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“IMAGINARY GEOGRAPHY” IN CAESAR’S *BELLUM GALLICUM*

CHRISTOPHER B. KREBS



Abstract. Caesar’s “imaginary geography” of *Germania* as an infinite extension without any patterns but simply endless forests contrasts with his presentation of *Gallia* as an overviewed space. Within these geographies different concepts of space prevail, all of which serve to explain why his *celeritas* ceases in *Germania*. Having crossed the Rhine and thereby entered *terra incognita* like Alexander and Pompey, he refrains from campaigning because of the geographical conditions. By alluding to Scythia’s similar space and Darius’ failure, he shows himself to act prudently. It is also a characteristic of the *imperator optimus* to know when a venture is too risky.

“(. . .) cur denique Fortunam periclitaretur? praesertim cum non minus esset imperatoris consilio superare quam gladio.” (Caes. *B Civ.* 1.72.3)¹

CAESAR’S MANY WAYS OF LEADING THE READER to draw the intended (i.e., Caesar’s) conclusion have been referred to as *Tendenz*, propaganda, *déformation*, and, more recently, the “strategy of representation of events.”² While earlier investigations tried to prove Caesar wrong and convict him of manipulating his readers by falsification of facts,³ more

¹“Finally, why should he tempt Fortune? Especially since it was at least as important for a general to excel by his judgment as by military might.” All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated; for the translation of Caesar’s *B Gall.*, I have often made use of Hammond’s edition (1996). The Latin is based on Hering’s text (*Bibl. Teubneriana* 1987).

²Mommsen (1976, 616, fn.) was among the first to speak of *Tendenz* in Caesar’s *commentarii*, and only comparatively recently Walser (1995) has detected *Tendenz* in Caesar’s geographical account of Gallic regions, thereby adding an important detail to his earlier work (1956). An earlier analysis of Caesar’s “propaganda” is given by Stevens (1952); more recent are Gardner (1983), Batstone (1990), Barlow (1998), and Levick (1998). Rambaud (1966) gives a thorough account of the many ways in which Caesar taints his report, and it is well worth reading still; for an illuminating overview of scholarship on Caesar’s coloring see Rambaud (1985, esp. 17–24). The quote is from Rossi (1999/2000, 239).

³See Huber (1913), who speaks of “bewußte Verdrehungen und grobe Entstellungen der Wahrheit” (105) or Stevens’ (1952, esp. 172) differentiation between “white” and “black”

recent work has focused on his artful representation and how he makes use of literary allusions and cultural assumptions to convey his message(s).⁴ Along these lines, this article looks into the suggestive power of Caesar's geographical representations in the *Bellum Gallicum*, in particular how his imaginary geography of *Germania* with its allusion to Darius' Scythian disaster serves to complete his self-portrait as an ideal *imperator* in spite (or rather because) of his withdrawal.⁵

Specifically, Caesar uses his representative power over the territories that he calls *Gallia*, *Britannia*, and *Germania* to explain to his Roman readership why, in deciding to avoid military confrontation beyond the Rhine, he reveals himself in yet another way to be the *imperator optimus*. His geographical account of *Germania* differs significantly from the accounts of *Gallia* and *Britannia* (sec. 1), insofar as *Germania* is presented as ἀπείρων, an infinite extension without any interior patterns except for infinite forests (sec. 2). In this imaginary geography, Caesar's characteristic *celeritas* comes to a grinding halt. And while "strategic space" is dominant in his account of his actions in *Gallia* as well as in *Britannia*, it is "geographical space" that dominates in his account of *Germania* (sec. 3).⁶ He finds himself in a position very much like Darius' in Scythia. Unlike Darius, however, the Roman conqueror does not become disoriented, but, having entered *terra incognita* and thereby challenged Pompey as Alexander's "Roman successor," he saves his and his soldiers' lives by leaving in timely fashion (sec. 4).

propaganda and his recognition of both in Caesar. See again Rambaud (1985, esp. 22) for the differentiation between *Verfälschung*, *Färbung* and *déformation*.

⁴See the more recent contributions by Barlow (1998), Damon (1994), and Rossi (1999/2000). This shift in scholarly interest, from Caesar's *Glaubwürdigkeit* (Huber 1913) to Caesar as an *Artful Reporter* (Welch and Powell 1998), is not limited to studies on Caesar but characterizes research on historiography in general (it is a long way from Koestermann's commentary on Tacitus' *Annales* to Woodman's).

⁵I follow Gelzer (1948, 25 [*Caesar*. Auswahl aus seinen Werken. Heidelberg: pub. unknown], quoted by Collins 1973, 942), Stevens (1952, esp. 179), and Collins (1973, esp. 940–43) in that the *Tendenz* of Caesar's *B Gall.* is not apologetic (as argued by Walser [1956, 21], Gardner [1983] *et alii*) but "self-panegyric" (Stevens, *ibid.*).

⁶Why this geography is "imaginary" will be discussed in sec. 2, and for Rambaud's (1974) differentiation of types of space in Caesar's *B Gall.*, see sec. 3.

1. CAESARIS ET GALLIA ET BRITANNIA: INTELLECTUAL AND TERRITORIAL MASTERY

Gallia est omnis (. . .): reading the very first words of the first *commentarius*, a Roman reader most probably identified *Gallia* with the Roman province *Gallia Narbonensis* or *Gallia Cisalpina*,⁷ not least since the Roman proconsul was officially in charge of these provinces.⁸ But Caesar's *Gallia*, effectively highlighted through the position of *est*, differs from the reader's conception of Gaul and signifies a much larger territory, which he subdivides by distinguishing three peoples (and, metonymically, their territories).⁹ In fact, this geography of the North, with *Gallia omnis* on the western side of the Rhine, the *Rhenus* as the borderline, and *Germania* on its eastern side, is a *Sensation*:¹⁰ he seems to be the first to employ the name *Galli* for all people on the eastern side of the Rhine, while referring to their geographical space as *Gallia*, and he also seems to be the first to speak of the *Germani* as a major ethnos in the north (see below). Gaul, Germany, and Britain as depicted in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* are his representations,¹¹ and, far from attempting to give a full picture, he

⁷ See Kraner and Dittenberger (1961, 78); cf. Constans (1926, 2): "César ne comprend pas sous le nom de *Gallia* la partie de la Gaule déjà soumise aux Romains," thereby neatly indicating the associations that the Roman reader was most likely to make.

⁸ Caesar was in charge of *Gallia Cisalpina* / *citerior* as well as *Gallia Transalpina* / *ulterior* / *Narbonensis*, the latter of which is often referred to as *provincia (nostra)*: *B Gall.* 1.2.3; see Kraner and Dittenberger (1961, ad *B Gall.* 1.2.3).

⁹ Therefore it is *Gallia omnis* and not *Gallia tota* (as in *B Gall.* 1.2.2). It is important to observe that the borderlines that divide the people (territories) are the rivers Garonne, Marne, and Seine (with the Rhine as the border to *Germania*); the ethnic landscape is thus based on a geographical one: France (1989, 96: "Il n'y a pas de portrait d'ensemble du pays et le fameux préambule [I, 1] est un tableau politique et ethnique, mais absolument pas géographique") overlooks this important point of a geographical foundation of the *tableau ethnique*. As to rivers as borderlines, see Nicolet (1988, 232, n. 20) and Braund (1996); for a discussion of rivers and boundaries in Caesar: Dobesch (2000, esp. 20–21).

¹⁰ Duval (1974), examining *les noms de la Gaule* in Greek and Roman writers, points out: "C'est chez César que le mot *Gallia*, flanqué d'une épithète, s'applique, pour la première fois à notre connaissance, soit à l'ensemble de la Gaule transalpine, soit à l'ensemble de la Gaule indépendante à l'exclusion de la province" (412). For the sensational presentation of the north in *B Gall.* 1.1, see Dobesch (2000, 28), who notes: "Dieses neue Gesamtgallien räumt nicht nur die alte Keltiké der griechischen Ethnographie (. . .) aus dem Weg, sondern auch das römische Verständnis von 'Gallia'." On the Rhine as Caesar's termination, see Norden (1920, 362–63), Walser (1956, 2), Rambaud (1966, 336), Lund (1998); on Caesar's invention of the *Germani* and *Germania*, see esp. Lund (*ibid.*).

¹¹ "[L]e *BG* ne traduit qu'une représentation de l'espace et non sa réalité," France 1989, 90.

placed them within the Roman concept of the world, as suited his and (maybe) the Roman people's interests.

Though the emphasis in *Bellum Gallicum* 1.1 is on the people rather than on the geography, the image of Gaul that Caesar evokes with this very first sentence is that of a clearly arranged territory; the Gallic geographical space seems to be intellectually mastered. A. C. Bertrand's comment on the opening passage of the *Bellum Gallicum* mirrors the impression which the suggestive power of Caesar's wording was intended to induce: "In the opening chapters of the *Bellum Gallicum*, he [i.e., Caesar] appears to be well informed about the situation in Gaul."¹² Since the Roman reader, if he accepts the Roman general's authority, is forced to revise his own concept of Gaul, one might more precisely say that Caesar subtly presents himself as being the only well-informed Roman. One could go further: by separating *Gallia* from *omnis* through *est*, he allows the reader's (common) idea of *Gallia* to form, which is then shattered by the mere attribution of *omnis*, followed by the tripartition. "Gallia" is a truly "dialogized word" in which the Romans' meaning is challenged and (eventually) replaced by Caesar's.¹³ Thus the first conquest in the *Bellum Gallicum* is of the Romans' geographical conception of Gaul.¹⁴

That Caesar had sufficient representative power to change the Roman conception of the north can be inferred from a passage in Cicero's speech *De provinciis consularibus*:¹⁵ there he twice notes that the Romans are constantly confronted with new names of tribes, peoples, and territories that Caesar brings to their attention.¹⁶ The Roman proconsul

¹² Bertrand 1997, 112.

¹³ For "dialogized words," see Bakhtin 1984, esp. 183–84.

¹⁴ On the Roman image of the world in general, the north in particular, see Mattern 1999, 24–80. It is also important to remember that this image was construed "through verbal descriptions in geographical texts" rather than maps (ibid. 42–44); see also n. 25.

¹⁵ Whether or not this speech is the *παλινοῦσία* that Cicero mentions in his letter to Atticus (*Att.* 4.5.1; see Butler and Cary [1990, 12–16 and esp. 106–8]), it is certainly propaganda (rather than "a frank and honorable speech" [ibid., 14]); this, however, does not seem to affect my argument.

¹⁶ *Prov. cons.* 22: "Is it possible for me to be an enemy to this man, by whose letters, by whose glory, and by whose messengers my ears are every day saluted with previously unknown names of peoples, and nations, and places?" ("An ego possum huic esse inimicus cuius litteris fama nuntiis celebrantur aures cotidie meae novis nominibus gentium nationum locorum?"); *Prov. cons.* 33: "(. . .) those regions and those nations which previously had not been made known to us either by anyone's letters or by any personal account or even by vague rumor, these our general and our army and the arms of the Roman people have now traversed" ("... quas regiones quasque gentis nullae nobis antea litterae, nulla

here figures as explorer, as *primus inventor*, and as conqueror. Cicero sketches the situation before Caesar pacified Gaul as follows: "A side-path in Gaul was all we had, senators, before Caesar; the other parts were controlled by tribes which were hostile to this empire, disloyal, unheard of and surely monstrous, barbaric, warlike" ("*Semitam tantum Galliae tenebamus antea, patres conscripti; ceterae partes a gentibus aut inimicis huic imperio aut infidis aut incognitis aut certe immanibus et barbaris et bellicosius tenebantur*").¹⁷ He was, according to Cicero, the first to see "that all of Gaul had to be brought under our [i.e. Roman] control" ("*totam Galliam in nostram dicionem esse redigendam*").¹⁸ Cicero aptly refers to the Roman province *Gallia Narbonensis*, to which Caesar had originally been sent, as a *semita* and indicates that the "real" Gaul had not been under Roman control (this statement receives further emphasis by his speaking of *ceterae partes*).¹⁹ What he understands to be the "real" Gaul, what he means when he speaks of *Gallia tota*, can be inferred from the following exclamation: "May the Alps sink into the ground! For there is nothing beyond that height of the mountains all the way to the ocean that Italy has to fear" ("Quae [i.e., Alpes] iam licet considant! Nihil est enim ultra illam altitudinem montium usque ad Oceanum quod sit Italiae pertimescendum").²⁰ Comparing this to the geographical adjunct (*B Gall.* 1.1.5–7),²¹ it becomes clear that in 56, when giving this speech, Cicero had

vox, nulla fama notas fecerat, has noster imperator nosterque exercitus et populi Romani arma peragrarunt"). On the political implications of conquering unknown people, see Mattern 1999, 32–33.

¹⁷ Cic. *Prov. cons.* 33.

¹⁸ Cic. *Prov. cons.* 32.

¹⁹ Cicero calls *Gallia Narbonensis* a *semita*, "perché era come uno stretto accesso verso le altre regioni della Gallia e verso la Spagna" (Tarditi 1970, 73, n. 40).

²⁰ Cic. *Prov. cons.* 34. This idea of the *Alpes* as protecting Italy *muri vice* (Cato, F85 Peter) is widespread (cf. Walbank 1957, vol. 1, 390).

²¹ This "appendix" (*B Gall.* 1.1.5–7) has, like other geographical passages, repeatedly been suspected of being an interpolation. Thorough discussions with contrary conclusions can be found in Klotz (1910, 26–27), who argued that the passages in question are interpolations; later he had to revise his verdict, since he thought Beckmann (1930) had proved most of his arguments wrong, but he then returned to his original opinion (1934, esp. 69), though slightly modified. Hering (1956) sided with Beckmann, and Berres (1970) with Klotz, arguing, partly against Hering, that *B Gall.* 1.1, 4.10, 5.12–14, 6.25–28, 6.29.4 were interpolations from one author, who may have belonged to Caesar's staff (175). The *geographica* have been questioned for the following reasons (with some *geographica* there is the additional problem of a spurious text or of repetitiveness): (1) they show an attempt at *variatio* (which, it is held, is alien to Caesar); and (2) while normally additional ethnographical and geographical information is of immediate relevance to Caesar's military

adopted Caesar's geography of the North, since the Gaul Cicero refers to is the Roman general's revolutionary concept of Gaul.²²

Caesar further substantiates the impression of *Gallia omnis* as an intellectually mastered space, as evoked in the opening passage, through the presentation of tribal territories within the Gallic space. This becomes evident in the very first episode: there he explains to his Roman readers that Orgetorix easily convinced the *Helvetii* to leave their "country," since they were thronged into a narrow space, pressed on all sides: "on one side by the very deep and broad Rhine, which separates the land of the *Helvetii* from the *Germani*; on another side by the heights of the mountain Iura, which lies between the (territories of the) *Sequani* and the *Helvetii*; on the third side by Lake *Lemanus* and the river Rhone, which separates our province from the *Helvetii*. (...) Their territory is 240 miles long and 180 miles broad" ("una ex parte flumine Rheno latissimo atque altissimo, qui agrum Helvetium a Germanis dividit, altera ex parte monte Iura altissimo, qui est inter Sequanos et Helvetios, tertia lacu Lemanno et flumine Rhodano, qui provinciam nostram ab Helvetiis dividit. [. . .] qui [i.e., angusti fines] in longitudinem milia passuum CCXL, in latitudinem CLXXX patebant" [*B Gall.* 1.2.3]).

Gerold Walser has shown how the Roman general manipulates the geographical information about the *Helvetii* in order to promote his specific interests.²³ I would like to draw attention not to the skewing of

action, this function is lacking with the *excursus*. This paper's main argument is that the *excursus* do have a "rhetorical" function, even though it might not be as apparent as in the case of the shorter pieces of geographical information. Hence I consider reason (2) to be an inappropriate limitation of Caesar's *scientia suorum consiliorum explicandorum* (*B Gall.* 8.praef.7). The *variatio*, on the other hand, poses problems of its own, as it is known that Caesar's style changed from the first to the last *commentarius*, which is one of the reasons why this issue is intricately linked to the question of the publication of the *commentarii* (see the next n.). However, as this is not the place to discuss these (ultimately insoluble) questions, I would like to assert that my overall argument on the differences in the representation of space in the *B Gall.* would remain plausible even if the doubted geographical passages were to be discarded.

²²This leads to the much-debated question of the form of publication: my argument does not necessarily imply that the *commentariorum liber primus* had to be published by 56 and that the individual books were therefore published annually. The *litterae Caesaris* (*B Gall.* 2.35.4; 4.38.5; [assumed in] 7.90.8) most certainly contained a geography of Gaul (and often enough seem to have been copied into the *commentarii*). For the parallels and differences between the *commentarius* and the *memoralis libellus* (Suet. *Iul.* 56.2), see Norden (1920, 87–88) and Rambaud (1966, 19–23). The latest contribution to this controversy is Wiseman's (1998), who argues for serial publication.

²³Walser 1995.

details but rather to the overall impression of this account, since it is representative of Caesar's presentation of Gaul as well as of Gallic regions.²⁴ He sets out a clear-cut picture, giving not only a precise account of the borders but also providing his readers with exact figures of length and breadth. Later on he mentions rivers (e.g., 1.12.1) and gives accurate figures of distances (e.g., 1.8.1; 1.21.1; 1.23.1). Bertrand may be right that Caesar did not possess any detailed maps and was more or less "stumbling through Gaul";²⁵ the impression, though, that the Roman general gives of his knowledge of the Gallic territory is one of total control. From the very first sentence, Gaul is presented as a *terra cognita* and, as such, a part of the geographical knowledge of the Roman Empire. It is only a small step from this intellectual dominion to a territorial one,²⁶ and Caesar will end his campaigns in Gaul with its total subjection.

Britanniae pars interior (. . .): The representation of *Britannia* shows the same characteristics. Caesar not only gives exact numbers of distance, length, and breadth but also, according to Greek practice,²⁷ a geometrical simile as well (*B Gall.* 5.13.1): "[t]he island is triangular in shape; one side faces Gaul, and one corner of this side, where Kent is and where almost all ships from Gaul put in to harbor, looks east, the other south. It stretches for about 500 miles ("Insula natura triquetra, cuius unum latus est contra Galliam. huius lateris alter angulus, qui est ad Cantium, quo fere omnes ex Gallia naves adpelluntur, ad orientem solem, inferior ad meridiem spectat. hoc pertinet circiter milia passuum quingenta"). Again, this presentation, if genuine,²⁸ leads the Roman reader to recognize that the Roman general has an overview, that this space is intellectually mastered. And as with Gaul, the intellectual mastery goes

²⁴ Other examples are: *B Gall.* 1.38, 2.16, and 3.1.1 (trans. Hammond): "When Caesar set out for Italy, he sent Servius Galba, with the Twelfth legion and a section of the cavalry, to the lands of the Nantuates, Veragri and Seduni. These lands reach from the territory of the Allobroges, Lake Lemannus, and the River Rhône up to the peaks of the Alps" ("Cum in Italiam proficisceretur Caesar, Servium Galbam cum legione XII et parte equitatus in Nantuates, Veragros Sedunosque misit, qui a finibus Allobrogum et lacu Lemanno et flumine Rhodano ad summas Alpes pertinent").

²⁵ See n. 12 for ref. On the existence and usage of maps in Rome, see Mattern 1999, 41–66 (41, n. 61, contains a useful survey of the scholarly discussion of this question).

²⁶ This link between knowledge and power is made by Cicero in his speech *De Provinciis consularibus* (33: as quoted in n. 16); see also Plut. (*Caes.* 23.2, as quoted below and with my interpretation of κατέχειν).

²⁷ For this topos (and others), see Trüdinger 1918.

²⁸ This excursus (*B Gall.* 5.12–14) has been suspected of being an interpolation (see n. 21).

together with a territorial one, as Caesar will later lay claim to having effected the final surrender of the *Britanni*.²⁹

The twofold significance of his expedition can be gauged from Plutarch's evaluation: "and the island which was doubted because of its size and had provided numerous writers with a varied argument—it was a (mere) name, a myth (of an island) that had not existed nor did exist—(this island) he attempted to seize, and he led the Roman power beyond the inhabited world" (καὶ νῆσον ἀπιστουμένην ὑπὸ μεγέθους καὶ πολλὴν ἔριν παμπόλλοις συγγραφεῦσι παρασχοῦσαν, ὥς ὄνομα καὶ λόγος οὐ γενομένης οὐδ' οὔσης πέπλασται, κατασχεῖν ἐπιθέμενος προήγαγεν ἔξω τῆς οἰκουμένης τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν).³⁰ Caesar's two achievements—the intellectual as well as the military—are neatly brought together in this: he is the one to ascertain that there is indeed an island (he is the first to understand [κατέχειν] the matter),³¹ and he extends the Roman power beyond the limits of the inhabited world in an attempt to occupy (κατέχειν) it.³²

Thus, the two territories, which are presented as conquered, are acutely defined and presented as part of the geographical knowledge of the Roman Empire: they are intellectually and territorially conquered. Furthermore, Caesar, by providing his readers with accurate figures of distances of and within the two spaces, presents their geography in the form of an itinerary. Recent scholarship has emphasized the difference between the Greek and Roman "odological" view and our modern two-dimensional cartographic one.³³ The Roman's image of the world was

²⁹ *B Gall.* 5.22.3 (trans. Hammond): "Cassivellaunus (. . .) sent envoys to Caesar through Commius the Atrebatian to surrender" ("Cassivellaunus . . . legatos per Atrebatem Commium de deditione ad Caesarem mittit"). Hering (1986, 74) also reveals a relation between Caesar's presentation of *Britannia* and the state of affairs there in contrast to *Germania*: "Caesar believed that it was possible to bring the island of Britain under his control or he considered the subjugation of the island to have been possible. But Germany could not have been conquered at that time by any means (. . .) Germany was unknown territory to Caesar, unlike the island of Britain" ("Caesar Britanniam insulam in suam potestatem redigere posse credebat vel redegissee potuisse arbitratus est. At Germania hoc tempore nullo modo expugnari potuerat (. . .) Caesari erat Germania aliena terra, non quidem Britannia insula").

³⁰ Plut. *Caes.* 23.2. Caesar's achievements, in the context of rivaling Pompey as Alexander's Roman successor, will be looked at in sec. 4.

³¹ The lack of knowledge is mentioned by Caesar himself: *B Gall.* 4.20.4.

³² The verb κατέχειν allows for the connotations of an intellectual as well as a territorial mastery (see LSJ, s.v.). With this, cf. Diodorus (3.38.3), who states that it was Caesar who brought Britannia εἰς σύνταξιν ἱστορίας.

³³ I owe this last point to the anonymous reader; for the itinerary as a standard form of geography, see Mattern 1999, 27–29.

for the most part based on “verbal descriptions in geographical texts”,³⁴ by presenting *Gallia* and *Britannia* in this odological perspective, Caesar uses the standard form of geographical representation and thus makes it comparatively easy for his Roman readers to construe these two spaces and to integrate them within their mental geography. Hence he not only leaves the reader with the impression that he has mastered these spaces but also facilitates their comprehension of them.

2. CAESARIS GERMANIA: NO PLACE FOR ROME

Germania multum ab his differt: Caesar is now generally held to be the first to speak of the *Germani* as a major ethnos in the north,³⁵ and it has been argued by Allan Lund that he is in fact the *primus inventor* of their “country.”³⁶ The hallmark of his geographical construction is the Rhine; as early as in the first paragraph the *Germani* are referred to as *qui trans Rhenum incolunt* (*B Gall.* 1.1.3),³⁷ despite the fact that, as Caesar himself concedes, there are *Germani cisrhenani*.³⁸ Hence Eduard Norden

³⁴ Mattern 1999, 41.

³⁵ If the reconstruction is correct (but see Lund 1998, 41, with further bib.), the first extant reference to the name *Germani* is an inscription of 222 B.C.E (*Inscr. Ital.* 13,1; 78f.) that celebrates M. Claudius Marcellus’ victory *de Galleis Insubribus et Germ[an(eis)]*. But even so, it cannot be said whether it is just a tribe or a people that is meant by *Germani*. The very same problem arises in the case of Posidonius’ brief characterization of the *Germanoi* as drinkers of milk and eaters of roasted flesh (*FGRH* 87F22, Edelstein and Kidd F73 [Athen. 4.39]). And the fact that even after Caesar and other Roman authors, who wrote about the *Germani* as a distinct ethnic group, Greek historiographers and ethnographers (some of whom can be found in Norden 1920, 101–2) tended to stick to the traditional Greek conception of the north as comprising the *Κελτοί* in the west and the *Σκύθαι* in the east indicates that the threefold north (*Gallia*, *Germania*, *Scythia*) is a Roman conception (the significance of the Greeks’ continuation of the Greek tradition is elaborated by Lund 1995 [with further bib.]).

³⁶ Lund (1998, 49) provides perhaps the most detailed argument for the thesis that “Caesar ist der Erfinder der Germanen Germaniens.” There is a good English discussion of “the discovery of the Germani” in Rives (1999, 21–27).

³⁷ Within the first book, whenever speaking of the *Germani*, Caesar connects them with “their” river (1.4; 2.3; 27.4; 28.4; 31.5; 31.11; 31.16; 33.3). The first time he mentions the *Germani* without the Rhine is in chap. 36 (when the association “*Germani qui trans Rhenum incolunt*” can be regarded as firmly established in the reader’s mental geography).

³⁸ There are five German tribes in *Gallia* (*B Gall.* 2.4.10): “(. . .) the Condrusi, the Eburones, the Caeraesi, the Paemani, who are called by the common name of Germans” (“. . . Condrusos, Eburones, Caerosos, Paemanos, qui uno nomine Germani appellantur”); and the fifth is mentioned in *B Gall.* 6.32.1 (trans. Hammond): “The Segni and Condrusi, who are to be counted among the German people and who live between the Eburones

in 1920³⁹ suggested that Caesar defined the Rhine as a cultural border in order to explain the abrupt end of his successful campaigns in the territory he calls *Germania*. While few doubt that Caesar had political motives in establishing the Rhine as a border, a close reading of the textual geography of *Germania* does not seem to have been undertaken yet.⁴⁰

Caesar defines the *Rhenus* as the western border of *Germania*, but unlike later authors, including Pomponius Mela (De Chor. 3.25), Pliny the Elder (*HN* 4.81), and Tacitus (*Germ.* 1.1), he does not mention any of the other borderlines in the north or south or east, so that the territory beyond the Rhine seems to extend endlessly.⁴¹ In addition to this insinuation of infinity, which will later be made explicit, there is a noticeable absence of an interior pattern: no rivers or other structures that could provide orientation in this territory are mentioned, except for infinite forests. Dieter Timpe⁴² has argued that the Romans did not explore the space beyond the Rhine before the Augustan Period. But given Caesar's frequent references to Gauls and Germans as his informants⁴³ and his eagerness to gather as much information about the *loci natura* as possible (cf. Suet. *Iul.* 58), it is hard to imagine that Caesar did not know anything about the inland and borders of *Germania*. Timpe's suggestion is the more unlikely, as Caesar, during both of his invasions into *Germania*, tells his readers that he learned from Germanic tribes what the *Suebi* had done and where they had withdrawn.⁴⁴ During his

and the Treveri (. . .)" ("Segni Condrusique, ex gente et numero Germanorum, qui sunt inter Eburones Treverosque . . .").

³⁹Norden (1920, 94) speaks of an attempt to explain why "der Siegeslauf der Legionen am Rhein seine Grenze [fand]."

⁴⁰Ramnaud's carefully argued paper on "L'espace dans le récit Césarien" (1974) differentiates between *espace géographique*, *espace stratégique*, *espace tactique* (113), but he does not consider the differences between the accounts of *Gallia* and *Britannia* on the one hand and the account of *Germania* on the other. France's paper on *espace géographique* (1989) often provides pointed observations but is primarily concerned with what an ancient historian must bear in mind when reading Caesar's geographical passages (89). Timpe's paper (1995) concentrates on actual geographical factors and their impact on political decisions. Horsfall's argument (1985) is an important contribution to the question of the literary function of geographical descriptions within Latin historiography. This paper attempts to provide another example of his phenomenon. See also n. 54.

⁴¹Cf. France 1989, 95. One might argue that Caesar's reader could infer the (natural) border in the north, the *oceanus*, but it seems noteworthy that Caesar never, to my knowledge, explicitly mentions (!) this natural borderline.

⁴²Timpe 1995, 15.

⁴³See Meusel (*Lex. Caes.*) s.v. *explorare*; cf. Ramnaud 1974, 112–13.

⁴⁴*B Gall.* 4.19.2: "The Suebi, after they had learned through scouts that a bridge was being built, held a council according to their custom and then sent orders in every direc-

second campaign in Germany, he actually seems to intend to pursue the *Suebi*, as he had ascertained an access to them (*aditus viasque in Suebos perquirat*, *B Gall.* 6.9.8); but instead of chasing them and engaging them in battle, he withdraws back to Gaul.⁴⁵

The suspicion that there is a reason why Caesar does not mention any borderlines or interior patterns is supported by another observation: he explicitly draws his readers' attention to the vast, seemingly infinite space of the German territory. Two passages are particularly striking: "Thus, it is said that on one side the territory adjacent to the *Suebi* is unoccupied for 600 miles" ("itaque una ex parte a Suebis circiter milia passuum sescenta agri vacare dicuntur" [*B Gall.* 4.3.2]). Here the sheer size of the waste territory (*milia passuum sescenta agri*) on one side of their living space evokes the image of vastness. Elsewhere he provokes his reader's bewilderment by his choice of words and their arrangement (*B Gall.* 6.23.1): "the highest praise among the tribes goes to those who ravage their borders and so maintain the widest unpopulated area around themselves" ("Civitatibus maxima laus est quam latissime circum se vastatis finibus solitudines habere"). The most emphasized positions in this sentence are *civitatibus maxima laus est* and *solitudines habere*,⁴⁶ whereby Caesar highlights what seems to be close to a paradox: namely, that the greatest honor is achieved by having as much vast desolation as

tion that the people were to move out from the towns, and that they were to convey their children, wives and all their possessions into the woods, and that all those who were able to bear arms should come together in one place" ("Suebos, posteaquam per exploratores pontem fieri comperissent, more suo concilio habito nuntios in omnes partes dimisisse, uti de oppidis demigrarent, liberos, uxores suaque omnia in silvis deponerent atque omnes, qui arma ferre possent, unum in locum convenirent"); see further (*B Gall.* 6.10.1): "Meanwhile, after a few days, (Caesar was informed) by the Ubii that the Suebi were drawing their forces into one place (...)" ("Interim paucis post diebus fit ab Ubiis certior Suebos omnes in unum locum copias cogere ...").

⁴⁵This is how Bebel judged Caesar's undertaking in *Germania* (1673, 100, col. 2): "Am I, therefore, to accept Caesar as witness and seek out from his writings what he did in Germany that was worthy of praise? (...) But, my dear Caesar, when you heard that the Suebi had gathered, that they were awaiting the advance of the Romans and had settled to fight it out with them, you fled hastily into Gaul, tearing down the bridge so that they were not able to follow after you" ("Accipio igitur Caesarem in testem et requiro eius scripta, quid fecerit in Germania laude dignum? (...) At, bone Caesar, ubi audivisti Suevos esse congregatos, Romanorum adventum expectare atque cum his decertare constituisse, fugis in Galliam celeriter pontem rescindens, ne te insequi possent").

⁴⁶Zeitler (1986, 46) recognized this. It seems noteworthy that the only two times Caesar uses the word *solitudo* are in the context of his description(s) of *Germania* (*B Gall.* 4.1.3 and 6.23.1).

possible. This impression receives further emphasis through the (almost) oxymoronic juxtaposition *solitudines habere*.

This vastness figures dominantly, particularly in the case of the *Suebi*;⁴⁷ to fully understand their and the other German tribes' strategy, one has to remember that Caesar presents them as nomads: they pursue agriculture only in a limited way (if at all), nourish themselves mostly with milk and meat, and move on after having been in one place for no more than a year.⁴⁸ It is ultimately this nomadic lifestyle that allows them to take full advantage of their space with the help of a "Scythian" strategy: they embark on quick ambushes, after which they withdraw to the furthest parts of their space—infinite woods in particular—and thus make themselves ἄποροι.⁴⁹

When once again hunting the *Suebi*, Caesar learns "that all of them had withdrawn deep into their most distant territory; there was a forest of infinite size, called the Bacenis" ("omnes . . . penitus ad extremos fines se recepissee; silvam esse ibi *infinita magnitudine*, quae appellatur Bacenis" [*B Gall.* 6.10.4–5]). This is as infinite a forest as the Hercynian is,⁵⁰ to either of which it is worth comparing the Ardennes, "which is the

⁴⁷ *Pagos centum Sueborum: B Gall.* 1.37.3; 4.1.4.

⁴⁸ The *Suebi* cultivate their soil (*B Gall.* 4.1.8), but they do not own it nor do they remain in one location for more than a year: "They do not live much on corn, but for the most part on milk and flesh, and are much [engaged] in hunting (. . .)" ("neque multum frumento sed maximam partem lacte atque pecore vivunt, multumque sunt in venationibus . . ."). In Book 6 (22.1) the *Germani* do not pursue agriculture at all: "They do not concern themselves with agriculture, and the major part of their food consists in milk, cheese and meat" ("agriculturae non student, maiorque pars eorum victus in lacte, caseo, carne consistit"). Caesar reasserts that they do not have any private property and that they move on after one year (*transire cogunt*); as for these nomadic elements in Caesar's portrait of the *Germani*, see Lund (1996, 20), who points out that archaeological evidence seems to indicate that the *Germani* did not move annually. A first hint at the nomadic lifestyle is given as early as *B Gall.* 1.36.7. For the literary tradition of nomads, see Shaw 1982/3.

⁴⁹ When in *Germania*, Caesar is told *Suebos sese in silvas recepissee* (*B Gall.* 6.29.1; other passages are: *B Gall.* 1.54.1; 4.16.5; 4.19.1–4, all of which I found in Timpe 1995, 15); also the *Sugambri*, to give another example (*B Gall.* 4.18.4): *se[que] in solitudinem ac silvas abdidierant*. As with the Herodotean Scythians, there is an interdependence of nomadic lifestyle and this strategy of elusion: see sec. 4 with nn. 82 and 85.

⁵⁰ After having hinted at the largeness of the Hercynian forest by giving an account of the bordering tribes, Caesar stresses its immeasurable depth (*B Gall.* 6.25.4): "nor is there any person of this part of Germany who says that he either has gone to the extremity of that forest, although he had journeyed for sixty days, or has heard in what place it begins" ("neque quisquam est huius Germaniae, qui se [aut audisse] aut adisse *ad initium eius silvae* dicat, cum dierum iter LX processerit, aut *quo ex loco oriatur*, acceperit"). For the problem of whether this is an interpolation, I refer to n. 21.

largest in all of Gaul and extends from the banks of the Rhine and the territory of the *Trevi* to the territory of the *Nervi*; it is more than 500 miles across" ("quae [i.e., silva] est totius Galliae maxima atque ab ripis Rheni finibusque Treverorum ad Nervios pertinet milibusque amplius quingentis in longitudinem patet" [*B Gall.* 6.29.4]).⁵¹ The crucial difference between the largest Gallic forest and the German ones is that the former, though huge, is obviously measured and mastered. Even in *Gallia* and *Britannia*, Caesar often encounters difficulties due to forests, but immeasurable forests pose an insurmountable obstacle, an insoluble strategic problem.⁵² This difference between the forests seems to agree with the difference in the general's respective actions: in *Gallia* as well as in *Britannia* he has his soldiers cut the forests down; in *Germania* a forest is reason enough to withdraw (see below).

Heinrich Bebel, German humanist and patriot, ridicules the Roman's retreat from *Germania* and the given reason, that is, the geographical conditions in *Germania* "and how he wants to use the vastness of the Hercynian forest as an excuse of his failure to attack them!" ("Qui [i.e. Caesar] quomodo, precor, *causari vult vastitatem sylvae Hercyniae*, quominus illos sit aggressus," [. . .]).⁵³ Bebel thus suggests that Caesar used

⁵¹This geographical information, too, has been read as an interpolation, mostly because the *Arduenna silva* is characterized earlier in the *B Gall.* (5.3.4: "to the Ardennes forest . . . , which due to its large size stretches from the Rhine across the middle of the Treveri's land all the way to the frontier of the Remi" ["in silvam Arduennam . . . , quae ingenti magnitudine per medios fines Treverorum a flumine Rheno ad initium Remorum pertinet"]); as has been noticed (Berres 1970, 173), the core difference between these two definitions is the substitution of *ingenti magnitudine* with a specific, measured size, and the reason for the additional passage on the Gallic forest is the contrast with the Hercynian forest. I agree and take both observations to provide a very good reason for assuming the genuineness of both descriptions.

⁵²Connected to this strategic problem, there is a logistic problem as well: the ability to guarantee the *res frumentaria* poses a serious, and eventually intractable, difficulty under these circumstances, as is at first (*B Gall.* 6.10.2) rather casually admitted in the context of the second crossing of the Rhine, but ultimately leads to the exploration's termination (*B Gall.* 6.29.1).

⁵³Bebel (1519, fol.139, col. 2), who pointedly goes on to contrast Caesar's action elsewhere (as in Britain): "who [i.e., Caesar] sought out across the inhospitable sea the British, men from another world and up to that time unknown to the Romans, and for whom, both before and after the (encounter with the) Suebi, the remoteness of a place did not pose a problem, nor the adversity of a location, nor the desolation, poisonous serpents or the crippling heat of Libya, nor the harshness of any storm" ("qui Britannos alterius orbis homines et hactenus ignotos Romanis per infestissimum mare quaesivit et cui ante et post Suevos nulla regionum longinquitas, nulla iniquitas locorum nec vastitas nec noxii serpentes nec fervores Libyae, nullius tempestatis asperitas obstitit").

geographical data to justify his action, i.e., his retreat from *Germania*, and with this suggestion—it seems to me—he was right: by omitting some aspects (borderlines, interior patterns), and by (over)emphasizing others (infinite wasteland, infinite forests), Caesar presents an imaginary geography of *Germania* as ἀπείρων, i.e., as “boundless in terms of its spatial extension [and] internal nondifferentiation.”⁵⁴ It is not as though there were no grain of truth to Caesar’s portrait; on the contrary, it undeniably contains accurate descriptive elements (after all, there were forests in *Germania*). These elements, however, are arranged in an image of boundless and indifferentiated space in order to convey a specific message.⁵⁵ The argument, as presented here, does not therefore claim that Caesar falsifies the geographical account of *Germania*⁵⁶ but rather that he colors it. In doing so, he accounts for his (in)action in *Germania*.

3. ESPACE GÉOGRAPHIQUE: CAESAR—THE SPEEDSTER—LINGERS

It is in general remarkable that, while Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul and Britain are characterized by their decisiveness and speed, the opposite seems to be the case in Germany. The Germans’ use of a hit-and-run-and-hide strategy leaves Caesar in a stupor; in *Gallia* or *Britannia*, though, when confronted with similar strategies, his action is decisive: at the end of his third year, the Roman general wants to “pacify” the *Morini* and the “*Menapii*, who started to wage war with tactics very different from the rest of Gaul” (“qui longe alia ratione ac reliqui Galli bellum gerere instituerunt” [*B Gall.* 3.28.1]). They realized that great armies that fought the Romans in a pitched battle were defeated. Thus they embark on what seems to be a German strategy: “They possessed woods and marshlands nearby, into which they shifted with all their possessions” (“continen-

⁵⁴This is Romm’s (1992, 11) general definition of ἀπείρων; he does not, however, look at Caesar’s geographical presentations at all. In the same context he speaks of “the cognitive discomfort which an unlimited extent of space could inspire” (10), and that very much seems to me to be the intent of the Roman general’s representation. As to imaginary geography and its rhetorical function, similar arguments (for other authors) have been made by Stewart (1995), Kraus and Woodman (1997, esp. 22), and Clarke (2001).

⁵⁵And Caesar is more concerned with this image’s impact on the reader than with an accurate geography (however valuable his ethnographical and geographical information is, he was a politician, a general, but not a scientist à la Posidonius).

⁵⁶That, indeed, *Germania* could prove hazardous, can be reckoned from Varus’ disastrous defeat. One should also compare Strabo’s brief mention of the Germans’ strategy (1.1.17; the context is his discussion of the usefulness of geography).

tesque silvas ac paludes habebant, eo se suaque omnia contulerunt" [*B Gall.* 3.28.2]]. From there they attack the Romans swiftly and return to their hideout. Caesar's countermeasures are typical of his actions in *Gallia* (*B Gall.* 3.29.1): "then, during the remaining days, Caesar had the wood cut down (. . .)" ("reliquis deinceps diebus Caesar silvas caedere instituit [. . .]"); and also in *Britannia*, where with incredible (and therefore characteristic) speed (*incredibili celeritate*)⁵⁷ his troops cut down huge areas of the forest (cf. *B Gall.* 5.21).

Michel Rambaud's differentiation of three concepts of space ("espace géographique, espace stratégique, espace tactique"), which he traces in Caesar's *commentarii*, helps to pinpoint the difference between the two geographical representations and Caesar's respective behavior therein. The predominant concept of space in the *Bellum Gallicum* is the strategic: "C'est un espace ressenti, on voudrait dire, vécu."⁵⁸ This is the space in which the *imperator* demonstrates his decisive and speedy action, in which distance is measured in *itinera* (*magna* or often *maxima*), and start and finish lines are *civitates*. The geographical space, on the other hand, presents itself to an observer who merely surveys a usually vast territory.⁵⁹ In this space the only points of orientation are the *points cardinaux* (in opposition to strategic points like villages); it is not a space one acts in as much as a space one struggles to fathom.

Although Rambaud does not attribute a specific concept to either of the territories (i.e., *Germania* on the one side, *Gallia* and *Britannia* on the other), it seems clear from what has been presented so far that, while the strategic space is dominant in the presentation of Gaul and Britain, in Germany it is the geographical space. This connection of two different concepts of space with the reconstructed two different geographical concepts (i.e., of *Germania* as an infinite extension and of *Gallia* as a mastered space) is supported by Caesar's (in)action in *Gallia* and *Germania*. While in Gaul especially (but also in Britain), the narrative often struggles to keep pace with the actions;⁶⁰ the narrator, when in

⁵⁷ Caesar's speediness is often taken to be another characteristic he shared with Alexander (see below, sec. 4): Lucan (1.151 and 10.34) and Appian (*B Civ.* 2.149) are only two possible references. Yet speediness is a characteristic of any great general (see Hdt. on Cyrus' unexpected arrival at Sardis [1.79: αὐτὸς ἄγγελος]).

⁵⁸ Rambaud 1974, 116.

⁵⁹ "L'espace géographique est le lieu idéal de la vision synthétique des plus vastes contrées" (Rambaud 1974, 113). The third concept of space does not matter for my argument.

⁶⁰ See *B Gall.* 1.13.1–2: "After this battle, in order to be able to pursue the remaining forces of the *Helvetii*, he had a bridge constructed over the Saône and led the army across it. The *Helvetii* were thrown into turmoil by his unexpected arrival, and when they

Germania, finds time to carefully set out the technical feat of the bridge (4.17) and to provide his readers with the famous synopsis (6.10–29). There is only one, ephemeral, indication of the speedy *imperator* during his first excursion across the Rhine (*B Gall.* 4.18.2: once across the river *in fines Sugambrorum contendit*); but when he realizes (*B Gall.* 4.18.4) that the *Sugambri* have withdrawn, he does not know what to do other than to linger a couple of days (*moratus*) and to destroy their villages (*B Gall.* 4.19.1).⁶¹ His second expedition reads as similarly static: after he has started the usual preparations for a campaign against the *Suebi* (*B Gall.* 6.10.2), he again learns that his enemy is inapproachable in a forest of infinite size (*B Gall.* 6.10.4). Nothing else can be done but to leave the bridge (slightly dismantled) as a threat of future attacks (*B Gall.* 6.29.2). It is surprising to see how much time passes more or less unaccounted for.⁶² One might, indeed, ask with Heinrich Bebel, “what did Caesar do in *Germania* that was worthy of praise” (“quid fecerit [Caesar] in *Germania* laude dignum?”).⁶³

It is illuminating to remember Lucan’s double simile and his characterization of Caesar and Pompey: the smashing lightning (1.151–55) serves to symbolize Caesar’s famous *celeritas*,⁶⁴ whereas Pompey is described as the firmly rooted oak. This trait of Caesar’s is anticipated in the preceding characterization in which Lucan stresses that Caesar’s “virtue” never lingers (*nescia virtus / stare loco*, 1.144f.). Hence it is noteworthy that the restless conqueror, *hoc τέρας horribili vigilantia, celeritate, diligentia*,⁶⁵ simply lingers when in *Germania*; there he is not himself.

Caesar’s *Germania* is not a strategic space; on the contrary, it is the space where his characteristic *celeritas* seems to come to a halt. An *iter* is

learned that he had crossed the river in one day, a crossing which had caused them a delay of twenty days and huge difficulties, they sent envoys to him” (“Hoc proelio facto reliquas copias Helvetiorum ut consequi posset, pontem in Arari faciendum curat atque ita exercitum traducit. Helvetii repentino eius adventu commoti, cum id quod ipsi diebus XX aegerrime confecerant, ut flumen transirent, illum uno die fecisse intellegerent, legatos ad eum mittunt”).

⁶¹ He eventually returns to the *Ubii*, from whom he learns that the *Suebi* also have withdrawn (*B Gall.* 4.19.2); he thus returns to Gaul and the space of his speediness: despite the late summer *tamen in Britanniam proficisci contendit* (*B Gall.* 4.20.1).

⁶² *B Gall.* 6.10.1: “Interim paucis post diebus (. . .)”; *B Gall.* 6.10.4: “They [i.e., *Ubii*] carried out the orders and, after a few days interval, reported back (. . .)” (“illi imperata faciunt et paucis diebus intermissis referunt . . .”). What is Caesar doing *per multos dies*?

⁶³ See n. 45.

⁶⁴ Rosner-Siegel (1983) carefully traces echoes of this first simile throughout Lucan’s poem.

⁶⁵ Cic. *Att.* 8.9.4.

not even mentioned once, and while the form of the itinerary in the presentation of *Gallia* and *Britannia* makes it easier for the reader to fathom these two spaces, Caesar's refusal to give any account of distances beyond the Rhine makes a geographical comprehension impossible. The infinite and undefined geographical space is a constitutive part of his imaginary geography of Germany: there the *imperator* yields to nature rather than nature to him, and the reader is left equally baffled by the space.

4. THE TRADITION OF GREAT GENERALS: *CAESAR MAGNUS IN SCYTHICA GERMANIA*

One might wonder why Caesar entered *Germania* in the first place. He himself partly motivates the first crossing of the Rhine with the desire to demonstrate (to his fellow Romans as well as to the Germans) that Roman troops are strong and daring enough to make this crossing (*et posse et audere populi Romani exercitum Rhenum transire* [*B Gall.* 4.16.1]).⁶⁶ Because of the difficulty of the undertaking (*summa difficultas faciendi pontis*)⁶⁷ and because of the bravery displayed in reaching beyond the limits of the inhabited world (ἐξω τῆς οἰκουμένης),⁶⁸ Caesar can, despite the meager military achievements,⁶⁹ claim the crossing and exploration as an achievement *per se*. He thus writes (*B Gall.* 4.19.4) that he returned to Gaul, "believing that enough had been achieved as for glory and advantage" ("satis et ad laudem et ad utilitatem profectum arbitratus").

The symbolic significance of this exploration must be seen within

⁶⁶Plutarch (*Caes.* 22.6) tells us that Caesar wanted to cross the Rhine in order to punish the *Sugambri*, as they had provided other Germans who were fleeing from Gaul with shelter; "and besides, he desired the fame of being the first man to cross the Rhine with an army . . ." (ἄλλως δὲ καὶ δόξης ἐφιέμενος [καὶ] τοῦ πρώτος ἀνθρώπων στρατῷ διαβῆναι τὸν Ῥήνον [. . .]).

⁶⁷The crossing is difficult *propter latitudinem rapiditatem altitudinemque fluminis* (*B Gall.* 4.17.2); see n. 68.

⁶⁸Crossing the Rhine is comparable to the oft-celebrated arrival at the ocean (see, e.g., Cic. *De imp.* 33, Sall. *Epist. Mith.* 17, Plut. *Pomp.* 38.2–3; for the special symbolic achievement of reaching the ocean, see Romm 1992, 137–42).

⁶⁹The quality of Caesar's military action allows Lucan's Pompey to refer to them as a flight (2.570), and it has prompted scholars ever since to read the description of the bridge (*B Gall.* 4.17) and the synopsis of *Galli* and *Germani* (6.11–28) as a mere distraction of the reader in order to conceal the military failure (Huber [1913, 105], Norden [1920, 92–93], Rambaud [1966, 334], Walser [1956], and more recently Zeitler [1986]). This, however, overlooks the significance and the fame of Caesar's claim to be the first to cross the Rhine, to enter *Germania* (see, e.g., Plut. *Caes.* 22.6 [n. 66], Suet. *Iul.* 25.2, Cat. 11 [as discussed below]).

the context of great generals: to reach beyond the borders of the known world was a hallmark in the portrayal especially of Alexander the Great. Subsequently, Pompey had gained great fame through his explorations in the east⁷⁰ and had taken great pains to present himself as Alexander's Roman successor *Pompeius Magnus*.⁷¹ As Caesar has himself explain to the Senate in Rome at the beginning of the Civil War, he had always striven to outdo others (his *aemula virtus*, Luc. 1.120).⁷² His account of his daring penetrations into *Germania* and *Britannia* not only brought later glory and comparison with Alexander⁷³ but had more or less immediate repercussions (Cat. 11):

sive trans altas gradietur Alpes,
Caesaris visens monimenta Magni,
Gallicum Rhenum, horribilesque ultimi-
mosque Britannos.

or should he cross the high Alps, visiting
the achievements of Caesar Magnus, the
Gallic Rhine and the dreadful Britanni,
who live at the end of the world.⁷⁴

Catullus, addressing two “friends” who would follow him to the ends of the world, clearly refers to Alexander in the first stanza;⁷⁵ in the second stanza he equally clearly adumbrates Pompey's (the second *Magnus*)

⁷⁰ Plut. *Pomp.* 45–46.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Plut. *Pomp.* 2.2–4 and Sall. *Hist.* 3.88M (note, however, that the two authors qualify the similarity differently) and Gelzer 1984, 108–9; for the cognomen “Magnus,” see Heftner 1995, ad 13.7.

⁷² In *oratio obliqua* Caesar states before the assembled senate (*B Civ.* 1.32.9): “(…) and that, in the same manner as he had striven to excel in actions, he also wished to be superior in justice and equity” (“... se vero, ut operibus anteire studuerit, sic iustitia et aequitate velle superare”). This also comprises *in nuce* the different self-portrayals in Caesar's two writings.

⁷³ The *loci classici* are discussed by Green 1978, 11–12 and n. 15.

⁷⁴ Cat. 11. 9–12 (I follow Bardon's edition [Stuttgart 1973] but understand “Magnus” as a cognomen, hence the capitalization; to avoid the hiatus many emendations have been suggested [for a survey see Benediktson 1990]. I, however, find the latter's argument in favor of the manuscript tradition rather convincing). Cicero's famous *symboleutikos* (see Green's critical discussion [1978, 12–13]) provides further evidence for a more or less immediate association of Caesar's deeds with Alexander's.

⁷⁵ Cat. 11.1–4: “Furius and Aurelius, comrades to Catullus, whether he'll push into furthest India where the shore is pounded by the far-resounding Eastern surf” (“Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli / sive in extremos penetrabit Indos, / litus ut longe resonante Eoa / tunditur unda”). This was noticed by DeWitt 1942, 343.

realm.⁷⁶ Then he takes his reader to the world conquered by Caesar (see above), who is now, as his explicit naming and the hyperbaton emphasize, the true *Magnus*.⁷⁷

Peter Green has thoroughly scrutinized the *testimonia* for the widely accepted thesis that Caesar did try to imitate Alexander, and he concluded by discarding even the more moderate thesis that Caesar presented himself as a Roman Alexander for propagandistic purposes on the grounds that "[t]he only avenue for a legitimate exploitation of Alexander in political terms—through his military achievements—had already been monopolized by Pompey."⁷⁸ But, if Catullus' poem and Cicero's attempts to write a *symboleutikon* (*Att.* 12.40.2) suggest that there was a more or less immediate association of Caesar with Alexander,⁷⁹ and if Caesar rivaled Pompey, who claimed to be Alexander's successor, then it seems plausible that he tried to eclipse his rival in this regard as well (and for Catullus, and later Plutarch, this is exactly what he achieved). Caesar was not so much concerned with presenting himself as a second Alexander as with presenting himself as more of an Alexander than Pompey, and particularly as an exemplary general. Caesar's account⁸⁰ of his excursions into *Germania* and *Britannia* served exactly that purpose.

But though the bridge across the Rhine leads Caesar to fame, it does not lead him to the Germans: whenever he tries to attack them,

⁷⁶ Cat. 11.5–9: "Whether he will go to the Hyrcanians or the effeminate Arabs, or the Sacians or the arrow-bearing Parthians, or to the sea which the seven-fold Nile stains with color" ("sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles, / seu Sagas sagittiferosve Parthos, / sive quae septemgeminus colorat / aequora Nilus"); this is taken by many interpreters (Wiseman 2000, 144–45; Syndikus 2001, 124, n. 15) to refer to Crassus' expeditions in the East; but what about Africa (Mommsen [1976, 334, fn.] therefore assumed a reference to Crassus and Gabinius)? This stanza recalls Pompey's two (of three) famous triumphs, the African as well as the one in the East; cf. Vell. Pat. 2.40.4: "Fortune raised up the pinnacle of this man's career by such great leaps, as first he triumphed over Africa, then over Europe, and for a third time over Asia, and, as many divisions of the world are in existence, so many he made into monuments to his own victory" ("huius viri fastigium tantis auctibus fortuna extulit, ut primum ex Africa, iterum ex Europa, tertio ex Asia triumpharet et, quot partes terrarum orbis sunt, totidem faceret monumenta victoriae suae").

⁷⁷ This will later be Plutarch's reason for writing (*Alex.* 1.1): "the life of Alexander and of Caesar, by whom Pompey was ruined (. . .)" (τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου . . . βίον καὶ τοῦ Καίσαρος, ὅφ' οὗ κατελύθη Πομπήιος . . .).

⁷⁸ Green (1978, 16), whose learned paper should be the starting point for any further discussion of this issue.

⁷⁹ The *terminus post quem* for Cat. 11 is Caesar's exploration of *Britannia* (55); the letters in which Cicero describes his agony over the *symboleutikos* date to 45 (e.g., *Att.* 12.51; 13.2; 13.27; 13.28).

⁸⁰ For the question of the form of publication of the *commentarii*, see n. 22.

they have withdrawn already; he simply cannot pin them down but remains in a stupor. This passivity in *Germania* might seem to damage his self-presentation as an *imperator optimus*,⁸¹ but his account of *Germania* helps not only to establish him within the tradition of famous explorers (like Pompey and Alexander) but also to set him off as a circumspect conqueror under difficult circumstances (unlike Darius).

Caesar's representation of Germany and his account of the Germans' effective strategic use of their space are highly reminiscent of Herodotus' account of Scythia and the Scythian strategy employed in their confrontation with Darius. He praises this strategy as their greatest invention (4.46): "their most important discovery is that nobody who has attacked them can escape them, nor is it possible to seize them if they refuse to be found" (τὸ δὲ μέγιστον οὕτω σφι ἀνεύρηται ὥστε ἀποφυγεῖν τε μηδὲνα ἐπελθόντα ἐπὶ σφάας, μὴ βουλομένους τε ἐξευρεθῆναι καταλαβεῖν μὴ οἶόν τε εἶναι). Just as the Germans withdraw into the depth of their space whenever Caesar attempts to engage them in a pitched battle, so also the Scythians retreat in the face of Darius' challenge.⁸² Herodotus explicitly relates their clever strategy to the geographical conditions of their territory (4.47): "The nature of the land fits their discovery and the rivers help them, too" (ἐξεύρηται δέ σφι ταῦτα τῆς τε γῆς ἐούσης ἐπιτηδέης καὶ τῶν ποταμῶν ἐόντων σφι συμμάχων).

The Scythian strategy matches their nomadic lifestyle and is tailored to the Scythian geography, which deprives the invader of all means of orientation and provides the defender with numerous hideouts. The Persian general does not know how to orient himself in this treeless flatland that is streaked with countless rivers, and the Scythians try to prolong the intruder's stay so that eventually he will encounter a shortage of supplies (Hdt. 4.130; like Caesar's problem with the *res frumentaria*, see above). Darius continues chasing them until he has led his troops sufficiently far away from the Ister. The Scythians then send him presents: a bird, a frog, a mouse, and five arrows (Hdt. 4.131). Gobryas, a follower of the Persian king, correctly interprets these: the Persians will ultimately die

⁸¹ See Goldsworthy 1998 for "boldness bordering on recklessness" as a characteristic of a Roman general.

⁸² "[. . .] la guerra contro Dario aveva messo in luce come essa implicasse una vantaggiosa «imprendibilità»": Corcella 1993, ad 4.46 (my underlining). As for the interdependence of their nomadic lifestyle and their strategy of elusion, see Hartog (1979, 142): "Autrement dit la seule arme des Scythes, c'est leur aporie, le fait qu'il n'y a pas de *póros* vers eux et qu'ils sont insaisissables. [. . .] Si les Scythes sont *áporoi*, il [sic] ne peuvent être que nomades et s'ils sont nomades, ils sont nécessairement *áporoi*. [. . .] [L]'aporie est au moins autant un choix stratégique que le résultat d'un mode de vie."

by the Scythian arrows, as they cannot hide in the soil, or in the air, or in the water. Darius then realizes, almost too late, that things are different beyond the Ister, and he decides to return as quickly as possible. Thus the bridge, which was originally intended to provide an access to the Scythians, turns out to be the lifesaving path across the Ister out of Scythia and back to a familiar world.⁸³ Thus the Scythians are ἄμαχοι, the meaning of which expressively blurs between "invincible" and "not taking part in a battle,"⁸⁴ and they are ἄμαχοι because they are ἄποροι.⁸⁵

Because of these striking parallels it seems as if Caesar represents *Germania* as a Scythian landscape in which the *Germani*, who are also clearly marked as nomads (of whom the Scythians are the archetypes),⁸⁶ pursue a Scythian strategy to which he does not fall victim, however, as Darius almost did.⁸⁷ That Darius' disastrous Scythian expedition was well known in Rome at the time of Caesar's writing can be gathered from Nepos' *Miltiades*: there he briefly recounts Darius' invasion of Scythia,⁸⁸ which went badly (*male rem gerere Darium premique a Scythis* [3.3]) and might easily have resulted in Darius' end: "either by the enemy's sword or through shortage of supplies" (*vel hostium ferro vel inopia*, 3.4). Although it is tempting to assume that Caesar alludes to Herodotus' *logos Skythikos* in particular,⁸⁹ in order to extol his circumspect halt in contrast to Darius' blind rush, there is, as far as I can see, no textual support for

⁸³This is largely the interpretation of Hartog 1988, esp. chap. 2.

⁸⁴See *LSJ*, s.v. I (unconquerable, as in Hdt. 5.3) and II (taking no part in battle).

⁸⁵Herodotus (4.46) describes the nomadic lifestyle and then raises the question (trans. A. D. Godley): "(...) how can they not be invincible and unapproachable?" (κὼς οὐκ ἂν εἴησαν οὗτοι ἄμαχοί τε καὶ ἄποροι προσμίσγειν).

⁸⁶"Comment peut-on être nomade? Il faut et il suffit, répond la tradition, que l'on soit Scythe: [...] le Scythe est nomade et le nomade est Scythe" (Hartog, 1979, 136).

⁸⁷Norden (1920, 95) thinks that Caesar contrasts himself with Crassus, whose careless crossing of the Euphrates ended disastrously. It seems noteworthy that, despite the Romans' appreciation of a general's daring, it was also considered the general's duty to secure a most favorable situation for battle (see Goldsworthy 1998, 205).

⁸⁸Nep. *Milt.* 3.1: "At this same period, Darius, king of Persia, resolved to transport his army from Asia into Europe and to wage war against the Scythians. He built a bridge over the river Ister, so as to lead his forces across" ("Eisdem temporibus Persarum rex Darius ex Asia in Europam exercitu traiecit Scythis bellum inferre decrevit. Pontem fecit in Histro flumine, qua copias traderet").

⁸⁹If Cicero's roughly contemporary discussion of Herodotus in *De oratore* (2.55) and (if it was not written much later) *De legibus* (1.5), and especially his subtle allusion to a passage in Herodotus' *Histories* in a letter to Atticus (*Att.* 10.5.2: Ἀρκαδίην, which is an allusion to Hdt. 1.66), could be interpreted as evidence of the Roman aristocracy's general familiarity with the *Histories*, I would be less hesitant to suggest an allusion by Caesar specifically to Herodotus.

this thesis.⁹⁰ But the vastness of the Scythian territory and their strategy as well as the strategic problems that ensued for the Persian general were common knowledge among Greek as well as Roman writers;⁹¹ though Caesar might not be alluding to Herodotus' *logos*, he certainly alludes to the topos that Herodotus had fundamentally and lastingly shaped.

Thus Caesar's (in)action beyond the Rhine is characterized by his circumspection and carefulness; compared to Darius he cuts a much better figure, as he is not foiled and bemused by a Scythian-type vastness and does not fall into a Scythian-type trap but successfully withdraws. Within the tradition of great generals, Caesar stands his ground against more than one.

5. THE IDEAL LEADER

“Was er schreibt, leuchtet dem vorurteilsfreien Leser als das richtige und vernünftige ein (. . .).”⁹²

Gelzer's verdict is but a late echo of Hirtius' famous characterization of Caesar's *scientia suorum consiliorum explicandorum* (*B Gall.* 8.praef.7). With his representation of *Germania* as ἀπειρών, Caesar suggests that it was reasonable not to embark on any further military action that would have required him to penetrate deeper into the territory.⁹³ His account of his incursions into *Germania* presents him as the Roman leader, who, like Pompey and Alexander, is brave and daring enough an explorer to cross the Rhine and to enter *terra incognita* but, unlike Darius, circumspect and cautious enough a general not to risk his soldiers' lives in such a Scythian environment. It is worth remembering that Caesar himself elsewhere defines the imperator's duty as *non minus consilio quam gladio superare* (*B Civ.* 1.72.3; cf. n.1), wherein the Latin prioritizes the first part over the second.

⁹⁰In Nepos' case it seems particularly doubtful that his story was derived from Herodotus, since there are many details (concerning Miltiades rather than the Scythian *excursus*) in which Nepos' account contradicts Herodotus'.

⁹¹Hartog (1988, 13) concludes his presentation of the metaphorical usages of Scythia and the Scythians with the following words: “All that is formulaary and implicit knowledge, purveyed at the very least from Aeschylus down to Quintus Curtius (. . .).”

⁹²Gelzer 1974, 473.

⁹³See Norden (1920, 95) and Klingner (1961, 109: “Auch er [i.e., the *excursus*] dient dazu, Entschluß und Handeln des Herrführers vernünftig und richtig erscheinen zu lassen”). These authors, to name but two, interpret the ethnographical part of the *excursus* as an argument in Caesar's justification of his withdrawal from Germany.

"It is difficult to say whether, when undertaking his expeditions, Caesar was careful rather than daring; but he never led his troops on hazardous routes, unless he had ascertained the geographical conditions" ("In obeundis expeditionibus *dubium cautior an audentior*, exercitum *neque per insidiosa itinera* duxit umquam nisi perspeculatus locorum situs"). Suetonius' comment (*Iul.* 58) on Caesar's leadership reads like an acute summary of the analysis of Caesar's self-portrait as presented here: the explorer, daring at the outset, withdrew cautiously out of concern for his troops, since *Germania*, as he himself presents it in his *commentarii*, proved hazardous and unfathomable.⁹⁴

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⁹⁴Parts of this paper were presented to audiences in Kiel (Germany), Oxford, and Leeds; I benefited greatly from the subsequent discussions. A first draft was read by Professors Konrad Heldmann (Kiel), Christina Kraus (Yale), and Christopher Pelling (Oxford). I would like to thank them for their numerous comments and also for their constant support. I would also like to thank Professors Kathleen Coleman and Barbara Gold, as well as the journal's anonymous reader, for their helpful suggestions.

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