although Caesar still considers the treacherous and fickle Gauls a threat, he offers his readers a scheme that extends the psychological power exerted over the Romans by the *metus Gallicus* to different and more distant peoples.

Caesar first presents this formula at the very beginning of his work, in the famous geographical passage that divides Gaul into three parts (*BGall.* 1.1.1–3):

> Gaul is a whole divided into three parts, one of which is inhabited by the Belgae, another by the Aquitani, and a third by a people called in their own tongue Celtae, in the Latin Galli … Of all these peoples the Belgae are the strongest, because they are farthest removed from the culture and the civilization of the [Roman] province, and least often visited by the merchants introducing the commodities that make for effeminacy; and also because they are nearest to the Germans dwelling beyond the Rhine, with whom they are continually at war.[20]

This initial ethnography of the Gauls is primarily focussed on establishing geographic boundaries within which Caesar's savagery metric functions. He accomplishes this first by creating a puzzling distinction among the Galli, the Belgae and the Aquitani, all of whom are still technically Gallic and living in this tripartite Gaul. He appears to do this in order to contrast the strength of the Belgae with the other two groups, since the Belgae are fierce because of their distance from Roman territory and because of their constant fighting with the Germans, who are yet further away from society and therefore, by implication, even fiercer than the Belgae. The Germans themselves are clearly separated from the Gauls by the Rhine, which acts as an effective boundary in Caesar's conception between the familiar, at least partially domesticated, Gaul and the unknown wilds of Germany. This, like the division of Gaul itself, is a too-convenient division to suit reality, because abundant archaeological, linguistic and historical evidence has shown that there were Germanic peoples living on the west bank of the Rhine as well. Caesar's ignoring this, wilful or not, only strengthens the clear and easy spatial boundaries he sought to provide for his ethnographic framework.[21] This comparative description of the Belgae also implies, however, that the Gauls who lived closer to Roman provinces (those mentioned last by Caesar and called Galli) have been visited *most* often by Roman merchants and therefore have been effeminized by their goods.[22] Although Caesar does not mention how this comparison applies to the Aquitani, it can be inferred from the relative distance of their coastal dwellings from

[20] All translations are my own, although they tend to draw upon those in the Loeb edition of H.J. Edwards. The Latin is drawn from Du Pontet's Oxford Classical Text. *Gallia est omnis diuisa in partes tres, quarum unam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur … horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate prouinciae longissime absunt, minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent important, proximique sunt Germanis, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, quibuscum continenter bellum gerunt.*

[21] Schadee (n. 1), 170; C.B. Krebs, '"Imaginary geography" in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*', *AJPh* 127 (2006), 111–36, at 113–14; H.D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London, 1987), 2–4; Riggsby (n. 3), 60; Wells (n. 19), 104; Woolf (n. 6), 83–6.

[22] Here the weakened and corrupted Gauls live within a clearly defined and measured space with no further room for inquiry or discovery, a feature that Caesar uses—Schadee (n. 1), 162 has argued—to indicate that Gaul and its people are well known to the Romans.

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both the Galli and the Germans that their strength lies somewhere between that of the Galli and that of the Belgae.[23]

His formula in place, Caesar then introduces the crisis that initiated his assignment to Transalpine Gaul: the encroachment of the Helvetii. According to the framework he has set out, however, the Helvetii should not present any threat to Caesar, for, as the crow flies, the Helvetii were the Gallic tribe closest to Roman territory and the civilized sections of Gaul, and so, in principle, corrupted by luxuries and no longer as fierce. But Caesar had prepared for this potential problem when he first introduced the Gauls, Aquitani, Belgae and Germans, for he quickly adds that 'the Helvetii also excel the rest of the Gauls in valour, because they struggle in almost daily fights with the Germans, either endeavouring to keep them out of their own territory or waging aggressive warfare into German territory' (*BGall.* 1.1.4).[24] Thus, even though the Helvetii live close to Roman lands, their constant fighting against the Germans on their other borders either for survival or for supremacy keeps their primitive ferocity alive and, perhaps more important for Caesar's political interests, makes them an imminent threat to Rome. The threat posed by the Helvetii does not represent a renewed *metus Gallicus*, however, but is rather a by-product of what Caesar would have his readers believe is the greater threat posed by the more distant Germans. With this potential contradiction solved, Caesar proceeds to narrate his campaign against the Helvetii and various Belgic and Germanic tribes, now established as more dangerous threats than the most southerly Gauls themselves.

Thanks to this construction, Books 1 and 2 form a relatively well-defined compositional unit, with Caesar's actions in 58 and 57 B.C. neatly driven and his literary narrative neatly motivated by the brief ethnographic passage in 1.1, for here he identifies the Helvetii, Germans and Belgae as savage and therefore dangerous, defeats them and writes the story of his deeds.[25] Is there any reason that he might have written these books with such an emphasis on distant barbarian threats and disseminated them together after the 57 B.C. campaign? In fact, it happens that Caesar's command of Transalpine Gaul was in peril at this time—L. Domitius Ahenobarbus was running in 56 B.C. for the consulship of 55, and swore that if elected he would deprive Caesar of the province (Suet. *Iul.* 24.1; Cic. *QFr.* 36.3).[26] Caesar's consular provinces, Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum, were not threatened, because they had been granted to him for five years by the *lex Vatinia* of 59 B.C. His grasp on Transalpine Gaul was more precarious: because it had probably been

[23] Naturally, then, Caesar emphasizes the great preparations when his legate P. Crassus is sent against them (*BGall.* 3.20). Schadee (n. 1), 160 also mentions the confusion Caesar creates with his tripartite division of Gaul and its peoples, and infers from his clearer description of the Gauls' borders that they are the principal focus of this treatment and that the territories of the Belgae and Aquitani exist 'only in relation to the Galli'.

[24] *Helvetii quoque reliquos Gallos uirtute praecedunt, quod fere cotidianis proeliis cum Germanis contendunt, cum aut suis finibus eos prohibent, aut ipsi in eorum finibus bellum gerunt.*

[25] Book 1 alone also forms a neat unit of composition, given Caesar's remark that he 'concluded two great wars in one summer' and sent his forces into winter quarters earlier than required (*BGall.* 1.54.2), but the Belgae, who are identified in 1.1 along with the Helvetii and Germans as fierce opponents, have not yet been defeated. Furthermore, the language found at the end of Book 2 after the Belgae have been subdued is even more conclusive: 'These deeds pacified all of Gaul, and such a report of this war was carried about to the barbarians that legates were sent to Caesar from those tribes who dwelt across the Rhine, promising that they would give hostages and carry out his commands … and for these achievements reported by Caesar's letters fifteen days of thanksgiving were decreed, an honour which before that time had fallen to no one' (*BGall.* 2.35.1, 4).

[26] T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, 3 vols. (New York, 1951–86), 2.194.

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assigned to him in 59 for the sole purpose of dealing with the Helvetii, which he had already done, the Senate might have felt justified in reassigning the province. That this political threat would be abolished (and the election of Domitius Ahenobarbus prevented) by the celebrated meeting of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus at Luca in April of 56 B.C.—where they reconfirmed their triumvirate and Caesar's command—was a happy conclusion of which Caesar could hardly have been confident before the fact. Thus, it makes a good deal of sense that before that meeting Caesar might have circulated at Rome a pamphlet—consisting of the first two books of the *Gallic War*—emphasizing that, even with the Helvetii defeated, Rome's interests in Gaul were still menaced by even more dangerous folk, and that he was the man to handle them.[27]

The next compositional unit begins in Book 3 with an immediate reinforcement of the relative weakness of Gauls closest to Roman territory. Here Caesar relates that his legate, Servius Galba, encountered opposition from the Nantuates, Veragri and Seduni in the Narbonese town of Octodurus (*BGall*. 3.1.4). The trouble began, Caesar explains, when the three Gallic tribes noticed the small number of Roman troops present: Galba had sent two cohorts to Nantuatan territory (*BGall*. 3.1.4) and many individual soldiers had been dispatched elsewhere to secure supplies (*BGall*. 3.2.3). Trusting, then, in their numbers, the advantage of an assault from the surrounding heights (*BGall*. 3.2.4), and the Romans' incomplete fortifications (*BGall*. 3.3.1), the Gauls resolved to attack. After a long and fierce battle (*BGall*. 3.5.1), the Romans charge outside the gates of their camp in an attempt to escape, only to surround the Gauls and slaughter more than a third of their 30,000-man force (*BGall*. 3.6.1–2).

Although this scene might appear at first glance to imply Gallic ferocity, the details paint a different picture. Caesar mentions that, in addition to the two missing cohorts, Galba's legion had never been at full strength (*BGall.* 3.2.3, *legionem neque eam plenissimam*), which appears to have been a common problem for Caesar's forces in Gaul, for he later records that two legions combined amounted to little more than 7,000 men and that they faced a similarly massive force of 60,000 Gauls (*BGall*. 5.49). As such, with his ranks already diminished and two cohorts absent, Galba's force was likely no more than 3–4,000 strong. That the Romans managed to defeat the Gauls despite this great disparity in numbers is striking enough, but Caesar also mentions additional advantages afforded to the Gauls by high ground and incomplete Roman fortifications, advantages that are rendered fruitless by Roman *uirtus* (*BGall.* 3.5.3). This seems like a calculated effort on the author's part to depict the Gauls near Roman territory as both weak and militarily incompetent.

Caesar's conflict with the coastal Gauls is somewhat different. The Veneti, the most prominent of the coastal Gallic tribes, are characterized as masters of the sea (*BGall*. 3.8.1), and Caesar writes at length about the difficulties faced by the Romans, who sailed to war only in the comparatively gentle Mediterranean, when fighting them (*BGall*. 3.9.4–9). In particular, he highlights the fact that the Romans had few ships (*BGall*. 3.9.6), and repeatedly mentions their total unfamiliarity with the iron-bound

[27] The schedule of the dissemination of the parts of the *Gallic War* proposed here accords with earlier scholars' observation of the contradiction between Caesar's statement that the Nervii had been wiped out in 57 B.C. (*BGall*. 2.28.1) and the fact that they are found besieging Cicero's camp with 60,000 men by 54 B.C. (*BGall*. 5.49.1). The puzzle can hardly be solved, but the contradiction is more easily excused if Books 1 and 5 were disseminated separately and some years apart. Gesche (n. 1), 257–8 and Rambaud (n. 1), 9–12, 403–5 collect the literature on this and other contradictions.

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coast and its difficulties (*BGall*. 3.9.4, 6–8; 3.12.3–5). By contrast, the Gauls' ships were extremely numerous (*BGall*. 3.12.3), as well as large, sturdy and generally better-suited to the region than those of the Romans (*BGall*. 3.13). By emphasizing these features, Caesar draws the reader's attention to the distant, unknown aspects of the Gallic coast and to the differences of its inhabitants from the inlanders, thus creating a distinction between the Gauls of the periphery and the inlanders just defeated so heroically by Galba's depleted legion. This serves to magnify the impressiveness of their defeat by Caesar's uncertain sailors, who manage to neutralize the advantages of the coastal Gauls' ships and settle the conflict through *uirtus*, in which the Romans 'were easily superior' (*BGall*. 3.14.8).

With the Veneti defeated, Caesar turns his conquering eye toward other coastal-dwellers: he sends Sabinus to fight the Venelli of the modern Cotentin Peninsula (*BGall*. 3.17–19), P. Crassus against the Aquitanian Sotiates, Vocates and Tarusates to the south-west (*BGall*. 3.20–7), and himself moves against the Morini and the Menapii of the Belgic coast (*BGall*. 3.28). It accords with his ethnographic framework that Caesar also represents these peripheral tribes as dangerous in relation to more central Gauls. He gives special notice to Crassus' Aquitanian venture, moreover, by recounting the decisive defeat of L. Valerius Praeconinus and the embarrassing flight of the proconsul L. Mallius a few years earlier (*BGall*. 3.20). This he no doubt does with the intent of making Crassus' impending victory over the Aquitanian tribes appear more impressive, but also perhaps to emphasize that these coastal tribes of Aquitani, as described in Book 1, were fiercer than the inland Gauls near Roman territory, thus reinforcing the ethnographic framework laid out at the opening of his work. Sabinus and Caesar are likewise successful in their own battles, and Caesar thus concludes Book 3 with a rapid string of victories over the Gauls, Belgae and Aquitani of the northern and western coasts, setting the stage for his later journeys into Britain and Germany in Books 4–6.

Caesar, as it turns out, will continue to spend most of Books 4–6 on the edges or even outside the bounds of the province of Transalpine Gaul, pursuing threats far greater than those that lay closer to Rome. But he does not feel the need to offer a more detailed ethnography of the Gauls until Book 6 of the *Gallic War* and, when it comes, he includes it in large part to contrast the Gauls with the ferocious Germans, whose extended ethnography immediately follows.[28] This is emphasized by a chapter in the German ethnography in which Caesar acknowledges a time when the Gauls were actually stronger than the Germans (*BGall*. 6.24.1, *ac fuit antea tempus, cum Germanos Galli uirtute superarent, ultro bella inferrent*), but he is quick to remind his reader that this is long past and that the Gauls have since been weakened by foreign luxury and frequent defeat by stronger enemies such as the Romans and the Germans (*BGall*. 6.24.6). The general acculturation of the Gauls to Roman ways is thus emphasized in Caesar's description of them and in his contrasting description of the Germans, not least when it becomes apparent that the Gauls have mostly abandoned the older tribal system that dominated their society and have now adopted a more Roman-style system of assemblies presided over by chieftains and priests.[29]

Unlike the brief account in Book 1, the ethnography in Book 6 features a fair number of *thaumata*—'wonders', conventionally reported in ethnography since its beginnings[30]—which Caesar might either have lifted from Posidonius, as Tierney

[28] For more on the comparison between Gauls and Germans in Book 6, see Allen-Hornblower (n. 15), 682–93.
[29] Gardner (n. 4), 182; Woolf (n. 6), 88.
[30] Riggsby (n. 3), 70. Romm (n. 15), 69–78 collects many examples of *thaumata*.

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suggests,[31] or noted in Posidonius and confirmed with his own findings. Posidonius and Caesar agree that the Gauls regularly sacrificed both convicted criminals and innocent persons in giant humanoid statues made of wicker, as well as by more conventional means (*BGall*. 6.16.3–4; Strabo 4.4.5).[32] Unique to Caesar, as far as we know, is a description of old-time Gallic funeral practices, in which the valuables, slaves and favoured dependants of the deceased were also burned on the funeral pyre, although immolation of the living had, Caesar notes, recently ceased—another step toward civilization under Roman rule (*BGall*. 6.19.4–5). Also gone were the frequent, almost yearly conflicts instigated by the nobles of the Gallic tribes, which had been mostly stamped out after Caesar's arrival in Gaul (*BGall*. 6.15.1). Caesar thus juxtaposes the older savage customs of the Gauls with the process of civilization produced by recent inroads of Roman culture in Gallic society. In such a way does Caesar paint a powerful picture of a semi-civilized Gaul at the mercy of the stronger, uncorrupted Germans (*BGall.* 6.12.2–5; cf. 6.24.5–6).

Caesar's German ethnography immediately follows the Gallic in Book 6, and many of its features parallel those attributed to the Gauls, creating juxtapositions intended to reinforce the distinction between the two groups to the advantage of the Germans. By presenting the Germans' strange cultural practices in contrast to the more settled customs of the Gauls, Caesar emphasizes the Germans' primacy as the most savage and fearsome barbarian people. German religion, for example, is very simple when compared to that of the Gauls: the Germans worship deities associated only with visible natural powers from which they directly benefit—the sun, the moon and fire—and care little for making sacrifices even to them, having no formally constituted priestly class like the Gauls' druids (*BGall.* 6.21.1–2). Also in contrast to their Gallic neighbours, the Germans have no regular military leaders and no enduring social hierarchy to facilitate such leadership; instead, they form crude, temporary war-bands whenever a charismatic leader arises (*BGall*. 6.23.4–5, 7). The primary function of the Germans' chieftains, then, seems to be that of ordering their strange system of land-tenancy rotation, which mandates that land assignments should be changed yearly so that individual tribe members spend every other year away from the land fighting and hunting, a practice intended to prevent the Germans from developing an unwarlike taste for agriculture that would rob them of their fighting spirit (*BGall*. 6.22.2–3). In a final nod toward their predilection for fighting, Caesar notes that the Germans, true to their role as outland savages, prefer to have large swathes of vacant land surrounding their territories as a testament to their *uirtus* (*BGall*. 6.23.1–3).[33]

Caesar's account of German dietary habits and other elements of their behaviour further strengthens their fierce and primitive image. German boys hunt and fight from their early youth through adulthood, and their diet consists principally of milk, cheese and

[31] See n. 14 above.

[32] It is unclear from Strabo's account whether or not wicker men are original either to Posidonius or to Caesar (L. Edelstein and I.G. Kidd [edd.], *Posidonius: Fragments Vol. I* [Cambridge, 1972], 239 fr. 274 K). As with many allegations of human sacrifice and cannibalism in all eras, supporting evidence for the practice is sparse, and it is possible that the idea was simply a literary embellishment (Wells [n. 19], 59–60).

[33] See also D. Potter, 'Empty areas and Roman frontier policy', *AJPh* 113 (1992), 269–74. On Caesar's depiction of *uirtus* among the barbarians of northern Europe, see J.E. Lendon, 'Julius Caesar, thinking about battle and foreign relations', *Histos* 9 (2015), 1–28, at 15–19; for *uirtus* among the Romans, M. McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2006), especially 290–300.

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meat (*BGall*. 6.21.3–4, 6.22.1)—traits that are frequent topoi in Greco-Roman ethnographers for the inhabitants of northern Europe and imply a culture's impatience with agriculture. Caesar himself believes that the Germans' size, strength and ferocity derive from this free-ranging carnivorous way of life, but says the Germans maintain that these traits are a product of sexual abstinence, which they pursue with such competitive vigour that great shame awaits the German lad who has sex before age twenty (*BGall*. 6.21.4–5). These traits, combined with the Germans' wearing of animal skins and habit of communal river-bathing (*BGall*. 6.21.5)—more topoi—add to an image of oddness and savagery characteristic of far-off peoples in Greek ethnography.

Caesar concludes his German ethnography with a description of the boundless Hercynian forest and the *thaumata* to be found within it. By Caesar's reckoning, the Hercynian forest is effectively measureless; even the Germans themselves have no idea how far it extends (*BGall*. 6.25.4). This boundlessness contrasts sharply with the detail of Caesar's much more precise geographic description of Gaul from Book 1. According to Krebs and Schadee, this contrast is a calculated effort on Caesar's part to capture the sense of mystery and otherworldliness that characterized many ethnographies of the edges of the known world and to suggest to the reader that Germany was a place that Caesar—and Rome—were exploring for the first time.[34] Caesar also claims that the Hercynian forest is home to fantastic beasts,[35] and both his inclusion of these wondrous animals and his direct engagement with earlier writers concerning the size and name of the Hercynian forest are strong indications of his knowledge of the Greek ethnographic tradition. But their inclusion at the end of an ethnographic account is designed to strengthen the dichotomy that Caesar has sought to create between the Gauls and the Germans ever since the first lines of the work. This distinction and the inclusion of the Germans' own peculiar customs and fantastic fauna further entrench their position on the very edge of the known world as a place as far away and as different from Roman civilization as possible. There are, by contrast, no strange creatures in Caesar's tamed and bounded Gaul.[36]

Yet, some Gauls live beyond the Rhine. A Gallic tribe called the Volcae Tectosages—whose historical existence is better attested in the western regions of Narbonese Gaul—had once, in the old days when the Gauls were stronger than the Germans, settled around the most fertile spots of the Hercynian forest, where some of its members still lived in Caesar's time and retained their pristine strength in war because they endured the same 'poverty, want and hardship' as the Germans of that land (*BGall*. 6.24.2–4). Caesar's mention of these Gauls, who '[have] the highest reputation for justice and renown in war' (*BGall*. 6.24.6, *summamque habet iustitiae et bellicae laudis opinionem*), confirms that the ethnographic framework bases its distinctions not upon ethnicity but upon proximity to or distance from Roman territory. In the same passage, Caesar insists that it is the Gauls who live near Roman provinces that have been corrupted by luxuries (no 'poverty, want and hardship' for them) and, 'having grown accustomed to being defeated, no longer dare to compare their own courage to that of the Germans' (*BGall*. 6.24.5–6).

[34] Krebs (n. 21), 113–14; Schadee (n. 1), 170, 178.

[35] Such as a unicorn (*BGall*. 6.26), a peculiar jointless elk (*BGall*. 6.27) and the huge aurochs 'somewhat smaller than an elephant' (*BGall*. 6.28). Although the aurochs was an actual species known to have inhabited that region of northern Europe, its size in Caesar is likely an exaggeration, making it a fitting companion to the two other animals.

[36] Allen-Hornblower (n. 15), 687–93.

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Caesar's decision to devote over half of Book 6 to ethnographies of the Gauls and Germans is curious given his inclusion of a very similar ethnographical description of the Suebi—a German tribe—at the beginning of Book 4 (*BGall.* 4.1–4).[37] In this briefer passage, about half the length of the German ethnography in Book 6, Caesar attributes many of the same characteristics to the Suebi that he will later apply to all Germans. In Book 4 he speaks of annual agriculture-warfare rotation among the Suebi, of the fact that they wear skins and bathe in rivers, hunt incessantly and eat mostly milk and meat (*BGall*. 4.1.8–10); Caesar also says that, like the Germans in general in Book 6, the Suebi maintain an uninhabited space around their own territory, which Caesar claims is as large as six hundred miles on one side (*BGall*. 4.3.1–2).

There are, however, some details included in Caesar's ethnography of the Suebi that are absent from his lengthier description of all Germans in Book 6.[38] The Suebi, he says, allow merchants to enter their territory solely to buy plunder taken from enemies (*BGall.* 4.2.1), and they ban the import of wine, which they believe renders men 'soft and womanish' (*BGall*. 4.2.6, *remolescere homines atque effeminari arbitrantur*). The Suebi also refuse to buy horses from these traders, and insist on using the small, shabby-looking mounts native to their own territory (*BGall.* 4.2.2). Their shopping habits aside, Caesar devotes more than half this excursus to making distinctions between various German tribes, contrasting the fierce Suebi with the less ferocious Ubii, Usipetes and Tencteri (*BGall*. 4.3–4). The latter three tribes have all been weakened through commerce with the Gauls (*BGall*. 4.3–4), the Ubii, even 'accustomed to Gallic ways' (*BGall.* 4.3.3, *Gallicis … moribus adsuefacti*), have been rendered subject to the Suebi, and the Usipetes and Tencteri driven over the Rhine. The Suebic ethnography in Book 4 is, then, a proleptic refinement of the ethnography offered in Book 6, but it works in the same way: the Gauls, by their contact with Greeks and Romans, are still a force of corruption, and those uncorrupted by them are stronger. Explicitly in the case of the Ubii (*BGall.* 4.3.3, *propter propinquitatem*) and by implication in the case of the Usipetes and Tencteri, who have actually been forced into Gaul, physical proximity to the Gauls itself creates weakness.

In Book 4 Caesar needs to make the distinction between German tribes (which he does not in Book 6) to explain his actions. He must fight (and nearly exterminate, on his account) the Usipetes and Tencteri (*BGall.* 4.15), because they have been forced over to the west bank of the Rhine by the stronger and braver Suebi, and must explain why his subsequent expedition over the Rhine into Germany should be considered a success. He builds a bridge (*BGall.* 4.17.3–10) and crosses the Rhine, but fails to collect the Usipetes and Tencteri who had taken refuge with the Sugambri (*BGall.* 4.16.2)—all having withdrawn into the forests—and merely ravages the territory of the Sugambri (*BGall*. 4.18.5–4.19.1). He then visits the friendly Ubii and makes pledges to them, but does not advance against the Suebi, who dominate the Ubii and have caused all this tribal commotion, because he is informed that they have sent their wives, children and property into the woods and were waiting to fight him with all their men in the centre of their territory. In response to the Suebi's unwillingness to engage him, Caesar recrosses the Rhine and breaks down his bridge (*BGall.* 4.19). The claim to having overcome the Suebi implied here—on the grounds that they would not come forth from their fastnesses to fight Caesar but remained in the centre of their land

[37] See n. 2 above.

[38] Allen-Hornblower (n. 15), 683–4 also discusses contrasts between the ethnographic excursuses in Books 4 and 6.

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(*BGall.* 4.19.3, *medium fere regionum earum*)—depends on the people he has defeated merely by frightening them (*BGall.* 4.16.1, 4.19.4, *ut Germanis metum iniceret*) being supremely brave, and so of all men the least given to fright. Thus, Caesar has carefully represented the Suebi in terms that he has come to associate with only his fiercest opponents in an effort to magnify the glory gained from their implied defeat.[39]

The second German ethnography (in Book 6) is nestled in the middle of Caesar's tale of his movement to cut off Ambiorix from potential asylum in Germany, and to punish the Germans for having conspired to aid Ambiorix in his fight against Caesar (*BGall.* 6.9.1–2). The Suebi, he discovers, are to blame (*BGall.* 6.9.8), but this time Caesar has no literary reason to distinguish between the German tribes, and so the Suebi are simply incorporated in his longer description of the customs of the Germans, by which he establishes their courage (as we saw above) with his contrast to the semi-civilized Gauls and his depiction of the Germans as a wild people in an untamed and trackless land. Both ethnographic accounts of the Germans, in short, operate within the lineaments of the ethnographic framework Caesar established at the beginning of Book 1 and continue to assert its distance-savagery metric, using the inferior ferocity of the Gauls as a reference point by which to make the Germans seem more dangerous and threatening.[40] Caesar's motivation for doing so in Book 6 is parallel to that in Book 4, for once again he has another bridge and another expedition over the Rhine to explain, the account of which closely sandwiches his Gallic and German ethnographic excursuses: just before the excursuses the reader is told that Caesar has built a bridge and crossed the Rhine, and that the Suebi have gathered to fight the Romans, not merely in the middle of their territory, as in Book 4, but in its most distant recesses (*BGall.* 6.10.4, *penitus ad extremos finis*). The instant the ethnographies are done—the reader has just heard that the Germans coat the horns of the mighty aurochs in silver and drink from them, a perfect flourish with which to close the depiction of a wild and dangerous people (*BGall.* 6.28.5)—the reader discovers that Caesar will not pursue them there, fearing a lack of grain to feed his troops, but will instead retreat across the Rhine and break down (most of) his bridge. Just as in Book 4, the reader must deduce Roman superiority over the Suebi by their unwillingness to advance to fight Caesar (an even more extravagant unwillingness, in this case, the Suebi lurking as they do in the even less accessible furthest reaches, not merely the centre, of their territory); and, just as in Book 4, the quality of that symbolic victory depends on the supreme courage of the people Caesar has intimidated, a courage he has spent many pages proving with lurid examples and contrasts with weakened Gauls.[41]

[39] On this non-encounter between Caesar and the Suebi, and the similar event in Book 6, see Lendon (n. 33), 18–19. Schadee (n. 1), 170 sees the expedition into Germany as primarily an exploratory one, and posits that Caesar had neither the intention nor the need to fight the Suebi, although she does concede the possibility that he had intended to fight them and, having failed to do so, wrote his description of the journey in a way that made it seem less focussed on conquest.

[40] Riggsby (n. 3), 58–60 argues that Caesar imitates Herodotus' depiction of the nomadic Scythians for his German ethnography. The milk-and-meat diet is a key indicator of a nomadic lifestyle, he asserts, and of the peoples whom Herodotus places on the outside edges of the known world, who are characterized by 'mobility and fluidity' (58). Nevertheless, aspects of Caesar's German ethnography militate against this interpretation: Caesar's German nations have fixed boundaries (even if they keep them barren; *BGall.* 4.3.2, 6.23.1–4) and their land-tenancy rotation system implies clear long-lasting boundaries within each tribal area (*BGall.* 4.1.5–9, 6.22.3–4).

[41] Allen-Hornblower (n. 15), 683 n. 4 provides bibliography for and agrees with the traditional view that the Gallic and German excursuses are intended to excuse Caesar's failure against the Germans rather than to emphasize his victory gained by scaring them away (my view).

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Caesar's repetition in Book 6 of several elements of his German ethnography from Book 4 is particularly troubling if one believes that he composed the entire *Gallic War* all at the same time at his campaign's end; from that perspective, it is difficult to account for the discrepancies between the two accounts, especially the fact that traits of savagery shift from only the Suebi to the exclusion of other Germans in Book 4 to all the German tribes in Book 6. What we might see here, however, is another example of the ethnographic framework's influence on Caesar's writing. Books 3 and 4 see Caesar moving further away from the regions covered in Books 1 and 2 by venturing to the western and northern coasts of Gaul, across the channel to Britain, and across the Rhine to Germany. If Caesar had published Books 1 and 2 in 56 B.C., Books 3 and 4 would then have served as logical follow-ups to Books 1 and 2 by depicting his journeys into the furthest bounds of northern Europe to face the dangerous foes of whom he had warned in the first instalment of the *Gallic War*. As such, Books 3 and 4 might form another distinct narrative chunk—although neither book contains the sort of evidence seen in Books 1 and 2 to suggest that they had to have been published together. Either way, serial publication of this sort would explain the repetition of the German ethnography in Book 6, as well as the discrepancies between it and the earlier, Suebi-specific account of Book 4, because Caesar, who could not expect his reader to remember his description of the Suebi after several years, needed to write a new ethnographic passage on the Germans in Book 6 in order to re-emphasize the glory of his impending victory over them by contrast with the Gauls. It is possible, then, that Books 3 and 4 were written and circulated before Books 5 and 6, perhaps by sometime in early 54 B.C. before Caesar set out on the British expedition of that year.[42]

The sections in Books 4 and 5 of the *Gallic War* describing the Britons provide yet another opportunity for Caesar's ethnographic schema. On the one hand, the Britons were a truly unknown people—the only account of Britain or its peoples of which we are aware before Caesar's was that of Pytheas, and it was stingy with ethnographic details. Thus, to the Romans, Caesar was effectively the first to travel to Britain, and the new unknown qualities of the distant island and its inhabitants begged to be paired with the ethnographic markers of fierceness and savagery that typically characterized far-away peoples in ethnography. Yet, many of the people Caesar found there were, he admits, surprisingly civilized. This unexpected find necessitated some careful manoeuvring when Caesar described the Britons in his work.

The ethnography of the Britons begins when Caesar's troops, having successfully invaded Britain,[43] first skirmish with the terrifying chariot fighters that the Britons used in great numbers (*BGall*. 4.33–4). Caesar mentions twice that his soldiers were rather frightened by the Britons' use of these strange machines (*BGall*. 4.33.1 and 4.34.1, 5.15.5), observations that seem to place emphasis on the Britons' difference from the Romans while also stressing a fierceness and exoticism that would accord with their status as far-off barbarians. Also contributing to Caesar's portrayal of the Britons as savage barbarians is his description of how the natives paint their bodies

[42] Because of allusions to Lucretius which Krebs (n. 1), 779 finds in Book 5 of the *Gallic War*, he argues that Caesar could not have written Book 5 before late 54 B.C.

[43] The tenth legion's beachhead battle with the Britons has the distinction of featuring the first instance of direct speech in the *Gallic War* (*BGall*. 4.25.3), a stylistic oddity of Caesar's writing mildly supportive of the idea that he published the work serially. D. Rasmussen, *Caesars Commentarii. Stil und Stilwandel am Beispiel der Direkten Rede* (Göttingen, 1963), 20–54, 170–1, who, however, argues the opposite, examines every instance of direct speech in the work and collects the literature.

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blue with dye made from the woad plant to make themselves appear more imposing (*BGall*. 5.14.3), as well as his deployment of the venerable skin-wearing, milk-drinking and meat-eating topoi also found in the German ethnographies (*BGall*. 5.14.2). Furthermore, Caesar mentions various *thaumata* about the British that mark them as savage: in addition to daubing themselves with woad, the Britons also shave their bodies entirely save for the hair on their heads and upper lips, and, lest he fail to include an account of strange sexual practices (a vital element in sound ethnography, if Herodotus is to be believed), Caesar also relates that the Britons observe the peculiar custom of wife-sharing, which is most common among groups of fathers, sons and brothers (*BGall*. 5.14.3–5). Even before that, Caesar outlines the size, shape and climate of Britain, using information most likely taken from Pytheas and augmented by his own experience. He relates that the island is triangular and has shorter nights than the continent, a phenomenon he says the Greeks have exaggerated by their claim that mid-winter night lasts for thirty days, since he and his team have not been able to corroborate such an extreme difference (*BGall*. 5.13.1–4). Much like the description of the Hercynian forest, these details convey a sense of distance and foreignness. This sense, coupled with the distance-savagery topoi used by Caesar to build up and maintain his ethnographic framework, places the excursus within the Greek ethnographic tradition and constructs the sort of civilized-barbarian dichotomy the genre tended to produce.

Caesar is, however, unable to cast the entirety of the British population as stereotypical savage meat-eaters. Those Britons who reside along the eastern coast, and especially the Cantii, are comparatively civilized (*BGall*. 5.14.1), a fact that may strike the reader as particularly surprising because they are descendants of Belgic invaders (*BGall.* 5.12.2). But once they arrived in Britain, Caesar claims, they took up agriculture and settled the land in Gallic fashion, building in the Gallic style (*BGall.* 5.12.2–4) and trading continuously with the Gauls across the channel (*BGall.* 5.13.1; cf. 3.8.1). No surprise, then, that the Cantii 'do not differ much from the Gallic way of life' (*BGall*. 5.14.1, *neque multum a Gallica differunt consuetudine*), and Caesar cements the separation of the Cantii and their coastal kin from the inland Britons by attributing the anti-agricultural, meat-eating, milk-drinking diet and skin-wearing to the inland-dwellers only (*BGall.* 5.14.2). Woad-smearing, body-shaving and wife-sharing are found among the coastal dwellers as well as the inlanders (*BGall.* 5.14.3). Nevertheless, the distinction between the more civilized coastal peoples and the inlanders is a miniature example of Caesar's ethnographic framework in action. Proximity to and interaction with the Gauls creates civilization; the inlanders who are both more distant and do not have such contacts are wilder in ways similar to the other fierce peoples found in the *Gallic War*. Caesar, then, effectively replicates his greater ethnographic framework on a smaller scale in Britain, a particularly striking adaptation given that the coastal Gauls, whose trade is supposed to have civilized the coastal Britons, were depicted as fierce opponents in Book 3—yet another example of the framework's flexibility and of Caesar's willingness to change his characterization of a given people from book to book as his own movements and perspective changed. This narrative feat would have been aided by the likelihood that readers of Book 5 would not remember Caesar's descriptions of the coastal Gauls in Book 3, and such a condition would have been much more likely if Books 3 and 5 had been published at different times.

In sum, we see from the first chapter of the *Gallic War*, and from its more detailed ethnographic sections in Books 4, 5 and 6, that Caesar actively sought to create, maintain and expand a consistent ethnographic framework. In addition to recording

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his journeys to Germany and Britain, his inclusion of *thaumata* from both regions and his challenges to traditions on the Hercynian forest and the climate and geography of Britain offer evidence of Caesar's engagement with the Greek tradition. In the same spirit he borrowed the topoi and patterns used by his predecessors to craft a framework that would furnish the characteristics necessary to distinguish between different types of barbarian. He avoided the use of Hippocratic climatology—the Greek view that climate formed national character[44]—as a means of explaining the cultural and physical characteristics of barbarian peoples, and instead focussed on a system that equated a given people's distance from civilization with the degree of their savagery, implied fierceness in battle, and potential danger to Rome, a danger that, of course, Caesar was happy to eliminate.[45]

By the reckoning of the ethnographic framework, then, the Gauls are comparatively weak because of their proximity to Rome and their corruption by Rome (*BGall.* 6.24.5–6). Wholly left aside is the puzzle of why the Romans themselves, the most civilized and the most corrupting (and so by implication the most corrupt), are nevertheless the most successful in war. For the limited purposes of his ethnographic framework, Caesar does not want the reader distracted by Roman superiority in order, discipline or technology.[46]

Whether or not Caesar himself was conscious of the contradiction inherent in pitting strong, civilized Romans against weak, semi-civilized barbarians when civilization is cited as the decisive factor in the weakening of a people cannot be known, for he never addresses the matter explicitly. Had he done so we might discover that Caesar was knowingly or unknowingly applying to the Romans (but not to the barbarians) a definition of *uirtus* that, under Greek philosophical influence, had come to encompass a wider collection of moral and intellectual qualities than courage alone. Such is *uirtus* as Cicero understands it.[47] Interesting, then, that Caesar's most worthy opponent in the *Gallic War* seems to possess Roman virtues—or Roman *uirtus*—for it is Vercingetorix, a foe nearly cast in Caesar's own image, who stirs the supposedly decadent Gauls to rebellion in Book 7 and brings Caesar's ethnographic framework crashing down around him.

Prior to Book 7, Caesar's Gauls are inferior to the other barbarians, but only comparatively inferior: Caesar must fight them and put down their rebellions, and he does not want these exploits to appear unimpressive. But these conflicts with Gauls proper are usually shown to have been handled with relative ease, often because of the lack of unity among Caesar's enemies or the quality of his own troops.[48] The revolt of Book 7 differs because a majority of the Gauls break away from Roman control and

[44] A subset of what modern scholars call geographic determinism: Woolf (n. 6), 37, 70–3; Hinds (n. 16), 108–9, 131; Hippocratic climatology theorized that climate had a direct effect on human development, suggesting, for example, that people like the Gauls, who lived in cold northern climes, were tough, large-bodied and fierce, while those of hot southern regions were shorter, darker-skinned and more prone to weakness in body and spirit: Schadee (n. 1), 163; Woolf (n. 6), 50.

[45] Gardner (n. 4), 181–2; Rawlings (n. 4), 173, 180–1; Riggsby (n. 3), 101–2.

[46] On these qualities among the Romans and their assimilation by the Gauls, see Riggsby (n. 3), 73–105.

[47] W. Eisenhut, *Virtus Romana* (Munich, 1973), 17, 21, 30–6; McDonnell (n. 33), 72–134, 320–56.

[48] Ambiorix's revolt in Book 5 poses the greatest challenge to Caesar before Vercingetorix, but it should be remembered that the Eburones Ambiorix leads are Belgae (*BGall.* 5.24.2–4), who are categorized as strong opponents by the ethnographic framework. Caesar also notes two separate times the dangers presented by the Morini and Menapii, other Belgic tribes, even if they turn out not to be very difficult to defeat in fact (*BGall.* 3.28, 4.37–8).

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rally behind Vercingetorix, who, as others have pointed out,[49] leads his Gauls in a surprisingly Roman-style military campaign. Of all the campaigns recounted in the *Gallic War*, this rebellion is the one with which Caesar seems to have the greatest difficulty. None of his previous opponents in Gaul, Germany or Britain is represented as being very well organized or strategically sophisticated—a common topos about European barbarians was that they were ferocious in hand-to-hand combat but had little tactical skill. The Gauls of Book 7 do not fit this picture. Not only do they undertake an uncharacteristic and highly organized scorched-earth campaign that seeks to destroy Caesar's potential supplies and starve him out of Gaul (*BGall*. 7.14, 16.3, 55.8), but they also on two separate occasions resist his attempts to lure them to fight on unfavourable ground (*BGall*. 7.35.5–7, 51.2–4), elsewhere a useful Caesarian tactic for dealing with barbarian foes (*BGall*. 5.50–1). Caesar even experiences a real defeat at Gergovia when the Romans, confident in their courage (*BGall*. 7.50.1, *nostri uirtute confiderent*), are taken in disarray and forced into retreat while attempting to capture the town (*BGall*. 7.50–2): he blames the loss on a failure of discipline among his soldiers (*BGall*. 7.52.3–4).[50] The Gallic sack of Noviodunum was more serious still, since all Caesar's Gallic hostages, grain supply, money from Rome, and a substantial portion of the army's and his own possessions were either stolen or burned when Eporedorix and Viridomarus led the inhabitants of the town in killing the garrison, seizing the Romans' goods, and then burning the town and ruining all the grain that they were unable to carry away themselves (*BGall.* 7.55). As Cunliffe rightly observes, this potentially dire blow to Caesar's logistical capabilities in Gaul is passed over so blithely in Caesar's narrative as to make it seem of little or no importance to the rest of the campaign.[51] The more likely reality was that Caesar had to go to extraordinary lengths in order to secure the necessary supplies to keep his men in Gaul thereafter, efforts that he portrays as examples of his fine generalship and *celeritas* rather than as a narrow escape from a disaster of his own making (*BGall*. 7.56).[52]

Vercingetorix's rebellion, culminating in Caesar's defeat at Gergovia and loss of Noviodunum, provides an all-too-compelling rebuttal of Caesar's earlier assertions that the Gauls were a comparatively weakened people surrounded by more powerful savages. Not only had the tribes that followed Vercingetorix been identified at the beginning of the work as the least brave in Gaul, but by the implicit reasoning of the ethnographic framework (*BGall*. 1.1, 6.24), Caesar's forces should have had little problem defeating the Gauls under Vercingetorix, because, when Caesar defeated the Germans or Belgae, he claimed victory over the Gauls—whom those barbarians had defeated and dominated—by proxy.[53] But now real Gauls and real events undercut his ethnographic framework. Caesar's defeat by the Gauls of Book 7 implies that in

[49] Both Rawlings (n. 4), 180–1 and Riggsby (n. 3), 97–100 argue that Vercingetorix's leadership and tactical thinking are distinctly Roman in flavour, and cite his *Romanitas* as the main cause of his temporary success. For Riggsby (n. 3), 101–2 Caesar's depicting Gallic assimilation of Roman technology and culture is intended to increase the impressiveness of his victory over Vercingetorix's Gauls.

[50] This is in keeping with one of the excuses adduced by N.S. Rosenstein (Imperatores Victi*: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990], 94–7), whereby defeated Roman generals would regularly shift blame for a defeat from themselves to the common soldiery.

[51] B. Cunliffe, *Greeks, Romans, and Barbarians: Spheres of Interaction* (New York, 1988), 120.

[52] Rawlings (n. 4), 180.

[53] For reasoning of this sort, Lendon (n. 3), 313.

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earlier books of the *Gallic War* he probably downplayed their fighting prowess in order to exaggerate the strength of other, more distant peoples. As Rawlings argues, it is more likely that the Gauls were actually perfectly good at fighting from the very beginning of Caesar's time in Gaul,[54] and that he sought for political reasons to imply that other peoples were more dangerous.

While he cannot entirely omit mention of his defeats, Caesar is still careful not to place too much emphasis on those events in Book 7 that are unfavourable to his own image as a general, which he has cultivated with great care throughout the *Gallic War*. It is unsurprising, then, that Caesar also never attributes his defeats directly to Gallic courage—particularly because he has devoted so much effort to constructing an ethnographic framework founded on the concept of comparative Gallic weakness in the *Gallic War*'s earlier books. It seems likely, then, that Caesar hoped that his reader would pay greater attention to the vivid imagery and strange *thaumata* used to depict the fierceness and savagery of the Germans and Britons and not notice the odd contradiction that those barbarians who were supposed to be the fiercest actually ran and hid from him,[55] while the Gauls, the weakest, temporarily overthrew his control and defeated him in battle.

This in turn raises an important question: if Caesar went to so much effort to craft an intelligible ethnographic framework in the first six books of the *Gallic War*, why did he not just alter his depiction of the Gauls to fit this model in Book 7? The most likely answer is that he did not because he could not, for if Caesar had composed the entirety of his work at the same time, he could have edited out the contradiction between his portrayal of the Gauls in Books 1–6 and in Book 7. If he composed the *Gallic War* serially, however, he could not alter what was already in circulation, and what was already in circulation depicted weaker Gauls dwelling near the Roman provinces whose occasional uprisings had been handled with relative ease.

Three main points arise from looking to the ethnographic framework as a means of analysing the composition of the work. First, as we have already seen, Books 1–2 form a relatively coherent compositional chunk. Caesar's ethnographic framework is initially constructed at the opening of Book 1 and points to the Helvetii, Germans and Belgae as brave and dangerous, and in Books 1 and 2 Caesar defeats these peoples one after another. These books represent the years 58–57 B.C., and we have noted above the possibility that Caesar composed and released to the public the first two books of the *Gallic War* in 56 B.C., perhaps just before the conference with Pompey and Crassus at Luca. It is undeniable that Caesar portrays the Germans and Belgae of Books 1 and 2 as much fiercer opponents than the Gauls further to the south-west, and this portrayal makes sense if he were attempting to convince readers at Rome—in particular, the senators whose support he hoped to win—that he should be allowed to remain in Transalpine Gaul in order to combat these more powerful and more threatening barbarian tribes. Caesar was in constant contact with influential people in Rome, even when he was in the furthest bounds of northern Europe, and it is, therefore, attractive to guess that one of the means he used to lure two

[54] Rawlings (n. 4), 181.

[55] Rawlings (n. 4), 176–7 observes that the Gauls appear to have conceived of warfare and its purpose in a manner quite different from the Romans, and that their primary interest in plunder explains why they retreat with relative ease and frequency. A similar argument might be made about the Germans' war-aims in Books 4 and 6, but the importance of the point highlighted here is that Caesar happily interprets barbarian opportunism as cowardice, particularly when it makes him appear a more successful general.

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hundred men of senatorial rank to Luca was the account of his conquests in Gaul (Plut. *Caes.* 21; *Pomp*. 51; *Crass*. 14).

The second point is that Caesar continued to elaborate the framework in order to justify and glorify his further fighting until the Gallic revolt under Vercingetorix in 52 B.C. His command safe after Luca, Caesar then in 56–53 B.C. extended his campaigns further out into Gaul, Germany and Britain—offensives often found puzzling by scholars, but conveniently represented as almost natural by his ethnographic framework, which he elaborates in the books that followed with passages about the distant, uncorrupted and thus dangerous inhabitants of these lands. Books 3–4 and 5–6, then, were presumably written and presented to the public by the winter of 53/52 B.C., since in them the ethnographic framework remains unchallenged, and it is tempting to suppose that the long ethnographic passages in Book 6 signal Caesar's ambition to carry on his campaign against the ferocious Germans in 52 B.C. Moreover, because of the discrepancies between the German ethnographies found in Books 4 and 6, Books 3 and 4 might have been published earlier than Books 5 and 6, perhaps by early 54 B.C., with Books 5 and 6 following by 53 or 52 B.C. We need not suppose, however, that Books 3–4 and 5–6 were necessarily published in these pairings, since there is no evidence in them to suggest it, and it is perfectly plausible that each was published individually in the year following the year's fighting it describes.

The third and final point is the significance of the collapse of the ethnographic framework in Book 7. As shown above, Caesar's portrayal of the Gauls is overturned by Vercingetorix's revolt and Caesar's embarrassing defeats at their hands. If the *Gallic War* had been composed at one time, Caesar would have been able either to construct a coherent framework of ethnography that did not stumble so obviously near the end of his work or to revise what he had already written to reflect the shift in Book 7. For otherwise there is a puzzle: if Caesar knew about the Gauls' bravery and increasing competence in Roman-style fighting from the beginning of his writing, why does his portrayal of them remain that of a comparatively weakened people through Book 6, after which this portrayal is dramatically and forcibly reversed? That Caesar happily added to, adapted and exploited his ethnographic framework until its abrupt and unexplained collapse in Book 7 is, then, strong evidence that the *Gallic War* was composed serially.

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