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The Contextual Audiences of Caesar's De Bello Gallico

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The Contextual Audiences of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*

Timothy Kimbrough
5 May 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* was composed during a period in which Caesar's absence due to his proconsular appointment in Gaul lessened his political influence at Rome. *De Bello Gallico*, however, provided him with an avenue through which to maintain and expand his power base at Rome through reports of success. Underneath the general propaganda are targeted reports of speech which both react to contemporary events back in Rome and aim to augment Caesar's standing within Rome. Through discourse both direct and indirect, Caesar crafts rhetorical appeals intended to react to the contemporary political climate in Rome while simultaneously maintaining in the mind of the general populace his worth as a political ally and reinforcing the necessity of his Gallic command in the eyes of both the *populus* and the Senate.

To understand fully the weight of Caesar's words, one must first understand the complex political situation of the 50s into which he was sending his reports. In addition to this, the chronology of composition and the means of distribution of the work must be considered. It is only then that one can grasp the weight of the reported speech. Throughout the course of *De Bello Gallico*, reported discourse reinforces the fluidity of the Roman political situation and the alliances contained therein. Additionally, the chronology of the work's composition allows Caesar to react to shifts in the political climate on a regular basis. Tied in with this, he uses instances of discourse in this work to magnify the threat of the Gauls and Germans, rendering necessary his continued command and military expeditions. Finally, Caesar uses instances of discourse to appeal directly to the Roman people and reinforce his position as a worthy ally and benefactor.

POLITICAL SITUATION

OPTIMATES AND POPULARES

The first component of understanding the effect of the discourse which Caesar reports is an understanding of the Roman socio-political construct during the period of the Late Republic. One major aspect of the climate into which this work was sent is the loose division of political figures into two groups: *optimates* and *populares* (Scullard 109). The core difference between them is the means by which they attempted to accumulate political power and prestige. The *optimates* appealed primarily to the Senate and the aristocracy to achieve their political goals, while the *populares* appealed primarily to the Roman *populus*. To put this in the context of *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar was primarily a *popularis*, resulting in a greater effort to build up support within the ranks of the Roman people rather than in the Senate (Wiseman *Population* 3). This political division should however be approached with a number of caveats. The first is that at the time of *De Bello Gallico*'s composition, there was no clear labelled distinction between or official organization of the two, as with modern political parties. Tying in to this first caveat is the second, namely that there was flexibility within the political system to shift between these two sources of derived power. It should also be noted that although the *optimates* and *populares* attempted to derive their political power from different sources, both groups generally did so within the political structures already in place and with no drive to change the socio-political power structure, simply to amass personal power. This is notable in the case of the *populares*, like Caesar, as it was not their goal to put more power in the hands of the masses or bring about social change. Rather, they sought to accumulate personal power by appealing to the people while effecting little to no fundamental change. This general division of the political realm into

optimates and *populares* influenced not only Caesar's choice of primary audience for *De Bello Gallico* but also his primary rhetorical goals for the work.

THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

In addition to the influence of the *optimatus-popularis* division on *De Bello Gallico*'s rhetorical message, the political machine of the first triumvirate also played a part in what Caesar said through his discourse and is thus crucial to its comprehension. Formed in 60 and composed of Caesar himself, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, and Marcus Licinius Crassus, the triumvirate was an important factor in the politics of the 50s (Hammond xvii-xviii). Although not as monolithic and dominating as it might seem (one need only look at the political leanings of the consuls in the years of the triumvirate's activity to see that they did not hold a political monopoly), the triumvirate was an important factor in Roman politics, especially for Caesar (Gruen 144-147). Although it was the people who carried a tribunician bill to grant Caesar Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for his proconsular year rather than the *silves collesque* granted him by the Senate, it was Pompey who proposed the bill adding to this Transalpine Gaul, setting the stage for Caesar's Gallic campaign (Scullard 118-119). Not only did the previous support of the people lead Caesar to attempt through *De Bello Gallico* to maintain that support, but the decline of the triumvirate¹ also left Caesar with a need to consolidate his power base. Accordingly, the years spent by Caesar as proconsul in Gaul cannot be appropriately covered without consideration of the first triumvirate and its role in Roman politics.

CLODIUS

Also necessary to the understanding of the rhetorical message of Caesar's discourse is an overview of crucial events over the course of the seven years spanned by the portion of *De Bello*

¹ See "The Deaths of Julia and Crassus"

Gallico written by Caesar. One key figure in the political events of these years, particularly the year 58, is Publius Clodius Pulcher, one of the tribunes of the year. Having joined the ranks of the plebians in 59 under the consular and pontifical authority of Caesar, Clodius stood for and was elected to the tribunate for 58 (Tatum 104, 110-111). Even prior to his election to the tribunate, Clodius was an inconstant ally to Caesar, despite the benefits he received from the then-consul. In response to being refused further honors, Clodius broke with Caesar in 59, going so far as to declare himself *inimicissimus Caesaris*² as well as his intent to fight against Caesar's legislation, a harbinger of later difficulties (Tatum 109). Despite this, by the end of the year, Clodius had begun a reconciliation with Caesar, standing as an ally within the tribunate rather than an opponent (Tatum 112-113). In 58, however, Clodius once again turned on Caesar and the triumvirate, questioning the validity of Caesar's consular actions, despite the fact that much of his own power rested on Caesar's effecting his adoption into the plebs (Wiseman *CAH* 385). This demonstrates not only the fluctuating nature of Roman politics but also the rampant inconstancy of Clodius himself, to which Caesar responds in this work³. Through *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar reacts to contemporary events, not the least of which are those surrounding Clodius and his efforts at amassing power.

THE DEATHS OF JULIA AND CRASSUS

A treatment of the 50s is also incomplete without touching on two deaths which rocked the foundation on which the triumvirate and its power base sat. The first of the two is the death of Julia, the daughter of Caesar and the wife of Pompey, in 54. This death weakened the ties between the two, as the marriage had been arranged in 59 to help solidify the alliance between the two men (Wiseman *CAH* 374). The second is the death of Crassus on his Parthian campaign

² Most hateful enemy of Caesar

³ See "Ariovistus and Clodius"

in 53 (Scullard 128-129). This left the triumvirate without its third man, obviating the need for Caesar as a mediator for Crassus and Pompey's mutual distaste. Thus with these two deaths, Caesar's marital ties to Pompey were severed and their political ties were weakened. At the very least, Books 6 and 7 of *De Bello Gallico* were written in this context, a backdrop for the work which is important to remember. With the decline of the triumvirate, Pompey began to sway to the side of the *optimates*, culminating, after the completion of the work, in Pompey's acceptance of command against Caesar in December of 50 (Scullard 124-6; Gelzer 186). With his most powerful allies dead or deserting him, it is reasonable that Caesar would then turn to the people, who had consistently been favorable toward him, to secure political power. These two deaths and the resulting loss of allies had an influence over the message which Caesar wished to send through his composition of *De Bello Gallico*.

LEGALITY AND PROSECUTION

One final aspect of the contemporary socio-politics concerning *De Bello Gallico* and its message is the questionable legality of Caesar's actions, particularly the forceful means by which he effected the passing of some of his favored legislation, during his consular year and the potential for prosecution upon his return. Stationed as the proconsul of the Gauls and Illyricum, Caesar was immune to prosecution for the period of his magistracy due to his service *rei publicae causa* (Gruen 292). However, even before his departure in the year 58 concerns were raised in the Senate by C. Memmius and L. Domitius Ahenobarbus over the legality of his consular actions, with charges eventually being leveled against Caesar by one of the tribunes of 58, despite the inability for charges against Caesar to result any tangible punishment for Caesar outside of the realm of public opinion (Gruen 291). This highlights the danger for Caesar should he return to Rome, as despite tribunician affirmation of his immunity, such immunity was only in effect until

the end of his magistracy. Compounding this was the attempted prosecution of the former tribune Vatinius, serving concurrently with Caesar's consulship, over infractions regarding legislative procedure, resulting in violence instigated by the triumviral faction (Gruen 292). To avoid prosecution for the same actions and accusations after his return of *maiestas* for forcing through desired legislation, however, would require persuasion through of the governing bodies, particularly the people, through Caesar or others that the former's actions were for the good of the republic as well as countering of the negative propaganda effected by opposing senators at Rome though Caesar's own indictment and the debacle following that of Vatinius.

Likewise, his proconsular appointment was itself an object of scrutiny. With the legislation giving him the command having been proposed by Vatinius as tribune, the nature of his appointment there was additionally suspect due to the allegations leveled against the legate (Scullard 119). Thus it was in Caesar's best interests to persuade the people that his appointment to Gaul and actions there were for the benefit of the state, regardless of the legality with which they were brought about. Such an attempt at persuasion can be seen in Cicero's *De Provinciis Consularibus* of 56. In the work, Cicero, recently reconciled with Caesar through the latter's fellow *triumvir* Pompey, advocates that Caesar has the best interests of the state at heart, rather than personal interests, and thus no punitive action ought be taken against him (Steel 158-9, Cicero xii.29). Though in this instance Cicero is attempting to prevent Caesar's recall rather than any indictments against him, the speech demonstrates and refutes the concern over Caesar's subordination of the good of the state to his own personal benefit, a concept which can be applied to his previous actions as consul. Such a fear of prosecution can also be seen in Caesar's attempts to stand for the consulship of 49 *in absentia*. He would otherwise be required to go to Rome to declare his candidacy and thus be in the city and a target for prosecution unless already

elected to and serving in the position of the new magistracy. Thus it was in Caesar's best interests to use his available methods of communication, including *De Bello Gallico* to highlight the good of the state effected by his actions and the necessity of those same actions.

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION

In addition to understanding the political climate into which Caesar sent his *De Bello Gallico*, one must also determine both Caesar's schedule of composing the work and the method in which he had it distributed. Although many have been proponents of the idea that *De Bello Gallico* represents a single instance of composition, including noted biographer of Caesar Matthias Gelzer, it is more compelling to infer that each book was composed individually and annually (Wiseman *Publication* 1; Gelzer 171). While there is the possibility of alternate publication schedules, such as in installments of multiple books, only the two primary opinions concerning the work's composition will be treated here (Riggsby 9, 224). In addition to commenting that there is no *a priori* reason to assume continuous composition, Wiseman aptly points to the disparity between accounts of the Nervii in Books 2 and 5 as indicative of the separate composition of the books (Wiseman *Publication* 2). Knowing, as he would if composing all the books simultaneously, that the Nervii were 60,000 strong when attacking Quintus Cicero, Caesar would not have reported that just 3 years previous he had reduced the Nervii to just 500 men (Wiseman 2; BG 2.28.2, 5.49.1). Similarly, as Balsdon notes, the account of Galba in the third book points to separate, yearly composition (Balsdon 23). His campaign at the end of 57 is recounted at the beginning of the third book, which covers the fighting of 56, suggesting that at the time of composition of the second book, regarding 57, Caesar, south of the Alps, had not yet heard of Galba's activities to the north (BG 3.1-7, Balsdon 23). Thus it is reasonable to infer that

the books of *De Bello Gallico* were composed yearly rather than *en masse* following Caesar's return to Rome.

WINTER ACCOUNTS

Balsdon's analysis of the placement of the accounts of winter actions noted above can in fact be extended throughout the work to further reinforce the theory that each book was individually composed in the winter following the year's events. Book 1 ends with winter but only with the assigning of winter quarters and no occurrences in the winter of 58-57 (*BG* 1.54). Book 2 also ends with the assigning of winter quarters but the third begins with Galba's posting, as previously discussed (*BG* 2.35, 3.1-3.6). Caesar could not have had foreknowledge of these events if writing Book 2 during the intervening winter, but they are reasonable to include with Book 2 if all the books were composed at once in 52-51. Book 3 again ends with the establishment of winter quarters, with the winter invasion of the Usipetes and Tencteri being recounted in the fourth book (*BG* 3.29, 4.1-4). As this is the catalyst for Caesar's return to Gaul from his winter quarters, it is sensible that if each of the books was written over an individual winter, his account for the year 56 would not contain these events, as it would have already been written upon his reception of this news (*BG* 4.6). Book 4, similarly to the preceding books, ends with the assignment of winter quarters (*BG* 4.37). Caesar's choice to delay the revelation of the building of the fleet until Book 5 despite having ordered it at the end of the previous year is also indicative of the yearly composition of *De Bello Gallico* (*BG* 5.1). This allows him to avoid inadvertent embarrassment if, having given the order before the winter and reported it in Book 4, upon his return he should find the fleet insufficient for another expedition to Britain. Had he composed all of the books simultaneously at the end of his tenure in Gaul, the order itself easily could have been inserted into the end of the fourth book. Books 6 and 7 also end immediately

after the distribution of the legions to winter quarters (*BG* 6.44, 7.90). Thus, despite much of the winter season being part of the preceding year, Caesar exhibits a tendency to include those events with the account of the following year, suggesting that the books were not composed at a single time following the completion of the Gallic campaign.

What then of the fact that the attacks on the winter quarters of Sabinus and Cotta, Cicero, and Labienus are reported in Book 5 with the other events of 54 (*BG* 5.26-58)? This can be solved in that the beginning of these attacks occurred only about a fortnight after the arrival in winter quarters (*BG* 5.26). Additionally, at this point Caesar is in Gaul at Samarobrivae, indicated by the fact that all his baggage, supplies, and hostages are yet in the town (*BG* 5.47). Thus, it is unlikely that with the legions recently having reached winter camp and his traditional move to areas nearer Italy impending Caesar would have already written his account for the year. This delay then allows him to include the events at the winter quarters in the year's report once the Gallic attacks had been subdued, and Caesar returned a province nearer Rome. Additionally, the choice to relate this account in Book 5 refutes the potential argument that Caesar viewed the next year's report as the appropriate location for an account of activities taking place in the winter. Had Caesar viewed the events following the distribution of the legions to the winter camps exclusively as the purview of the next year's account, much of Book 5 would have been included in Book 6. Thus, this suggests that in the instances previously recounted, Caesar did not include accounts of winter activities because he did not have the information he desired or required to write such accounts and thus delayed them to be included with the next year. This, in turn, indicates that accounts were written yearly rather than at a single time following Caesar's time in Gaul. As the exception to what seems to be Caesar's standard practice, Book 5 attests

that winter accounts were delayed to later books out of necessity rather than stylistic choice, indicating that the books were written yearly rather than as a single entity.

BENEFITS OF ANNUAL COMPOSITION

In composing the books annually, Caesar created an opportunity to refresh his presence in the minds of the populace back in Rome. Such reminders would have been crucial in a political climate in which the primary political power source of Caesar, who was an antagonist to and antagonized by the *optimates*, was the people. They served as a reminder not only of Caesar's existence as a political figure and factor but also of his worth and importance to the Roman people. For instance, Wiseman notes the unusual frequency of the phrase *populus Romanus* in the first book of the commentaries, with a full 41 appearances (Wiseman *Publication* 3). This shows that Caesar was attempting to highlight his relationship not just with Rome or the Senate, but to the very people whom he depended upon for his support. *De Bello Gallico* is not, as some have proposed, targeted primarily at the Senatorial upper class but instead at the general populace of Rome.

MEANS OF DISTRIBUTION

Like the compositional pattern of the books, the distribution mechanism used for *De Bello Gallico* must also play a part in fully appreciating the rhetorical purposes of Caesar's work. For the effectiveness of the work's popular rhetoric to be maximized, it must in some way be distributed to the *populus* at which it is aimed. This is by far the most difficult aspect of the popular message to reconcile with historical fact, but, it is in itself crucial for the discourse contained within Caesar's work to have been aimed at the *multitudo*. Wiseman postulates that the work was intended to be read aloud as a form of historical narrative, rather than by individuals from papyrus (Wiseman *Publication* 4). Though there is no explicit evidence of the

distribution of literature to the populace, a potential mechanism by which to do so can be seen.

To support his theory, Wiseman cites Hellenistic culture, which by the point of the Late Republic had a significant influence over Roman culture, as precedent (Wiseman *Publication 5*).

Wiseman also employs an example in the younger Pliny in which Aquillus Regulus circulates a biography of his son by distributing it to town councils and having it read aloud (Wiseman *Publication 5*). Although this provides the slightest of precedents within Roman culture, it does not in any way suggest that this was a common practice. What this information does, however, do is demonstrate that there was a mechanism by which the distribution of a composition to the common people of Rome could be effected. This method is not precluded by the typical method of publication in the late Republic, namely that authors were responsible for the dissemination of their works to those whom they wished to read it, or in this case to those whom Caesar wished it to be read (Fantham 36). Such a method of distribution would then lend itself to the third person narration of the work when many of the events pertained to Caesar himself. The third person is a superior choice for a historical composition, particularly one intended to be orally distributed, as it creates the appearance of an objective report rather than a semi-biographical performance (Riggsby 149). Overall, there is a potential mechanism for this work to be distributed through public readings, allowing the reports of Caesar's deeds to be disseminated not only to the elite and literate, but also to the *populus*, Caesar's core power base.

INTENDED AUDIENCE AND EFFECTS

With the potential composition and distribution models of *De Bello Gallico* having been worked out, we can now turn to the intended audiences and effects of the work. The yearly composition allowed Caesar to react to the ever-shifting events of Roman political life despite his physical distance from the city. In addition to these reactions to specific events, *De Bello Gallico*

provided Caesar with a means to defend his Gallic command and campaigns without returning to Rome, a goal which can be seen in instances of discourse throughout the book. Finally, the work allows him to refresh annually in the minds of the *populus* his value, thus perpetuating his ability to use them as a source for the accumulation of power.

FLUIDITY OF ROMAN POLITICS

DIVICIACUS AND DUMNORIX

Let us first turn to the ability of Caesar, through *De Bello Gallico*, to address the fluid nature of the Roman political system and his place within that system. Throughout the work, Caesar highlights his willingness to show mercy to those who are enemies and his clemency towards former allies who have more recently turned away from him or the state. One such instance is found in the reported speech of Caesar to Diviciacus and Dumnorix in the first book of the work (*BG* 1.20). Caesar acknowledges the benefits of the influence of Diviciacus and thus withholds significant punishment from Dumnorix, the brother of Diviciacus, despite his offences to Caesar and the state. This demonstrates that allegiances are not in most instances hard and fast.

However, for Caesar, the matter of preserving long-term benefit is paramount, even when it comes at a short-term expense. In sparing Dumnorix, he did open the state and himself up to further aggressive action by Dumnorix and his faction but cultivated his relationship with Diviciacus, who was himself the more powerful of the two since the coming of the Romans (*BG* 1.18.8). By doing this, Caesar looked to the long-term preservation of the mutual relationship which he had with the Aedui for the benefit of himself and Rome. In this matter, he highlights his constancy towards allies in the face of shifting allegiances, marking himself out as an ally who will not turn at the first sign of short-term loss, and thus a beneficial ally to the *populus*.

The comments of Caesar towards Diviciacus and Dumnorix emphasize Caesar's constancy in the face of a period rife with fluidity.

ARIOVISTUS

This fluidity extends not only to Romans and members of their subordinate states and allies, but to all Roman political actions, extending even to the likes of Germans in their interactions with Rome. A prime example of this is the interaction of Caesar and Ariovistus later in the first book of the work (*BG* 1.43-45). Despite the fact that Ariovistus was honored by Caesar and the Senate, as Caesar is keen to point out, the German king has begun to take an aggressive stance towards the Romans and their allies in Gaul. Thus he who as recently as the previous year had been a friend and ally became a fierce foe, refusing to back down in the face of Roman power. Specific parallels can be drawn between this interaction and contemporary political events in Rome⁴. In this, however, Caesar demonstrates the tendency of those who have gained power to attempt to take more, even at the expense of those with whom they have allied themselves for the moment, as with Ariovistus taking territory from the Gauls. This alone could be taken to apply to Caesar as well. However, in his speech, Caesar highlights the generosity of the Roman people, noting the "thanks, reputation, and honor" which they shower upon their allies thus demonstrating his place as an ally of the *populus*, and acknowledging the good which they have done for him in the past (*BG* 1.43.8). Following this, the constancy of Caesar is driven home by Caesar's explicit comment to the fact that neither he nor the Roman people are accustomed to abandoning allies (*BG* 1.45.1). The near juxtaposition of these two statements emphasizes the fact that Caesar is an ally of the Roman people and shall remain of that mind. In this way, the

⁴ See "Ariovistus and Clodius"

Roman political world was inherently a fluid one, but Caesar presents himself as a constant ally to the Roman people rather than an opportunistic one.

THE AEDUAN PEOPLE

Caesar's clemency shown toward the Aeduan people in the seventh book of the work demonstrates the constancy of Caesar in his relationships with those who are favorable to him. Long allies of Caesar, the cooperation between the Aeduan people and Rome can be seen in this work as far back as the first year of Caesar's Gallic command, in which the Aedui petitioned Caesar for help in defending against the migrating Helvetii and were granted it (*BG* 1.11.2, 1.11.6). However, in 52, the Aeduans sent to join in the fight against Vercingetorix in Gergovia turn against Caesar at the instigation of Litiviccus (*BG* 7.38). Although it is through the use of lies that the Aedui are turned from the Romans to the Arverni, the Aedui at the command of Litiviccus do torture and kill Roman citizens in their protection and take their possessions, a grievous offense in any case (*BG* 7.38.9). Despite this, Caesar explicitly spares the majority of these Aedui when they turn from their aggressive course, despite his assertion that retribution would be a justifiable course (*BG* 7.41.1). Thus Caesar demonstrates his memory of and constancy in mutually beneficial arrangements outside of the most abhorrent of trespasses. Caesar can see the causes behind actions against him, in this case at the instigation of a few important leaders, and remains constant to those who have proven themselves worthy allies in the past. Additionally, the place of this account in the final book composed by Caesar reflects that this characteristic of Roman politics was not limited to a brief span within the period over which the work was composed but in fact comprised the entire period.

PURPOSE OF THIS DEPICTION

Why then are these instances of fluidity within the Roman world so important for Caesar's communication with the *populus* back in Rome? Caesar is a solid foundation in a political world rife with inconstancy. His emphasis remains on the long-term good of Rome and its people regardless of circumstances. He recalls favors and rewards those who stand by him. By highlighting instances of the inconstancy of others and his mentality of perpetuating mutual benefit, Caesar points to the fluidity of Roman political life in which he is a bastion of constancy.

REACTION TO CONTEMPORARY EVENTS

ARIOVISTUS AND CLODIUS

It is the annual composition of Caesar's work which then allows him to react to this fluid nature of Roman political life through allusion to contemporary political events in Rome. This is achieved even early in the work, in which Ariovistus in his conflict with Caesar can be seen as a proxy for Clodius and his betrayal of Caesar's support back in Rome in the year 58. In each case, one can see a former ally turned blatant enemy, presenting a threatening stance toward a previous benefactor. In Caesar's speech towards Ariovistus, Caesar points out the benefits recently awarded to Ariovistus by the Senate and Caesar himself during his consular year (*BG* 1.43.4). In doing so, Caesar draws a parallel between Ariovistus and Clodius, who in the previous year had been adopted into a plebian family and was in the current year a tribune thanks primarily to the assistance of Caesar. The fact that Clodius' adoption, effected by Caesar, into the *plebs* was an irregular event is paralleled in Caesar's next sentence, in which he maintains that the honor of being named "Friend of the Senate," as Ariovistus was, is an honor accorded to few (*BG* 1.43.4). In each case, the antagonist of Caesar demonstrates brashness and the inability to appreciate favors done for them by others, notably Caesar, in the previous year. Whereas

Ariovistus is throwing away and questioning the value of the friendship of the Roman Senate and People as a whole, Clodius is throwing away Caesar's support. Through this parallel with Ariovistus, Caesar chastises Clodius in a medium which will reach the general populace, who form the primary power base for both Caesar and Clodius. In pointing out the inconstancy of Clodius and his irreverence in the face of favors granted to him, Caesar casts aspersions about Clodius' worth as a political ally and representative for the plebeian power base he shares with Caesar. Thus Caesar is able to comment through his composition on the current political situation in Rome, particularly regarding threats to or assaults on his own power.

AMBIORIX AND AHENOBARBUS

A second instance of addressing such a threat comes in Caesar's depiction of the events of the year 54, in response to the consulate of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus. Despite having been edged out of the consular seat by Crassus and Pompey in 55, Ahenobarbus again campaigned for the position in 54 and was elected (Gruen 147-8). Having made a political assault against Caesar's consular actions of 59 while himself a praetor in 58, Ahenobarbus was a staunch political opponent of Caesar and the triumvirate (Wiseman CAH 393). His election to consul therefore posed a threat to Caesar's Gallic command, not in the least because with familial *clientelae* in Gaul, Ahenobarbus stood as a logical choice for Gallic command after his consular year (Gruen 146). Caesar's depiction, then, of the winter events of 55 serves to react to any claims that Gaul would be better served by a different proconsul, perhaps one with Gallic ties already, although the necessity of this was to a degree lessened by the 5-year extension of his command effected in the previous year. Throughout the speech of Ambiorix, the Gallic leader repeatedly comments on his personal obligations to Caesar even as he is intending to betray the Romans under Sabinus and Cotta (*BG* 5.27). He mentions no less than three times in his single speech that he owes

much to Caesar but this in no way restrains him from perpetrating perfidy against the Roman garrison. This serves to point out that it is not the ties of friendship or obligations owed which will restrain the Gauls, but the power and influence of the proconsul himself. This is reinforced by the judgment of Sabinus that the Gauls only dare to undertake their attack because they are under the impression that Caesar is removed from Gaul, attributing to the Gauls a sense of hesitancy when under the immediate threat of Caesar (*BG* 5.29.2). The need for a strong and competent Gallic commander rather than one with Gallic ties is further highlighted by both the debate of Sabinus and Cotta and the orders of Quintus Cicero. In the debate between the two legates, it is the opinion of Sabinus, who advocates disregard for Caesar and his orders to remain in winter camp who wins out and resultantly, the majority of the garrison is slaughtered (*BG* 5.27). In contrast, Cicero, who orders his men to obey the previously given orders of Caesar, those being to garrison and hold the area around the Nervii through the winter months, withstands the Gallic attack until Caesar can arrive with reinforcements, (*BG* 5.24.2, 5.51). In this way, the argument of Sabinus and the orders of Cicero reflect that it is through Caesar's ability that the Gauls are thwarted and should a lesser man, perhaps Ahenobarbus, attempt to take the lead, the results will be catastrophic. This message is reinforced by Caesar's own speech concerning the events, in which he praises Cicero and the officers drawn from the ranks of the soldiery but attributes fault for the destruction of the legion under Sabinus and Cotta to the legate (*BG* 5.52.5-6). Thus it is the decision of a commander to disregard Caesar's orders which causes the disaster, further emphasizing that it is Caesar who is most effectively able to manage the Gallic situation. This passage also ties in to Caesar's technique of praising the *populus Romanus* by proxy of his soldiers⁵. Through the events surrounding the Gallic attempts against the winter

⁵ See "Praise of the *Populus*"

camps in Book 5 of *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar presents the case that it is he, not an individual with the advantage of Gallic ties such as Ahenobarbus, who can most effectively govern Gaul.

CRITOGNATUS AND CAESAR'S RETURN

Such adaptation to contemporary events persists even into the final book of the work composed by Caesar. The speech of the Gaul Critognatus is perhaps the most abhorrent in the work, namely due to his assertion that the besieged Gauls ought to turn to the cannibalization of the dead to sustain them once their food stores have been exhausted (*BG* 7.77.12). The rhetoric portrayed as encouragement to the Gauls concerning this point, namely that there was an ancestral precedent to the choice of cannibalizing the dead during a siege, would serve only to instill in the Roman people the sense of not only contemporary Gauls as a threat, but all Gallic peoples in perpetuity (7.77.12). This condemnation of the Gauls and thus justification of actions taken against them is well timed by Caesar, as it comes in what is, under the model of annual composition, his final publication of his time in Gaul. Here, Caesar aims to confirm through the speech of Critognatus that not only his actions surrounding the coalescence of Gaul under Vercingetorix are justified but in fact the entirety of his actions taken against the Gallic tribes over his near decade of governorship. To this end, Caesar as the author of this speech brings up from the mouth of Critognatus cannibalism in the case of a siege, which apparently has a Gallic, or at least Arvernian, precedent that is nonetheless heretofore unmentioned in the work. In doing so, he magnifies the difference between the Romans and Gauls, making the Gauls appear in a way less than human for his Roman audience and thus speaking to the necessity of punitive actions taken against them. This he does due to the rapidly approaching end of his tenure as governor of Gaul. With the contemporary issue of provincial mismanagement, it would be important to Caesar, and his hopes at a second consulship, that his actions not be taken as

another instance of mismanagement for personal gain, but instead as a crucial defense of the republic. Not only had his actions as consul prior to his Gallic assignment been called into question by Ahenobarbus and others six years earlier, but Caesar also demonstrated an awareness of finding ways to avoid prosecution. For instance, Vatinius, the tribune who was responsible for bringing about Caesar's command in Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum was named as legate by Caesar, likely to avoid criminal charges for his actions as tribune (Wiseman CAH 374). This is not altogether without bounds, as despite his exemption from prosecution due to his leave on actions *rei publicae causa*, charges were nonetheless leveled against him (Gruen 292). Despite the fact that that trial ended without the conviction of Vatinius, this demonstrates that prosecution was a legitimate potential threat for Caesar and his supporters. Caesar gives what is likely the most negative portrayal of the Gallic peoples at a point in time when it can be of most use to him in avoiding the repercussions of his actions when he returns to Rome in the next year.

NECESSITY OF CAESAR'S ACTIONS IN GAUL

The galvanizing speech of Critognatus is not the only instance in the work in which Caesar uses reports of conversations to highlight the necessity of his actions in Gaul. However, to fully justify his war, Caesar needs to be fighting one continuous war, rather than a series of small wars against individual tribes or small groups of tribes (Riggsby 144). He must be fighting a single war against Gaul as a unit. While the speech of Criognatus in the final book of the work gives a chronological unity to barbarity of the Gauls and thus necessity of the Gallic campaigns through its depiction of cannibalism as an ancestral precedent, other instances of discourse throughout the work serve to give a conceptual and cultural unity to the Gauls as well. This helps to preserve the continuity of Caesar's Gallic campaign and thus augment his justification for the pacification of the entirety of Gaul.

CAESAR AND DIVICO

One such instance of discourse which Caesar uses to justify his actions and lend a unity to the Gauls is the exchange of Caesar and the Helvetian Divico in the first book of the work following the bridging of the Saone. Here, as with the speech of Critognatus, Caesar emphasizes the chronological continuity of the Gallic threat. One of Divico's first arguments in favor of Caesar's withdrawal from conflict with the Helvetii is the previous defeat by the Helvetii of the Roman forces under Cassius (*BG* 1.13.4). This is made all the more poignant because Divico himself was the leader of the Helvetii under whom the Romans were handily defeated (*BG* 1.13.2). This then suggests that the Gallic threat is a continuous one, indeed that the threat of the Gallic tribes is one that has not previously subsided and will not subside without external pacification. This is further augmented by the response of Caesar to these very words of Divico. Caesar replies that it is not in spite of this previous defeat that he is attacking the Helvetii, but in fact in because of it (*BG* 1.14.1). Such a statement points to the fact that Caesar is motivated by obligation to the state, not by personal ambition. This then helps to further justify Caesar's actions to those back in Rome, as he portrays himself not as a provincial governor seeking wealth and glory through the exploitation of the natives of his province but rather as a staunch defender of Rome who remembers the wrongs done to her, with any glory received thus stemming from his service to the Republic. Thus, through the remembrance both on his own part and on that of Divico of past wrongs, Caesar lends weight to his present endeavors.

The exchange of Divico and Caesar serves not only to highlight the continuity of the threat of the Gauls but also to magnify the threat which they currently pose to the province and to Rome. Divico concludes both of his statements in this passage with thinly veiled threats against the Romans. In the first instance, his recommendation that Caesar not act lest disaster strike and

the Roman army be destroyed displays his confidence in the strength of Gallic arms (*BG* 1.13.7). Despite the eventual defeat of the Helvetii, this boldness on the part of Divico highlights that regardless of the magnitude of the threat which the Gallic tribes pose to the Romans, they judge themselves equal to the challenge of combatting them. Thus they will continue to thwart and defy the Romans so long as Gaul as a whole remains unrestrained. Likewise, the comment of Divico which concludes this whole exchange highlights the Gallic attitude that in a conflict between themselves and the legions, it is they who will emerge victorious. By implying the future defeat of the Romans through his statement that the Helvetii are more accustomed to receiving rather than giving hostages, Divico again displays the attitude that the Gauls are more than a match for the legions (*BG* 1.14.7). This recalls all of the bad blood between the two forces previously treated as well as once again emphasizing the confidence Divico has that the Gallic forces are more than a match for the legions under Caesar. Here Caesar seeks not to instill a fear of the Gauls in the Roman people, as this was already present in both contemporary politics and the historical tradition, but to highlight that that fear is one of consequence (Williams 1, 3). Additionally, in reporting this event in the year 58, at the outset of his Gallic engagements, Caesar lends a strong foundation to his Gallic campaign, emphasizing the reactionary nature and good of the state, thereby averting potential allegations that he is embarking upon these military actions for the sake of personal gain. Through these comments on the part of Divico, Caesar magnifies the threat which the Gauls pose to the territories of Rome and her allies, exemplifying their confidence in their martial ability regardless of whether or not it is a confidence backed by reality.

CAESAR AND ARIOVISTUS

The interaction of Caesar and Ariovistus later in Book 1 serves to highlight the Gallic threat against Rome as well as the German threat coming from beyond the Rhine. The magnification of the Gallic threat comes in that Ariovistus suggests that Gaul at war is rather more like a unified coalition of peoples than a series of individual tribes. He states that all of Gaul made war on him as a unit and he had overcome them in a single battle, implying that it was not a succession of attacks or individual tribes which he defeated but in fact a unified Gallic force (*BG* 1.44.3). Thus despite the fact that the Gauls are concretely (according to this speech of Ariovistus) inferior to the Germans and therefore implicitly inferior to the Romans, they can nevertheless bring to bear a great force with enough organization to strike out against an enemy as a unit. This ability to unify combined with the Gallic brashness seen in the speech of Divico helps to justify the actions of Caesar as a pre-emptive strike against a force that will inevitably turn its weighty attention to Rome herself. Additionally, the portrayal by Ariovistus of Gaul as being able to unify, if not perpetually unified, helps to justify Caesar's actions by emphasizing that wars against separate Gallic tribes are not separate wars but are rather components in a grander war against a single opponent: *omnis Gallia*. This lends further support to the foundation laid out in the speech of Divico previous, emphasizing from the outset that this will be a prolonged engagement, one not complete until the whole of Gaul is pacified. The unification of the Gauls seen in Ariovistus' speech not only presents the Gauls as a force that could pose a threat, at least temporarily, if turned toward Rome but also lends credence to the idea that Caesar's military actions throughout Gaul are not separate wars but rather separate engagements in a single prolonged war.

This speech of Ariovistus serves not only to magnify the Gallic threat but also to emphasize that of the Germans across the Rhine. Ariovistus states that he has crossed into Gaul at the behest of the Gauls, thus placing him significantly closer to Rome and her territories with the removal of the natural barrier of the Rhine and the political barrier of the Gallic tribes (*BG* 1.44.2). Ariovistus exerts his right as a conqueror of the region to exact tribute, naming the conquered region of Gaul as a Germanic *provincia* (*BG* 1.44.8). This stands to affirm that the Germans under Ariovistus have not just made a temporary sally into Gaul but instead intend to retain control of this region nearer the Province. Thus, without Caesar's rebuffs of the Germans, there will be a potentially hostile presence closer to the Province with greater military might than the Gauls. This could also serve as a staging ground for further Germanic expansion into Gaul, which would create an even greater threat to Rome. Ariovistus further states his desire for all of Gaul, making this a highly feasible potential course of action (*BG* 1.44.13). Through the speech of Ariovistus as reported by Caesar, the latter magnifies the threat that the Germans pose to Roman territory thus further justifying the military actions which he takes.

AMBIORIX AND SABINUS

In Book 5 of the work, the speech of Ambiorix of the Carnutes provides a second example of Gaul as a single unified opponent to Caesar and his forces. Ambiorix makes the comment that his people had come to the decision to attack the Roman camp due to the fact that other Gauls were doing the same and that their state could not resist following that lead (*BG* 5.27.4). Furthermore, he points out that it is the communal plan of Gaul (*BG* 5.27.5). This is not an action taken by a handful of tribes or even a great number of them. Rather, this is an action taken by Gaul itself as a single unit. This perpetuates the idea present in the speeches of Divico and Ariovistus that Caesar is fighting a single war in Gaul, as he has been since its beginning

nearly half a decade ago, thus supporting his continuation of military action against the Gallic peoples not yet subdued. In portraying Gaul as a single unit which generally acts together and can compel dissenting tribes into obedience, Caesar creates a cultural continuity among the Gallic tribes which creates the appearance that his military actions in the region have been various aspects of a single overall engagement.

Through these instances of discourse, Caesar creates the appearance to his audiences back in Rome that it is not he who is the cause of the current conflict with the Gallic people. It is instead the fact that a war with all of Gaul is ultimately inevitable due to the traditional warlike nature of the Gauls and he is simply ensuring that such a war takes place on Roman terms rather than Gallic or German ones. In this way he creates a strong foundation for the justification of his military actions from the very outset, perpetuating these concepts in the later books. By creating a chronological unity between previous and contemporary engagements with Gauls, Caesar justifies his military actions both as appropriate repayment of damages to the state and as measures which will prevent such disasters from happening again. Likewise, by creating a cultural unity among the Gauls, Caesar presents his actions as components of a single continuous war, allowing him to use the aggressive actions of some of the Gallic tribes as justification for the unprovoked pacification of others. In doing this, he appeals to his popular audience in that his Gallic campaign is creating safety for the Roman people in general against a Gallic threat that could bring to bear a large number of barbarians to ravage the Province and potentially Italy and Rome herself. Likewise, his actions against the Germans serve to keep such a group, reputed for more martial prowess than even the greatest of the Gauls, from expanding their bounds and approaching Roman borders. In doing so, Caesar can avoid any allegation of provincial

mismanagement which might stem from his choice to wage nearly constant war through his tenure as governor of Gaul.

PRAISE OF THE *POPULUS*

No commentary on Caesar's rhetorical audiences and goals for *De Bello Gallico* would be complete without a treatment of Caesar's praise of the *populus* as a whole. With the removal of property requirements for soldiers under Marius in 107, a vast number of lower class citizens had enrolled among the legions (Gruen 366). Thus, by praising the common soldiers under his command in contrast with his commissioned officers, Caesar is able to indirectly praise the *populus*, his power base, from which they and not the officers derive. This is a tactic which can be seen throughout the work in instances of reported discourse not only of Caesar himself but also of his subordinates.

CAESAR TO HIS TROOPS

One such instance of popular praise centers around the engagement of the Romans with the Germans in the first book of the work. In response to the rumors of Ariovistus' desiring a war with the Romans and the fear these rumors are causing, Caesar chastises his centurions, drawn from the ranks of the soldiers and thus the people, praising the army under Marius for its hand in the previous defeat of the Germans by the Romans (*BG* 1.40.5). As these men under Marius would have been drawn from the *populus*, Caesar indirectly praises the citizenry by praising these soldiers. Additionally, Caesar demonstrates that he esteems not only the modern *multitudo* but also that of the past, suggesting that he believes them to be of inherent and lasting virtue. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding the Tenth legion in this during this event serves to reinforce Caesar's esteem for the *populus* and his value and constancy as an ally of the people. Later on in the same speech to the centurions previously mentioned, Caesar expresses his

willingness to fight with only the Tenth legion, about which he allegedly has no doubts (*BG* 1.40.14). Thus, Caesar expresses more confidence in a group of men enlisted from the *populus* than in his own commissioned officers from among the senatorial class. This serves to remind the Roman people not only that Caesar is aware of their character but also that he acknowledges their influence. Caesar here uses praise of past soldiers to reflect positively on those currently serving under them and as a whole the class of individuals from which they came.

Later even in this same speech, Caesar once again demonstrates the constancy discussed earlier in this paper. Through a joking comment of a member of the Tenth legion whom he employs among his bodyguard for the parley with Ariovistus, Caesar demonstrates the worth which he feels, or at least would like to portray that he feels, that the *populus* has. Despite the levity of tone, the comment that Caesar has enrolled these men among the *equites*, as he has given them horses to serve as his bodyguard, is nonetheless poignant (*BG* 1.42.6). Here Caesar demonstrates the value that he places on the virtuous men of the lower ranks of Roman society and additionally that he does not overlook diligent service. He exhibits that he acknowledges those who give him advantage and acts accordingly, encouraging the *populus* to maintain their support of him. Through the discourse surrounding the prelude to conflict with Ariovistus, Caesar both praises the *populus* and highlights his own constancy toward those who support him.

THE AQUILIFER OF THE TENTH

The praise of the *plebs* in *De Bello Gallico* is not limited to coming from the mouth of Caesar himself. Another notable instance of indirect praise of the *populus* within the work comes in the exhortation to Caesar's soldiers by the aquilifer of the Tenth legion in the fourth book of the work (*BG* 4.25.3). Here the praise of the people serves not only to ingratiate himself with the *populus* but also to demonstrate that he is an effective means by which they are encouraged to

demonstrate that quality. The speech and actions of the *aquilifer*, along with the galvanizing effect which they have on his fellow soldiers speaks highly of the virtue of the *populus* and its ability to recognize the proper course of action and react accordingly. By reminding the soldiers of their duty, the *aquilifer* spurs them to join battle under utterly disadvantageous circumstances in a foreign land. This reflects positively on the soldiers and thus on the *populus* from which they come, as despite their trepidations, their sense of *officium* to both the state and their commander is enough to get them to risk their lives under highly adverse conditions. In noting their *officium* to both the *res publica* and the *imperator* in the *aquilifer*'s speech, Caesar accomplishes two things. First, he links himself with the *res publica*, an effective if not overly original rhetorical strategy serving to equate loyalty to him with patriotism. Secondly, in presenting a sense of duty towards him as a reason for which his soldiers are willing to risk their lives, he presents himself as someone worthy of the allegiance and devotion of the lower classes. This can be further extrapolated into a forward-thinking tactic on the behalf of Caesar. In contrast with the praise from Caesar in the first book, it is external motivation rather than internal motivation which drives the men to act and to exhibit *virtus*. This is in line with Riggsby's proposition that through his depiction of the Gallic war, Caesar was attempting to redefine the nature of *virtus* as being dependent upon one's superiors, their actions, and their influence (104-5). To this end, Caesar departed from the traditional association between the *virtus* of an army and its commander, namely, none at all (Riggsby 104). In this instance, for example it is the influence of Caesar and the state which drives these men to action rather than any personal courage or character. In appropriating the *virtus* of these men to himself and the state, Caesar begins to create the connections between *virtus* and commanders necessary in order to achieve his redefinition of Roman manliness in terms of subordination to the established hierarchy. In

this way, Caesar appeals to the *populus* through the glorification of their character and the presentation of himself both as analogous to the state and as an individual deemed worthy by their fellow *plebs* among the legions while laying the groundwork for his intended alteration of the core concept of Roman *virtus*.

LABIENUS TO HIS TROOPS

The exhortation of Labienus to his troops in the absence of Caesar later on in the work further serves to portray Caesar as an important and effective ally of the *populus* through his motivation of their peers in the legions. The urging of Labienus that the legion under his command fight as they had with Caesar himself present speaks volumes as to the motivations of the common soldiery and the esteem in which they hold their commander (*BG* 6.8.4). Here again we can see the loyalty of the soldiers to Caesar, thus further implying that he is worthy of the loyalty of the people as a whole. Additionally, that the urging is not to fight with valor in general but rather that to which they are accustomed with Caesar present suggests not only that the *populus* is virtuous but also that it is Caesar who brings out the best in the common people. Notably, this comes at the end of 52, when Caesar would be beginning to turn his attention to a degree back toward Rome as his return to the city in 50 was rapidly approaching. Thus this develops the theme begun more subtly in earlier books, as with the speech of the *aquilifer* of the Tenth legion previously noted, that Caesar is attempting through his composition to redefine *virtus* as subordination to a virtuous commander, namely himself. Here, though, he omits any reference to the *res publica*, leaving himself as the superior of and source of *virtus* for these men. As the end of his position in Gaul approaches, this attribution of subordination to Caesar as universal *virtus* rather than the *disciplina* of a soldier serves to transfer such a hierarchy from military to civilian life (Riggsby 105). In doing this, Caesar reaffirms his worth as a political asset to the people

both through his recognition of their value and his ability to draw out the best from them while simultaneously planting the seeds of the concept that loyalty to Caesar affirms the *virtus* of a proper Roman man. Here, Caesar layers a number of appeals to the people within a brief instance of discourse.

As discussed previously, the efforts of Caesar to praise the *populus* through praise of his soldiers do not stop at a single level of appeal. Although the straightforward advocacy of the people's virtue runs throughout the work, many of these instances are multifaceted. Repeatedly, Caesar uses such instances to demonstrate the loyalty of his soldiers to him and the benefits derived thereof, subtly suggesting that other members of the lower classes ought to treat him in the same manner. Furthermore, one can see a progression over the course of the work in Caesar's association of a soldier's *virtus* to his subordination to Caesar, beginning with simple praise of the *populus* at the outset of the work and over time developing a causal relationship between himself and the valor of his men. Regardless of the complexity of the appeal, however, Caesar continuously speaks to the *populus*, his power base and audience, through the exultation of their character.

CONCLUSION

De Bello Gallico is a highly propagandistic piece not only in its general content, detailing the manifold successes of Caesar in defending Rome and expanding her influence, but also in its instances of specific discourse. Throughout *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar uses this discourse to speak to the *populus Romanus* in multiple ways for a number of different purposes. He comments on the fluid nature of the Roman political system and by way of contrast suggests that he is not so wanton a political ally. Likewise, he takes advantage of these yearly reports to react to the political situation in Rome during his absence. Notable defenses against Clodius and

Ahenobarbus here take the fore, while his increase in his depiction of the barbarity of the Gauls through the speech of Critognatus near the end of Caesar's tenure in Gaul leads into yet another of his appeals to the people. Caesar repeatedly points to and magnifies the threat to Rome and her territories posed by the Germans and Gauls, highlighting the need for a strong commander, namely himself, and justifying his continued aggression against the native peoples. Finally, Caesar keeps his value in the mind of the people, not only praising them but also making distinct the choice of their peers in the army to be loyal to him. The political uncertainty of Caesar's absence coupled in later years with the decline of the power bloc of the first triumvirate lent itself to the employment of propaganda to secure Caesar's continued political importance. *De Bello Gallico* served as that propaganda. Keeping Caesar in the minds of the people through its annual composition and distribution, it highlighted the good which he was doing for the state in keeping such a threat away from the borders and subdued. Additionally, much of the discourse in the work served as propaganda to demonstrate to the people that he saw their true value not just as political allies but as Roman men. These appeals to his popular audience secured Caesar's continued importance and power at Rome despite his physical distance due to his Gallic proconsular appointment.

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