

Two authors that strongly deviate from the ethnographic tradition, to the extent of portraying the Gauls as peaceful, loyal, and even Roman are the emperor Claudius and the historiographer, Tacitus. The emperor Claudius, in a speech before the senate, separates the province of Gallia Narbonensis from that of *Gallia Comata*. He acknowledges that each of the regions has a different legal status, but does not say that they have different behavior. He also mentions the men from Lugdunum, a city in Gaul, rather than listing the number of tribes that appear in some of the earlier ethnographies.¹ Contrary to the stereotype of a bellicose Gaul, Claudius argues that the Gauls have been loyal and obedient to Rome for over one hundred years. They were even peaceful during the conduction of the census, which was something new for them.² In Tacitus' version of the speech a similar claim is made: although Rome waged war against Gaul, no other war ended so quickly—and since then the Gauls have been peaceful (*ac tamen, si cuncta bella recenseas nullam breviorē spatio quam adversus Gallos confectum: continua inde ac fida pax*) (*Ann.* 11.24). In addition to being loyal, in Tacitus' version the Gauls have adopted Roman customs (*continua inde ac fida pax. Iam moribus adfinitatibus nostris mixti*).³

In Tacitus' *Histories*, however, the Gauls are a more nuanced people than just northern barbarians or peaceful subjects. In the rebellion of 68/69 CE, the Gauls are presented as warlike, but they are given other qualities, distinct from the ethnographic tradition. Tacitus mentions that at one point in a battle, the Gauls get fresh courage to continue fighting, so they are warlike and able to sustain battle.⁴ But in an assembly to decide a course of action, Julius Auspex, a Gaul, convinces the mob not to go to war by appealing to the blessings of peace and rousing their fears

¹ *ILS* 212, col. ii, 29-30: *quando ex Luguduno habere nos nostril ordinis viros non paenitet*. Griffin (1982, p. 409), however, points out that this must be a joke, referring to the emperor himself, coming from Lugudunum.

² *ILS* 212, col. ii, 34-38.

³ Tac. *Ann.* 11.24.

⁴ *Hist.* 4.54; but at 4.57, Tacitus notes that the Gallic spirit is hostile to Rome, which echoes the rhetoric of Cicero *Pro Font.* 32 and *Catil.* 3.20.

about war—a very strong departure from the courageous Gaul, never fearing death, that we found in the ethnographic tradition (*Hist.* 4.69). In fact, in accordance with the division in *De Bello Gallico*, it is the Germans who possess the more barbaric qualities in Tacitus’ writings—they migrate into Gaul, driven by lust of spoils and a longing to change their homes; they fight for booty, the Gauls for liberty (*Hist.* 4.73, 78). It is also the Germans who abstain from agriculture and manual labor.⁵ Overall, in Tacitus’ writings, we see that the Gauls have largely been assimilated to Rome. Although in the narrative of the rebellion of 68 CE, they are depicted as warlike, elsewhere they are peaceful and loyal—they hold organized, Roman-style assemblies and have adopted Roman customs.

This is the confusing and ambiguous picture of the Gauls found in the literature from the conquest of Gaul in the mid-1st century BCE to the writings of Tacitus in the early 2nd century CE. Before their conquest by Caesar, the Gauls were an important part of the ethnographic tradition, forming the western division of the barbarian world. They were described, like their northern neighbors, the Scythians, as uncivilized barbarians, with a fierce and warlike nature. Beginning with the conquest, however, this picture of Gaul becomes more nuanced. Caesar distinguishes the backwards (yet-still-civilized) Gauls from the nomadic and barbaric Germans. Strabo remarks on the Gauls’ recent adoption of agriculture and civilization. Claudius goes so far as to say that the Gauls have been peaceful and loyal for over a hundred years. Tacitus describes the Gauls as peaceful and behaving as Romans. While all these changes and deviations are going on, though, authors such as Diodorus, Vitruvius, and Mela are still describing the Gauls like the earlier ethnographic tradition—that is, as northern barbarians. This survey demonstrates that the ethnographic tradition persists, despite changes in the political relationship between Gaul and Rome and despite some authors deviating from the stereotype. As mentioned

⁵ *Germ.* 26.

in the introduction, the tradition appears to continue, largely unaltered, into Late Antiquity.⁶ If we grant that the traditional stereotype has such pervasiveness, then the above instances which need explanation are those that deviate from the ethnographic tradition—primarily Caesar, Strabo, Claudius, and Tacitus.

Ethnography in Context

Internal Factors: Literary Purposes

First, it is possible that these deviations were simply another literary construct employed to serve a literary purpose or fulfill some intent of the author. Scholars have noted that the ethnographic stereotype of the “other” functioned as a literary trope and was employed to convey certain moral or ethical stances or as a means of enlivening a narrative.⁷ Perhaps the deviations from the tradition still functioned in the same way—to fulfill some intention of the author—but not one accomplished by the customary stereotype.

The depiction of the Gauls in Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*, specifically the one that differs from the ethnographic tradition, helped characterize Caesar’s victory as both worthwhile and definitive. Two scholars, A. Jervis and A. Riggsby, already have examined Caesar’s depiction of the Gauls in light of the ethnographic tradition.⁸ For the purposes of this report, I will provide a brief summary of the relevant arguments. Jervis analyzes Caesar’s use of the Roman virtue, *virtus*, throughout *De Bello Gallico*. She argues that Caesar ascribes *virtus* to the Gauls in order to depict them as worthy enemies, and more importantly, Jervis continues, to demonstrate to a Roman audience that fighting such a war will not diminish the *virtus* of the Roman soldiers. The decline of Roman virtues in general, Jervis points out, was a topic of debate in the Late Republic

⁶ Woolf 2008.

⁷ Rives 1999; Woolf 2008.

⁸ Jervis 2001; Riggsby 2006; see also Dobesch 1989; Dunham 1995.

and a concern amongst Roman elite after so many territorial gains had flooded the city with *luxuria* and foreign wealth.⁹

On the other hand, Riggsby notes how the assimilation of Gaul to Rome makes the Gauls a more formidable enemy. For instance, throughout the commentary there is an increasing adoption and incorporation of Roman military technology by the Gauls. The gradual military “Romanization” of the Gauls culminates in Book 7 with their unification under one leader, Vercingetorix, who trains his troops for battle and employs military strategy (very uncharacteristic of a traditional Gaul). By Book 7 Caesar is now defeating an organized force of Gauls, a threat to Roman security.¹⁰ By assimilating Gaul to Rome, which he does subtly throughout the work, Caesar makes the Gauls a worthy foe to the Romans, which then increased the glory Caesar would receive after a victory. Furthermore, Riggsby argues that Caesar gives the geographical divisions for Gaul, its cultural distinction from Germania, and a basic level of social organization in order to depict an enemy that is demonstrably conquerable—that is, a distinct group of people inhabiting a specific geographic location.¹¹ Therefore, a brief summary of these two scholars has shown that although Caesar does not maintain the ethnographic tradition of the Gauls as barbarous nomads, he deviates from the tradition in ways that are explainable by the purpose of his literary agenda: to narrate a war against a worthy and conquerable enemy in order to increase Roman and personal glory. *[edited out section on Strabo]*

Claudius is a third author who offers a picture of the Gauls that differs from the rhetoric of the ethnographic tradition. As we saw with both Caesar and Strabo, this departure may be due

⁹ Jervis 2001.

¹⁰ Riggsby (2006, p.122) also points out that the word *barbarus* does not appear in the last book of *BG*.

¹¹ Riggsby 2006; see also O’Gorman 1993.

to the purpose of Claudius' speech and perhaps also his desire to reward the Gallic people.¹² The purpose of the speech was to argue in favor of admitting certain Gallic noblemen into the Roman senate. For this reason, Claudius characterizes the Gauls in such a way that makes them worthy of such an honor. Claudius describes the Gauls as exhibiting steadfast loyalty (*immobilem fidem*) and remaining obedient in important situations (*obsequiumque multis trepidis rebus nostris plus quam expertum*). Moreover, when the situation did turn bad—that is, Drusus had to leave the province to fight the Germans—the Gauls stayed peaceful while he was away on campaign.¹³ For this reason, the Gauls are civilized enough to enter the Roman senate (although they have second seating to the Italian senators). Furthermore, Claudius may have wanted to depict the Gauls as civilized and peaceful, thereby rewarding them with senatorial rights, because in general he favored the province of Gaul. The emperor was born in Lugdunum, a point he jokingly alludes to in his speech, and once named emperor, he focused a lot of energy on the province, by building roads and granting colonial status to a number of cities. The prevalence of his tribe and name amongst the people of the province indicates that he made a large number of citizenship grants to Gallic people and communities.¹⁴

In general, scholars have characterized Claudius as an unorthodox emperor—a great centralizer of the provinces, interested in decreasing the power of the old, noble senatorial families in favor of provincial elites who would be favorable to him.¹⁵ Whether or not we can

¹² For more on the speech of Claudius, see Huss 1980; Griffin 1982; 1990; for more discussion on the Lyons Tablet, upon which Claudius' speech survives, see Fabia 1929; Fabia 1931; Flach 1973.

¹³ Claudius does not mention the revolt of Florus and Sacrovir in 20 BCE.

¹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 12.27; for more information on Claudius' impact on Gaul, see de Laet 1966, pp. 951-61; Walser 1980, p. 459ff; Grenier 1937, pp. 521ff; In his satirical work on the deification of Claudius, the *Apocolocyntosis*, Seneca characterizes Claudius as eager to expand the citizenship of Rome. He has Clotho, about to cut the thread of Claudius' life, say that if he had a little more time there would be no foreigner remaining, since Claudius had hoped to see all Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards, and Britons in togas (3.2).

¹⁵ Momigliano 1961, 45; de Vivo 1980, pp. 23, 30-1; Griffin (1982a, esp. pp. 410-414), however, limits this characterization of Claudius as a friend of the provinces, since, for instance, he maintains the superiority of the Italian senators over the provincial ones (ii.6)

make so sweeping a claim does not change the fact that Claudius characterizes the Gauls differently from the established ethnographic tradition and from the previous deviations made by Caesar and Strabo. The depiction of the peaceful Gauls supports Claudius' argument that they should be admitted into the senate; moreover, his favorable relationship with Gaul may further explain his departure from tradition in favor of a peaceful and civilized depiction of Gaul.

The final author in our study to stray from the ethnographic tradition is Tacitus, specifically in his version of the speech of Claudius just discussed. In this rendition, Tacitus not only deviates from the tradition, but also from Claudius, whom he is 'quoting'.¹⁶ The Gauls in Tacitus' version of the speech are not only peaceful and loyal subjects of Rome, but they are Roman! The peaceful Gauls share Roman ways and Roman wives (*continua inde ac fida pax. Iam moribus adfinitatibus nostris mixti*).¹⁷ Tacitus characterizes the Gauls as equal to the Italian senators and does not address the preferential ranking mentioned by Claudius on the Lyons Tablet. Some scholars attribute the incompatibilities of the speeches to the fact that Tacitus had to condense the speech in order to fit it into his histories and harmonize with his style.¹⁸ But the reason might be tied to his perspective and purpose. While Claudius characterizes the admission of the Gauls into the senate as another example of political innovation on the part of the Romans, Tacitus views this as the incorporation of foreign nations—a process that by the time of Tacitus had become traditional for the Roman empire, moving from Italy to Gallia Narbonensis and Spain, and then to the rest of Gaul.¹⁹ Tacitus himself was writing under an emperor from Spain who was married to a woman from Gallia Narbonensis.²⁰ The thrust of Tacitus' argument then is

¹⁶ Most scholars believe that Tacitus had access to the speech of Claudius in some form, see Syme 1958, pp. 703-8; Griffin 1982, p. 405; see also von Albrecht 1989.

¹⁷ The peaceful characterization of Gauls again passes over the revolt of Florus and Sacrovir in 20 CE, just as Claudius did.

¹⁸ E.g. Miller 1956.

¹⁹ Griffin 1982, p. 411.

²⁰ Griffin 1982, p. 407.

that Roman identity and citizenship spreads as Roman territory expands; thus, he characterizes the Gauls as Roman and as worthy of entering the senate.

From the roughly 150-year period of interest for this thesis, we have identified four authors that have deviated from the established tradition, while the remaining authors persist in using many of the traditional tropes when referring to Gaul. Caesar, Strabo, Claudius, and Tacitus all depict the Gauls (at least at times) as something other than warlike, northern barbarians. In the same way that scholars have examined how the ethnographic tradition functioned as a literary tool employed by authors to suit their purpose, this section has explored, albeit briefly, the possibility that the deviations from the tradition also may function in a similar way—that is, to serve the literary purpose of each individual author.