

JULIUS CAESAR, THINKING ABOUT BATTLE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS*

Abstract: There is a symbiosis between the ways Julius Caesar thought about international relations and his mental armamentarium for thinking about battle, especially in terms of physical pressure (*impetus, vis, premere, sustinere*), morale (*animus*), and courage (*virtus*), with its frequent corollary, revenge. Sometimes his modes of thinking about foreign affairs drew upon battle, and sometimes the two realms of thinking drew mutually upon each other. This sharing of concepts helps us to understand the method of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, the lack of interest Latin authors so often display in the origins of wars, and also real-world Roman aggression and its purposes, direction, and methods, as practised by Caesar and his successors.

Keywords: Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum*, Tacitus, *Agricola*, foreign policy, *virtus*

The intellectual realm of foreign policy is, and has historically been, an importer of metaphors and analogies. And the sources of the metaphors applied to interactions between states, where they can be discerned, merit attention, because assumptions about how international systems work, and the motives and methods of actors, may sometimes be smuggled in unawares as contraband with the metaphors used to describe them. So close attention to metaphors and their sources may help us understand why the behaviour of states is described as it is, and perhaps even—if decision-makers can be shown to have internalised and to act on the metaphors—why states behave as they do. Such an approach has been familiar to Roman historians at least since they began to notice the Roman habit of applying analogies taken from life in the forum—patronage, *gratia, beneficia, fides, amicitia*—to their relations with other states.¹

* This ungainly paper is a sequel to the author's 'The Rhetoric of Combat: Greek Theory and Roman Culture in Julius Caesar's Battle Descriptions' (London (1999)). In the interests of economy, it does not offer a detailed treatment of Caesar's metaphorical system for describing battle (the subject of that paper, to which the reader can revert for a full account) but confines itself largely to Caesar's use of the same or similar metaphors in the realm of foreign relations. I am delighted to thank A. Eckstein, L. Grillo, S. J. Harrison, E. A. Meyer, C. Pelling (the reader for *Histos*), and A. J. Woodman; all remaining errors are mine, as I am sure they will point out to me. I use *Gal.* for Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* and *Civ.* for Caesar's *Bellum Civile*.

¹ Badian (1958); Gruen (1984) I.54–95, 158–200 (arguing Greek origins for many of these analogies); Burton (2011), with discussion (pp. 1–27) of the issues in contemporary International Relations theory that arise; and Lavan (2013). Recently there has been as much interest in investigating such domestic analogies in the Greek context: Low (2007) 129–74; Hunt (2010) 108–33.

Similarly, metaphors and ways of thinking may leach out of the mental domain of foreign relations and into other intellectual jurisdictions, or two mental departments may develop a mutuality, and regularly share words and ideas back and forth: in the contemporary English-speaking world the obvious example is the close link of word and phrase in thinking about sports and war.

It turns out that there is a considerable coincidence between the intellectual machinery Julius Caesar uses to describe battles and the intellectual machinery he uses to describe relations between states. The contention here is that the way Caesar reasons about interstate relations is in many respects a borrowing from the way he thinks about battle—and *vice versa*—and that he imports a series of assumptions about how things work from one sphere to the other. This not only has consequences for our interpretation of Caesar's campaigns and writings (and not least for his famous ethnographic digressions), but also—since later Roman authors can sometimes be shown to have thought and written about foreign affairs along the same lines—may cast some light on the conduct of Roman foreign affairs during the late Republic and early empire, and on the intellectual habits of Latin historians, especially when they described, or failed to describe, the origins of wars.²

Julius Caesar's *Commentaries* on his wars in Gaul (58–51 BC) are no bad place to look for metaphors shared between battle and relations between states, for he offers the earliest extended description of both to survive in Latin. And his account repays particular study because Caesar was a general and a decision-maker as well as an author: so the deep intellectual mechanics he employs to think about battle and foreign relations are—whatever the polemical purposes of his writing—no fantasy of the cloistered scholar, but are likely to be similar to the intellectual equipment of the Roman decision-making class in general in Caesar's day.

1. The Physics of Nations

In late 56 BC or early 55 BC the German nations of the Usipetes and Tencteri crossed over the Rhine into Gaul. They did so, as Caesar describes in Book IV of his *Bellum Gallicum*, because another tribe, the formidable Suebi, had 'pressed them in war' (*bello premebantur*), prevented them from farming, and had finally driven them from their lands (*Gal.* 4.1.2; cf. 7.63.7). This driving off was hardly surprising, Caesar goes on to say, because Germans 'consider it a matter of the highest praise that the land on their borders lie unoccupied for as far as possible: this signifies the great number of states that cannot sus-

² The best general account of Roman thinking about foreign relations in the age of Caesar and Cicero remains Brunt (1978); for the empire, Mattern (1999).

tain their force' (*Gal.* 4.3.1, *suam vim sustinere*). The nation of the Suebi—by far the greatest and most warlike of all the Germans (*longe maxima et bellicosissima*), says Caesar, and he dwells on their vast population, huge physical size, and toughness (*Gal.* 4.1.3–10)—had naturally thus long assailed its neighbours. The Suebi could not drive off the mightier Ubii because of that nation's 'size and weight' (*Gal.* 4.3.4, *amplitudinem gravitatemque civitatis*), although the Ubii were 'pressed heavily' by them (*Gal.* 4.16.5, *graviter ab Suebis premerentur*; cf. 4.19.1). But although the weaker Tencteri and Usipetes had for some years 'sustained the force' of the Suebi (*Gal.* 4.4.1, *vim sustinuerunt*), they had now been driven over the Rhine into Gaul.

We can be confident that the pressing (*premere*) and force (*vis*) Caesar here describes are metaphorical: Caesar hardly imagined that the Suebi, however large, linked arms and muscled their neighbours back like harried police defending an embassy. But what sets Caesar's use of these metaphors apart from our use today of very similar ones is that in Caesar their origins are visible. For Caesar's vision that states exert and sustain *vis* and have weight is similar in vocabulary and imagined operation to the way he describes groups of soldiers in battle. 'When he had gone a little way from the camp, he saw his men being pressed by the enemy and sustaining their assault with difficulty' (*Gal.* 4.32.3, *ab hostibus premi atque aegre sustinere*). 'Men with small shields could not long sustain the force (*vim ... sustinere*) of the cavalry' (*Civ.* 1.70.5). When describing battles Caesar especially tends to think of bodies of warriors crashing into one another and withstanding such crashes: he elaborates a metaphorical physics of combat around the idea of one body of men making an *impetus* that an enemy body must sustain (*sustinere*).³ And *impetus* can be carried over to describe states attacking one another, an attack that also must be 'sustained' by its target: 'he sent to the Boii men who ... urged them to sustain the attack of the enemy with great spirit' (*Gal.* 7.10.3, *praemittit ad Boios qui ... hortenturque ... hostium impetus magno animo sustineant*; cf. *Gal.* 1.44.8; *Hirt. Gal.* 8.30.1). In describing relations between the German tribes, then, Caesar appears to have scaled up the metaphorical system he uses to describe combat to depict the effect of hostile states upon one another.⁴ Where did the idea

³ For these metaphors in their military context (with many more examples), Lendon (1999) 286–90. Koon (2010) does a similar analysis of Livy's military vocabulary, and, at pp. 73–81, of Caesar's, drawing somewhat different conclusions about the reality behind them. The use of *vis* for the fighting power of, say, horses and elephants (*Enn. Ann.* 236 (Skutsch) = *Gell.* 18.5.4), or an army (*Plaut. Am.* 191, 210; (*Quad. Hist.*) Peter F12 = *Gell.* 9.11.4) was old in Latin, as was the use of *impetus* for an attack in battle (*Plaut. Am.* 245; *Enn. Ann.* 506 (Skutsch) = *Festus* 356).

⁴ Luca Grillo points out to me that at *Civ.* 1.26.2 Caesar reports that he continues to negotiate with Pompey, *etsi impetus eius consiliaque tardabat*, with *impetus* here being a metaphor for 'Caesar's war effort', while in the next section (*Civ.* 1.27.2) Pompey fortifies *Brundisium quo facilius impetum Caesaris tardaret*, where the *impetus* is an actual attack.

come from? Caesar (or some lost Latin predecessor)⁵ probably adapted his physics of battle from Greek authors, who also used pressing metaphors to describe soldiers (and ships, and horsemen) in combat, a natural consequence of the fact that there may have been much actual pushing in Greek hoplite battles.⁶

The Greeks also used pressing metaphors to describe the condition of states. A city or people might be ‘pressed by war’ (Thuc. 4.66.1; Pol. 4.64.1; 5.29.1), as the Usipetes and Tencteri were in *Gal.* 4.1.2 until Caesar brought the pressing metaphor to life in *Gal.* 4.3, or simply ‘pressed’ because it was in an alarming position (Hdt. 4.105.1; Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.20), or pressed in the sense of ‘harassed’ (Hdt. 6.108.2; Thuc. 4.80.1; Xen. *Hell.* 7.2.10; Pol. 27.5.5). But cities or peoples metaphorically pressing or pushing on each other with the result that the weaker or lighter is physically shifted, as happens in Caesar, seems not to have been a common Greek usage (but see Hdt. 4.13.2, 118.2). Nor, seemingly, did it remain a usage of Latin authors after Caesar, authors who reverted to Greek habits: a city or people might be ‘pressed’ by war (Livy 3.6.6, 70.1; Vell. 1.2.1), but not usually pressed (and perhaps moved) by another city or people. *Impetus* remains a perfectly normal word for the attack of one state on another, but the metaphor is dead: although in later authors an *impetus* in battle or siege must be ‘sustained’ (*sustinere*), not so the *impetus* of one state upon another.⁷

2. The Art of Fear

Caesar’s—idiosyncratic, so far as we can tell—enlisting of the way he thinks about the physics of battle to provide himself with mental tools to think about foreign affairs makes us curious as to how far such borrowing extends. And as Caesar’s story of the war against the Usipetes and Tencteri continues, the

⁵ No claims can be made for the originality of Caesar’s thought in the Latin tradition: because Caesar stands so close to the beginning of (surviving) continuous Latin prose, such claims are impossible to substantiate or impeach. So for ‘Caesar’ below it is often necessary to add mentally, ‘or some lost Latin predecessor’. Of extended battle descriptions in Latin before the time of Caesar, I know of, in prose, one in Cato (Peter F83 = Cornell F76 = Gell. 3.7) and two duels of Romans against Gauls, that of Manlius Torquatus (Claudius Quadrigarius, Peter F10b = Cornell F6 = Gell. 9.13) and that of Valerius Corvus or Corvinus by an unknown Annalist, ((*Quad. Hist.*) Peter F12 = Gell. 9.11.3–9); in poetry, Plautus’ *Amphitruo* ll. 188–261; and a passage of eight lines in Ennius, *Annales* (391–8 Skutsch = Macr. 6.3.3).

⁶ Adapted from Greeks, Lendon (1999) 285–90; Greek metaphorical system, 284–5. For my views on whether the *othismos*, or ‘push’, of the Greek phalanx actually happened or was purely metaphorical, Lendon (2010) 307–13.

⁷ For *impetus* in Livy, Koon (2010) 46 n. 362, 104–19. The closest is Livy 36.30.1, *totum impetum belli sustineret*.

reader discovers that psychology in the world of states works much as morale does in battle. Informed that these German tribes had crossed the Rhine, Caesar realises that he must take action against them. The Gauls are fickle and quick to adopt and abandon plans, he explains, because they are apt to over-react to information they receive (*Gal.* 4.5–6; cf. 7.42.2). Caesar fears that wild rumours about the coming of the Tencteri and Usipetes will whirl through Gaul and that Gaul will fly to arms against him (cf. *Gal.* 4.13.2–3; 7.1.2–3). And so, ‘in order not to have to confront a more serious war, Caesar set out to join his army earlier than was his custom’ (*Gal.* 4.6.1). And wisely, for upon arrival he discovers that some Gallic states had already sent ambassadors to the Germans, inviting them to advance into Gaul and offering to provide for their needs (*Gal.* 4.6.3).

Caesar is interested in the rapidity with which information moves around in Gaul, and reactions to it, and in attempts to control its dissemination (*Gal.* 5.53.1; 7.3.2–3). ‘For it is understood that impetuous and inexperienced men (*temerarios atque imperitos*) are often panicked (*terrerent*) by false rumours and thus pushed on to crime or to take [sc. hasty] counsel concerning issues of supreme import’ (*Gal.* 6.20.2; cf. 6.10.2). But the appearance here of *homines temerarios atque imperitos* falling into terror hints to us that there is more going on in Caesar’s mind than mere observation of the quaint customs of the Gauls.⁸ For these are words Caesar also applies to his own or enemy soldiers who panic easily or behave foolishly in battle: ‘here there was no fortification to receive the terrified (*perterritos*) men: recently recruited and inexperienced (*imperiti*) in military ways, they all turned to look at the military tribunes and centurions’ (*Gal.* 6.39.2, cf. 3.19.3; 4.24.4; 6.7.4; 7.52.1). Caesar appears to use the same mental arsenal (marked by words like the ubiquitous *terrere*) to understand the collective emotions of states as he does those of soldiers. His sense of the rapid motion of information at the interstate level, and of the tendency of its recipients to over-react to it, is similarly paralleled by his understanding of how the flow of information works in war and battle and its impact on soldiers’ morale, and especially the susceptibility of soldiers to contagious panic on the basis of rumour: ‘a panic (*timor*) suddenly assailed the whole army, caused by conversations among our troops and statements from Gauls and traders’ (*Gal.* 1.39.1; cf. 6.37.3–9; *Civ.* 2.29, 43.2–4).⁹ And soldiers’ and allied powers’ moods are repaired in the same way, and with the same words: a general, when faced with weak morale among his soldiers, labours to ‘firm up their spirits’ (*firmare* or *confirmare animos*, *Gal.* 6.38.4, cf. 7.53.3; *Civ.* 3.65.1). Being informed that the Gauls are wavering in the face of the Tencteri and Usipetes, Caesar summons their chief men to conclave, and,

⁸ On *temeritas* in Caesar, Grillo (2012) 33.

⁹ For Caesar on soldiers’ morale, Lendon (1999) 295–304, with further references.

concealing his knowledge of the Gauls' contacts with the Germans, in parallel fashion 'sooths and confirms their spirits' (*Gal.* 4.6.5, *animis permulsis et confirmatis*; cf. 1.33.1; 2.5.1). States, then, like soldiers, have morale, and it works in much the same way, and much the same way as it worked in Greek authors like Xenophon, who emphasised the importance of morale in both battle and foreign relations, and from whom Caesar likely borrowed this model.¹⁰

Caesar's campaign against the Tencteri and Usipetes is rapidly successful—not least, some said, because he attacked them during a truce—and by his own claim some 430,000 of them are killed or drowned.¹¹ Caesar concludes, however, that he must nevertheless cross the Rhine. 'The most important reason was, since he saw that the Germans could be so easily impelled (*impelli*) to enter Gaul, he wanted to make them terrified (*timere voluit*) in turn for their own affairs, since they would understand that an army of the Roman people could, and dared to, cross the Rhine' (*Gal.* 4.16.1; cf. 4.19.4).

Such thinking follows from Caesar's regular assumption that great waves of terror will crash forth from events. After the defeat of Ariovistus, the Suebi who were about to cross the Rhine to join the German king turn back in panic (*perterritos*), and their neighbours, recognising the fact, harry them (*Gal.* 1.54.1). After the successful Roman campaigns of 57 BC, 'so great a rumour of this war was transmitted to the barbarians (*tanta huius belli ... opinio perlata est*) that ambassadors were sent to Caesar from the tribes living across the Rhine offering hostages and promising to obey his commands' (*Gal.* 2.35.1; cf. 3.27.1; 5.58.7; 7.8.3–5). Fear's almost tsunami-like quality can lead to success for those who cause it far wider than the local consequences of the original victory, as typified by the request of the friendly German tribe of the Ubii, who beg Caesar to cross the Rhine because 'given the defeat of Ariovistus and this recent battle the fame and rumour (*nomen atque opinionem*) of Caesar's army were so great even among the most distant German nations that the Ubii would be safe in the rumour and friendship (*opinionem et amicitiam*) of the Roman people' (*Gal.* 4.16.7). The reputation of the victorious Romans will terrify all potential foes into inaction, and inspire Rome's friends with complete confidence in Rome's protection.

As the advice of the Ubii shows, fear in Caesar's thinking about relations between states is so powerful because it is not rational dread of peril or a calm, reasoning trepidation. It is an overwhelming, irrational, storming wild-

¹⁰ For Xenophon, Lendon (2006) 88–91, with references to other Greek authors as well. Fear in foreign relations was a special interest of Thucydides, e.g., 1.23.6; 3.11.1–2, 12.1; 5.97; 6.49.

¹¹ The rights and wrongs (even by Roman standards) of Caesar's behaviour are not our topic here, but Cato the Younger at least (*Plut. Caes.* 22.3; *Cat. Min.* 51.1–2) thought his conduct in this campaign outrageous.

fire of emotion that can be started by a relatively small or distant spark. And it is likely that Caesar thinks about the power of fear in the interstate arena in this way because it is the more familiar workings of fear on the battlefield that he has half in mind. For like earlier Greek authors, Caesar regarded the morale of soldiers in battle as extremely volatile.¹² He was a keen student of the aetiology of military panic, and of how ‘the common chances of war, how tiny causes—a false rumour, a sudden terror, a religious scruple—can produce disasters’ (*Civ.* 3.72.4; cf. *Gal.* 1.39; 6.37.3–9; 7.50.2, 84.4–5; *Sall. Jug.* 99.2–3). In the campaign against the Usipetes and Tencteri alone he reports two major military panics, one afflicting his own cavalry (*Gal.* 4.12.2), and the other the decisive rolling panic of the Germans at his unexpected approach that sends them fleeing to their destruction in the rivers (*Gal.* 4.14–15). His expectation that crossing the Rhine will strike terror on a strategic scale into the Germans seems to arise almost organically from his experience of the campaign that led up to that decision, and the role of tactical panic in it. Caesar’s understanding of the way fear works in relations between states is merely a natural extension of how he understands that fear works on the battlefield.

The wider significance of this link between fear on the battlefield and fear in the interstate arena is that it influenced Caesar’s decisions as a general and statesman. Possessed of supreme confidence in the power of fear, Caesar went forth to cause fear—‘he ordered the cavalry to wander as broadly as possible, so as to strike the greatest possible fear (*terrorem*) into the enemy’ (*Gal.* 7.8.3; cf. 4.16.1, 19.4; *Sall. Jug.* 54.6, 55.7). The implacable bloodletting involved in his Gallic campaigns—one tradition claims he killed a million, and sold another million into slavery (*Plut. Caes.* 15.3; cf. *App. Gall.* 1.2)¹³—was in large part a consequence of this faith in, and his particular understanding of, fear. ‘He didn’t see any good outcome for his plans’, his friend Hirtius writes about Caesar’s doings in 51 BC, ‘if more Gauls in various places entered upon plans of this type, so he decided to deter the rest by terror with exemplary punishment (*exemplo supplicii deterrendos*). And so he allowed all those who had borne weapons their lives—but cut off their hands’ (*Hirt. Gal.* 8.44.1–2; cf. *Gal.* 3.16.3–4).

Nor was this high valuation of the power of fear limited to Caesar. ‘We are protected not by the whirlpools of the Rhine, but by fear caused by your name (*nomini tui terrore*)’, says the panegyrist to Constantine. ‘Let the river do

¹² Lendon (1999) 292, 296.

¹³ A number, whatever its absolute value, that is more consistent with Caesar’s implication that some 250,000 were killed or made slaves during the Helvetian campaign (*Gal.* 1.29.2–3) and 430,000 during the campaign against the Tencteri and Usipetes (*Gal.* 4.15.3), than Velleius Paterculus’ total of ‘more than 400,000’ (2.47.1). On these numbers, Pelling (2011) 210–12.

what it will: dry up in a drought or freeze solid with ice. No enemy will dare to cross!’ (*Pan. Lat.* 6(7).11.1).¹⁴ When Agricola arrived in Britain in AD 77, he faced the challenge of the Ordovices, who had just massacred a Roman cavalry wing. The Britons, Tacitus says, were on tenterhooks to see how the new governor would react to the disaster. Although the normal campaigning season was over, Agricola pursued the Ordovices into their Welsh fastnesses. ‘He slaughtered almost the entire tribe’, the historian reports, but that was not enough. ‘Not ignorant that one should follow up on rumour (*instandum famae*), and that the terror of the others (*terrorem ceteris*) would depend upon how his first deeds turned out’, he decided to conquer Anglesey (*Agr.* 18.3; cf. *Ann.* 14.23.1).¹⁵ Passages like this from Roman imperial authors—describing a policy of terror and approving of it—can easily be multiplied.¹⁶ In Tacitus’ *Agricola* the commitment to control the Britons by causing fear—a policy approved by Tacitus—takes on what seems to a modern reader a nearly pathological character (*Agr.* 13.1; 17.1; 22.1; 29.2; 38.3). The objective of keeping neighbours in fear was normal and perennial. ‘The strategy of deterrence by terror was not a policy invented by a particular emperor and his council. It was traditional; it was the Roman way.’¹⁷ The standard pattern of imperial Roman military policy towards the northern *barbaricum*—the sequence of punitive campaigns so often ending, to the alarm of a modern sensibility, in massacre and mass-enslavement—was built upon a certain set of assumptions about the operation, efficacy, and what we might call the economy of fear—the belief that a small act of terror could produce exaggerated fear, and so great results, and that a large act of terror was likely to prove dispositive of any problem in foreign affairs.¹⁸

Roman confidence in fear as an instrument of foreign policy was hardly the unblemished fruit of hard-eyed empirical observation: fear might have the opposite effect of that intended, inspiring greater resistance and drawing quarrelling enemies together into a more formidable coalition (*Gal.* 3.23.2–3; 7.1.4–5, 7.29–31; cf. Tac. *Agr.* 16.1–2). Caesar, despite the fear he worked to create and that he created in fact, was obliged in a brief span of years repeatedly to fight foes who should have been properly terrified earlier into quavering passivity. Such too was the later experience of the Roman principate in Germany and Britain. And at some level, the Romans understood the limits of fear as a policy. ‘Fear and terror are weak chains of affection; be they re-

¹⁴ Cf. *Pan. Lat.* 3(11).8.4; 6(7).21.2; 7(6).4.3; 12(9).22.3; with Asche (1983) 40–4.

¹⁵ For the fear theme in Tacitus, esp. Laederich (2001).

¹⁶ For references, Haase (1977) esp. 727–38; Wheeler (1993) 36; Mattern (1999) 115–21.

¹⁷ Mattern (1999) 119; cf. Diod. 32.2, 32.4.5.

¹⁸ The classic account of the lawless ruthlessness with which the Romans acted beyond their borders is Alföldi (1952).

moved, those who have feared will begin to hate’, Tacitus has Calgacus say about the Roman empire (*Agr.* 32.2). But Rome’s confidence in fear seems never to have flagged during the centuries of empire. On the one hand Roman confidence in the power of fear, and the Romans’ brutality in causing fear, itself made fear more effective as a tool, because it was hardly irrational for Rome’s enemies to fear the slaughter and sack the Romans habitually used to terrify them. But on the other it is likely that Roman confidence in fear was also a result, at least in part, of the Romans’ borrowing their understanding of fear from a realm where fear indeed exerted a prepotent might—battle—and of the inability of Romans, however far from actual warfare their own experience might be, to establish the world of states as a realm intellectually independent of the terrifying battlefields of their imaginations.

3. The Contests of Courage

The inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean world about whom we know—the Greeks and Romans and the peoples they fought who are recorded in Greek and Roman writings—seem to have shared the habit of fighting wars over the status or relative rank of states and, to preserve that status, of seeking revenge through war. This pattern of foreign relations among the Greeks has been studied extensively, and not least by the current author.¹⁹ Such relations between states have not received as much emphasis on the Roman side, and so part of the purpose here is to illustrate how at least one Roman—Julius Caesar—thought about foreign affairs in such terms.²⁰ But puzzles also arise. Caesar ranked states not (as the Greeks did) in terms of a generalised competitive honour, *timē*, which was a function of present power and glorious history; he ranked them chiefly by *virtus*, aggressive courage, literally ‘manliness’.²¹ *Virtus* was, of course, an important quality on the battlefield, and Caesar thought of fighting as a contest of *virtus*—in fact, the chains of causation that clanked through his mind when he was thinking of competition in *virtus* between nations and armies were parallel. In both realms of Caesar’s thinking, men of *virtus* considered the *virtus* of others a

¹⁹ Lendon (2000), with the older literature gathered at p. 23 n. 5; Hunt (2010) 197–201; Lendon (2010) esp. 6–12.

²⁰ For Roman foreign affairs in terms of revenge, esp. Mattern (1999) 185–94, 216–22; Mattern-Parkes (2003). On revenge at Rome in general, Lendon (2011) 379–83, collecting older literature.

²¹ Make-up of the *timē* of Greek states, Lendon (2010) 11. On *virtus* in Caesar see Rawlings (1998) 177–80; Erickson (2002); Riggsby (2006) 3–105; McDonnell (2006) 300–19 (McDonnell gathers older literature on the Roman concept of *virtus* at pp. 3–5); Grillo (2012) 51–7.

challenge to be defeated by violence, and if they were themselves defeated, or felt their *virtus* slighted, they sought revenge in blood.

Most Greeks and Romans would probably have agreed that, like individuals, some peoples were naturally braver than others, and that one found out which were braver by consulting the results of battles, since ‘in fights on land, courage becomes evident, because it can gain the upper hand if no accidents intrude’ (Diod. 20.51.5). But the pages of Caesar offer considerable elaboration on these commonplaces. The armies that fight each other in his *Commentaries* are finely graded by relative *virtus*, courage (*Gal.* 7.59.5, 83.4). A general must discover the *virtus* of a potential enemy force by inquiry (*Gal.* 2.15.3–5), by logic (‘x beat y, but z beat x’ (*Gal.* 1.40.5–7)), or by experiment—by skirmishing (*Gal.* 2.8.1–2; 7.36.4). Brave soldiers are eager to fight brave enemies (*Gal.* 3.17.5; *Civ.* 3.37.4, 55.2), eager to fight well to protect their reputation for *virtus* (*Gal.* 6.40.7; *Civ.* 3.28.5, 101.5), and eager if defeated to fight again to recover the reputation blemished by their loss (*Gal.* 2.27.2; *Civ.* 2.15.1). Brave soldiers are, then, intensely sensitive to insult or disgrace (*Civ.* 3.74.2; *Gal.* 4.25.5). For men of *virtus* to appear unwilling to fight is shameful—so generals draw up their armies to challenge the bravery of their foes (*Gal.* 3.17.5–6; *Civ.* 3.37.2), and move closer and closer to raise the shame stakes of the challenge (*Civ.* 3.84.2). To meet the challenge to their *virtus*, soldiers want to fight even where the ground or circumstances put them at a severe disadvantage (*Gal.* 6.8.1; 7.19.4), and restraining them presents a perplexity to a general like Caesar (*Gal.* 7.19.4–5, 7.52).²²

Martial reputation plays a parallel role at the state level. ‘What do the Romans seek or want, other than—led by envy (*invidia adducti*)—to bind to eternal slavery ... those they know to be outstanding in fame and powerful in war’ (*quos fama nobilis potentisque bello*)? So Critognatus of the Arverni, for whom Caesar writes a famous speech in Book VII of his *Bellum Gallicum* (*Gal.* 7.77.15), a speech that although of ‘singular and dreadful cruelty’ (*Gal.* 7.77.2) and somewhat given to advocating cannibalism, picks up many of Caesar’s own themes.²³ And one of those themes is the power in relations between peoples exerted by envy directed at those successful in war. In Gaul as in battle, courage, *virtus*, exerts a fell magnetism, drawing others to attack its possessor (*Gal.* 2.31.4, *sibi omnis fere finitimos esse inimicos ac suae virtuti invidere*; cf. Florus 1.45.2). Just as on the battlefield, *virtus* in a state by its nature compels its possessor to challenge others who claim *virtus*.

We cannot know the ultimate origins of this clutch of concepts. In the role of courage in battle and foreign affairs, Roman ideas diverge from

²² For *virtus* on Caesar’s battlefield, Lendon (1999) 306–16, from which these references are drawn. For an older expression of the expectation that brave men in battle will attract the attack of brave enemies, see Cato Peter F83 = Cornell F76 = Gell. 3.7.

²³ On Critognatus and his speech, Riggsby (2006) 89–91, 103–32.

Greek, and Caesar's thinking may ultimately partake of the common inheritance of the rude peoples who settled Western Europe.²⁴ But Caesar's thinking about the role of *virtus* in battle and its role in foreign affairs appear to have borrowed from each other, leaning upon each other for mutual support. Given the frequency with which contact between states in the Roman world resulted in war, such a continuity of thought is hardly surprising: the mental realms of war and foreign affairs were simply much closer together in the Roman world than in ours, so close indeed that they could sometimes hardly be distinguished. *Both* war and policy were each other by other means.

Putting Caesar together with later Latin authors allows us to trace the path Romans imagined between *virtus* and war. There was a rank-ordering of states by *virtus*, and that ordering was amenable to adjustment by battle.²⁵ States with superior *virtus* by their nature made war upon their inferiors, by their nature strove for empire and territory appropriate to their *virtus*, and, if defeated, like defeated soldiers leapt to fight again for revenge so as not to lose their reputation for *virtus*, and to restore their position in the ranking.²⁶ Where such brave states did not attack they invited attack themselves, because in their nature they acted in an arrogant and insulting fashion—they caused *iniuriae* by virtue of their *superbia*—which made their neighbours seek revenge upon them in war. For those brave neighbours, like brave soldiers in Caesar's battles, were themselves intensely sensitive to insult (*Gal.* 6.15.1; Tac. *Agr.* 27.2; *Ann.* 3.73.1–2). And the natural result might be that among the Gauls 'war ... occurred nearly every year, what with inflicting *iniuriae* and repelling *iniuriae* inflicted'.²⁷ The Romans, of course, usually preferred to believe that it was the enemy who inflicted the *iniuriae* that brought on any given war (thus the interest of Roman authors in pointing out such *iniuriae* as causes of wars), but when Romans considered the matter abstractly they understood that foreigners often regarded Roman actions as *superbia* and *iniuriae* against them (*Gal.* 2.14.2; 5.29.4; 7.38.10; Tac. *Agr.* 15.1–2). 'So they are arrogant. What is it to us? Must we be angry because someone is more arrogant (*superbior*) than we are?' Thus Cato the Censor, arguing with astonishing frankness against Rome's going to war with the Rhodians (*ORF*⁴ Cato fr. 169 = Gell. 6.3.50). The Roman reader expected, in short, that when two peoples

²⁴ Diverge from Greek, Lendon (1999) 304–16, (2006) 86–8, and (2010) 11–12.

²⁵ On rank-order by *virtus*, *Gal.* 1.1–2, 1.31.7, 1.40.5–7; 2.4, 2.24.5; 7.59.5, 7.83.4; Tac. *Hist.* 4.15.1, 23.2; and cf. Riggsby (2006) 83–4; Rawlings (1998) 178. By battle, *Gal.* 6.24.

²⁶ Make war, *Gal.* 1.2.2; 6.23.2; strove, *Gal.* 1.2.5 with 1.30.3, and Florus 1.7.3, *an Romana virtus imperium orbis mereretur*. If defeated, *Gal.* 5.29.5, 54.5; 7.1.8, 76.2; Florus 1.11.11, 22.2–3, 28.1; Tac. *Ann.* 1.3.6; 2.19.1; cf. 1.51.3.

²⁷ *Gal.* 6.15.1, *bellum incidit (quod fere ante Caesaris adventum quot annis accidere solebat, uti aut ipsi iniurias inferrent aut illatas propulsarent)*.

of outstanding *virtus* met—just like two armies—whatever the exact mechanism might be, fighting resulted.²⁸

So it is in Caesar's account of his early wars in Gaul.²⁹ Gaul is divided into three parts, he famously begins, but we are quickly told that the folk of one of them, the Belgae, are braver than the other two (*Gal.* 1.1.2, *horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae*).³⁰ And braver still than all three parts of the Gauls are the savage Helvetii (*Gal.* 1.1.4, *reliquos Gallos virtute praecedunt*). To the Roman reader, that Caesar will shortly fight the Helvetii is implicit in Caesar's introductory description of the land and peoples of Gaul.

Wars of *virtus* tend to arise from *iniuriae*, and it turns out that the Helvetii had inflicted *iniuriae* upon the Romans long ago, when, in 107 BC, they had defeated the army of Lucius Cassius, killing the consul and sending a Roman army under the yoke (*Gal.* 1.7.4). Now they are on the move: they are urged to migration by one of their magnates, who played on the fact that they found their territory too small for 'the multitude of their men and their glory in war and bravery' (*Gal.* 1.2.5, *pro gloria belli atque fortitudinis*), and too confining because 'they could not wander far and it was hard for them to wage war on their neighbours, which, inasmuch as they were a folk eager for war (*homines bellandi cupidi*), rendered them miserable' (*Gal.* 1.2.4). Nor would the conquest of their neighbours prove troublesome: 'since they were outstanding over all in *virtus*, it would be easy for them to take command of all of Gaul' (*Gal.* 1.2.3).

When the Helvetii apply to be allowed to pass through the Roman Province in southern Gaul on their important errand, Caesar recalls the events of 107, and considers it likely that if they are allowed in they will inflict more *iniuriae* and mischief (*Gal.* 1.7.4). He refuses permission. The Helvetii then try to break through Caesar's lines, thus inflicting (as we later learn but as any Roman reader would have understood) a further *iniuria* (*Gal.* 1.14.3). Failing this, the Helvetii negotiate passage through the lands of the Sequani, and plan to march west towards the Atlantic. Caesar decides to intercept them, and mentions his motives: he has heard that the Helvetii are bound for the lands of the Santones, which are near the lands of the friendly Tolosates in the Roman Province. Caesar is afraid for the safety of the Roman Province, in that

²⁸ Cf. McDonnell (2006) 303.

²⁹ The reader will notice for himself (and so will not be belaboured with reminders of) the parallels between the course of these events and the cycle driven by *virtus* in battle: (1) soldiers consider that they possess high rank in *virtus*; (2) resulting in a desire to fight others who possess *virtus* to prove superiority over them; (3) resulting in occasional defeat; (4) resulting in desire to avenge the *iniuria* represented by that defeat; (5) resulting, in the event of victory, in confirmation of their sense of their high *virtus*, and so back to (1).

³⁰ For how a Roman reader might have received the first words of the *Bellum Gallicum*, Krebs (2006) 113–16.

‘it would be a great danger to the Province to have warlike men, and enemies of the Roman people, as neighbours to unprotected and fertile country’ (*Gal.* 1.10.2).

This explanation was somewhat jeered at by an older generation of commentators, who were eager to find mendacious apology in Caesar for his aggressions.³¹ The target of the Helvetii, the Santones, live at a considerable remove from the Tolosates; and a westward march takes the Helvetii away from, not towards, Roman possessions. But whatever the factual value of this passage, its significance to a Roman reader would have been different, for he would never have read it as the main explanation for Caesar’s attack. To Caesar’s anticipated reader, war with the Helvetii was fully justified since the *iniuriae* of 107 BC, and doubly so after the recent *iniuria* inflicted by the attempt of the Helvetii to push their way into the Province.³² Caesar’s discussion of his fears about the march of the Helvetii presents at most secondary motives, and is perhaps no more than an explanation of why Caesar chose a particular moment to depart for Italy and gather his army. As the Helvetii march, a third motive is added: the peoples through whose lands the Helvetii move beg the Romans for help. This hurries Caesar into action. Catching one canton of the Helvetii, the Tigurini, isolated from the rest by a river, he slaughters them, remarking with satisfaction (*Gal.* 1.12.5–7):

This canton had in the memory of our fathers marched out from home alone and killed the consul L. Cassius, and sent his army under the yoke. Thus whether by chance or the judgement of the immortal gods, that part of the Helvetian state that had inflicted so striking a calamity on the Roman people first paid the penalty. By this event Caesar avenged not only public *iniuriae*, but private as well (*publicas sed etiam privatas iniurias ultus est*), because the grandfather of his father-in-law L. Piso, the legate L. Piso, the Tigurini had slain in the same battle as they had L. Cassius.

³¹ See Collins (1972) 926–8. Collins’ response to the vast Franco-German literature debating whether Caesar falsified his account to make his campaigns appear less brutal is worth repeating: ‘we may reasonably ask what possible acts of violence and arbitrary power worse than those Caesar has recorded he may have hidden’ (p. 935). For the huge scholarship about *Tendenz* in Caesar (neglected here), see Gesche (1976) 71–8 with 257–8 and 124–5 with 279–80 for a catalogue of the older material, and especially Rambaud (1966) (still one of the best books on Caesar’s narrative manner); for a catalogue of more recent material, Krebs (2006) 111–12 nn. 2–4 with a discussion of trends, Schadee (2008) 158 n. 1, and especially the articles collected in Welch and Powell (1998). The exhaustion of the topic of *Tendenz* is perhaps hinted at by the fact that the subject does not warrant a chapter in Griffin (2009) (but it finds mention at pp. 184–7).

³² Cf. *Gal.* 3.20.1; Riggsby (2006) 176–7.

Caesar's vengeance has begun, but it is hardly finished. Caesar quickly bridges the river, and alarm at the speed of his approach brings the Helvetii to treat. But their choice of ambassador is the ancient Divico, who had commanded against L. Cassius (so an insolent choice), and he delivers a speech recalling the defeat of L. Cassius and boasting of the *virtus* of the Helvetii. The just-concluded massacre of a mere part of the Helvetii, Divico is made to insist, does not alter the superiority in *virtus* that the Helvetii had demonstrated against Cassius. For

He [Caesar] ought to remember the old disaster of the Romans and the unblemished *virtus* of the Helvetii. He had set upon one canton unexpectedly when those who had crossed the river could not help them; thus he should not merely on that account attribute too much to his own *virtus* nor despise them. The Helvetii had learned from their fathers and ancestors to fight on the basis of *virtus*, rather than with tricks and ambushes (*magis virtute quam dolo*). Caesar must not permit this place, where they conferred, to take renown and perpetuate the memory of a calamity of the Roman people and the destruction of an army. (*Gal.* 1.13.4–7)

To this breathtakingly impertinent speech by an ambassador who is himself an intolerable reproach to Roman *virtus*, Caesar replies appropriately (*Gal.* 1.14.1–2). The defeat of Cassius in 107 BC was not occasioned by any *iniuria* that the Romans had committed against the Helvetii, but, he carefully explains, was an unmotivated *contumelia* by the latter. Thus in dealing harshly with the Helvetii, Caesar has less reason to hesitate, and more reason to 'bear heavily' their ancient insult. Caesar, that is, responds by adducing the logic of feud (just as a soldier would in battle, if sensing *iniuria* from a rival in *virtus*). If relations between the Romans and the Helvetii had begun with the Romans causing *iniuria*, the vengeance of the Helvetii would have been appropriate, expected, and thus possible to guard against. Yet since the Helvetii had inflicted the initial insult, Caesar is anxious to avenge it (cf. *Gal.* 4.7.3). 'And even if he could forget the old *contumelia*', he goes on to say, 'what about the recent *iniuriae*? How could he put aside the attempt to force a passage through the Roman Province against his will? The ravaging of the Aedui, the Ambarri, and the Allobroges?' (*Gal.* 1.14.3). Next Caesar turns to the person and speech of Divico. 'Also relevant was that they gloried in their victory so insolently, and that they gloated about the fact that they had gone so long without punishment for inflicting *iniuriae*' (*Gal.* 1.14.4, *quod sua victoria tam insolenter gloriarentur, quodque tam diu se impune iniurias tulisse admirarentur*). Divico's presence and remarks were themselves an insult that demanded vengeance. Then Caesar states his terms: the Helvetii may have peace if they offer satis-

faction to the Aedui and their allies and to the Allobroges for the *iniuriae* they have inflicted, and offer Caesar hostages. The giving of hostages, we know from elsewhere, implied *contumelia*, humiliation (*Gal.* 7.54.3). In other words, the Helvetii must accept an insult themselves, climb down and make symbolic obeisance, not just to the Romans but to the other Gauls. Naturally the proud Helvetii refuse with a final insult: ‘it was the custom of their ancestors to take, not give, hostages—and the Roman people were witnesses to that!’ (*Gal.* 1.14.7).

Caesar and the Romans subsequently defeat the Helvetii in a great battle, and pursue the survivors. Starving, the Helvetii appoint ambassadors to sue for peace. ‘They, meeting him on the road, threw themselves at his feet, and weeping, begged for peace in a suppliant fashion’ (*Gal.* 1.27.2). Such total abasement, repeated elsewhere by others begging for mercy or help (*Gal.* 1.31.2, 32.1; 7.78.4; *Civ.* 3.98.2), is what women do to encourage their men (*Gal.* 1.51.3) or to save themselves (*Gal.* 7.26.3–4, 47.5–6). Thus the defeat of L. Cassius is avenged and the triumph of Roman *virtus* is complete: the Helvetii have unmanned themselves. Naturally they are now prepared to submit to humiliating terms, to turn over hostages, arms, and deserters, and to return home. Of the 368,000 who set out, only 110,000, says Caesar proudly, made their way back to their homeland (*Gal.* 1.29.2–3).

What then were the causes of Caesar’s Helvetian War? Caesar piles up quite a few. Human wickedness was to blame, in part. A bad man (the Helvetian Orgetorix) had planned the Helvetian breakout from their glens (*Gal.* 1.2–4), and a second bad, ambitious man, Dumnorix the Aeduan, had abetted them (*Gal.* 1.9.2–3, 1.18–20). In attacking the Helvetii Caesar was protecting the allies of Rome against aggression and plunder and possible conquest, and protecting the Roman Province itself, which was vulnerable and fertile of grain (*Gal.* 1.7.4, 10.2, 11.2, 14.3). But when, after the defeat of the Helvetii, the Gauls send emissaries to Caesar to congratulate him, all these other reasons (for which the Gauls were nevertheless duly grateful) are demoted to second place, and in first place sits the supreme fact that ‘he had exacted in war punishment for the old *iniuriae* of the Helvetii upon the Roman people’ (*Gal.* 1.30.2).³³

It is not only the Helvetii whom their *virtus* dooms, for the war-song is soon sung again. In his geographical introduction Caesar had observed that the Belgae were the bravest of the Gauls because of their distance from the softening effects of civilisation (the Roman Province in the south of Gaul), but he had especially emphasised that both the Belgae and the Helvetii were braver than the rest because of their constant wars with the Germans, their

³³ Cf. Seager (2003) 20. For a conspectus of causes of war in the *Bellum Gallicum*, Ramage (2001); Riggsby (2006) 157–89.

neighbours to the east (*Gal.* 1.1.4).³⁴ This allusion to the Germans as a pole of *virtus* makes it nearly inevitable that Caesar will soon be fighting the Germans—for just as among Caesar’s soldiers, *virtus* seeks out *virtus* to fight—and that prediction is vindicated: the war against the Helvetii evolves into a war against the Germans under their king Ariovistus.

The way Caesar sets up the narrative of this war is similar. After the Helvetii are defeated, Caesar allows the Gauls a speech reminding the reader of the supreme *virtus* of the Germans, and describing the insufferable arrogance of their king Ariovistus: *superbia* can have many causes, but a sense of one’s own *virtus* is chief among them.³⁵ Ariovistus’ past behaviour and current attitude and activity constitute *iniuriae* to Rome’s friends. There were other reasons to fight him too, Caesar says: to liberate the friendly Aedui from his domination—a state of affairs that is ‘extremely shameful, given the magnitude of the empire of the Roman people’ (*Gal.* 1.33.2, *quod in tanto imperio populi Romani turpissimum sibi et rei publicae esse arbitrabatur*)³⁶—and to pre-empt the Germans from becoming a threat to Italy as they were in the days of the Cimbri and Teutones. But those reasons are bracketed by Ariovistus’ *iniuriae* and Caesar’s announcement to his reader that ‘as for Ariovistus himself, he was so puffed up, and had taken on such arrogance, that he wasn’t to be borne’ (*Gal.* 1.33.4, *ipse autem Ariovistus tantos sibi spiritus, tantam arrogantiam sumpserat, ut ferendus non videretur*; cf. 1.35–6).³⁷ Nor are the German king’s insults confined to the Gauls. When negotiations begin his communications are arrogant and insulting, and so is his behaviour when he and Caesar meet (*Gal.* 1.34.2–4, 36, 42.4, 46.4; Florus 1.45.11–12). Once again Caesar sets the scene for the coming war as a contest of *virtus*, by having Ariovistus boast of the *virtus* of his Germans (*Gal.* 1.36.7) and then having Caesar quell an incipient panic among his army at the *virtus* of the Germans by reasoning to them that Roman *virtus* is greater: hadn’t the Romans under Marius defeated the Cimbri and Teutones? Didn’t they just beat the Helvetii, who themselves were accustomed to defeat the Germans (*Gal.* 1.40.7)? And once again the Roman victory settles the contest: the Germans are sent fleeing over the Rhine (*Gal.* 1.53).

But *three* peoples were picked out for their bravery in Caesar’s introductory description of Gaul. Those remaining are the Belgae, and by the end of Book I of the *Gallic Wars*, Caesar’s Roman reader was perhaps wondering

³⁴ For civilisation damaging *virtus*, cf. Tac. *Agr.* 11.4; Schadee (2008).

³⁵ *Superbe et crudeliter imperare*, *Gal.* 1.31.12; cf. Florus 1.45.11; boasting of *virtus*, *Gal.* 1.36.7, 44.2–4.

³⁶ The Aedui have a special claim to Roman protection because they are *fratres consanguineosque* of the Romans (*Gal.* 1.33.2; cf. 1.36.5, 43.6, 44.9), although the nature and origins of this relationship confound scholars; Battistoni (2009) 93–4.

³⁷ Riggsby (2006) 180.

why they had not yet received the thrashing their *virtus* demanded. It was not long in coming: Caesar fought them next, helpfully making a reference back to the description of Gaul at the beginning of his work to remind his reader of how brave they were. This war was at the instance of the Belgae, says Caesar, who feared that the Romans, who had conquered the tribes to their south, would now attack them. Why do they fear such an attack? Caesar need not explain: when *virtus* meets *virtus*, battle naturally follows. Moreover, in addition to some domestic reasons for wanting to fight, the Belgae were stirred up for war because the Romans had presumed to winter and put down roots in Gaul, which they regarded as an insult (*Gal.* 2.1.3, *molestē ferebant*). Once again, the tournament of *virtus* is ceremoniously proclaimed: Gallic allies of Caesar's tell him that these Gauls had themselves defeated the Cimbri and Teutones, thus placing them a level of *virtus* above the Germans Caesar had just beaten (*Gal.* 2.4.2; cf. 2.8.1). And then the tournament of *virtus* is conducted: the mass of the Belgae are crushed and made to plead humbly for mercy (*Gal.* 2.13.2–3).

Once the Belgae are defeated, Caesar with little transition finds himself fighting their bravest subdivision, the still-undefeated Nervii (*Gal.* 2.15.3–5). Caesar gives nothing a modern reader would regard as a cause for this war, merely briefly re-advertising the contest of *virtus*: the Nervii, he notes, reject merchants and the allurements of civilisation. Just as the Belgae were braver than the Germans, so the Nervii were braver than the rest of the Belgae. 'These were savage men and of great *virtus*, and they upbraided and abused the rest of the Belgae for having surrendered themselves to the Romans and having cast away their ancestral *virtus*' (*Gal.* 2.15.5, *patriamque virtutem proiecisent*). No more explanation for the war is needed. Who will win this match? After a titanic struggle in which the *virtus* of the Nervii is a major theme (*Gal.* 2.27.3–5), Caesar masters them with great slaughter—only five hundred warriors survive out of 60,000, they claim—and the survivors plead for mercy (*Gal.* 2.28.2–3).

After this fourth iteration even Caesar's modern reader has been well trained in the significance of geographical or ethnographic passages that emphasise the *virtus* of the peoples of the North.³⁸ When he reads at the beginning of Book IV, therefore, of the appalling Suebi, 'the most warlike nation (*gens ... bellicosissima*) of all the Germans' (*Gal.* 4.1.3), eaters of flesh and drinkers of milk, wearers of skins who bathe in frigid rivers, men who keep the territory around them waste as a testimony to their power in war, he knows there is a contest on the horizon, even before he notices how Caesar has elegantly trumped his own beloved 'brave because they have no truck with

³⁸ On Caesar's ethnographic excursions, Gesche (1976) 83–7, 259–63, Krebs (2006) 115 n. 21, and Schadee (2008) 158 nn. 2–4, 178 n. 62 collect the literature.

merchants' theme, for the Suebi *do* have truck with merchants, not to *buy* from them (they scorn wine as weakening) but only to *sell* to the merchants what they themselves have taken in war (*Gal.* 4.1–3).³⁹ Once the Suebi have been so characterised, and their victims the Usipetes and Tencteri dealt with (see above), Caesar can afford to be quite cursory about exactly why he intends to cross the Rhine to challenge the Suebi (*Gal.* 4.16.1–2). Whatever the immediate pretexts for war, the description of the habits of the Suebi justify the war quite well: they are supreme in *virtus*, so war with them is inevitable.⁴⁰

But this much-prepared-for encounter with the Suebi has an unexpected outcome, at least to a modern reader. It is reported to Caesar that these Germans had emptied their towns and sent their belongings and children and wives to cower in the forests. Their men had indeed gathered to face Caesar, but, he carefully points out, they were waiting to fight him at a point near the centre of their vast territory. And Caesar declines to pursue them there, contenting himself with having ‘terrified the Germans, taken revenge upon the Sugambri, and freed the Ubii from blockade’ (*ut Germanis metum iniceret, ut Sugambros ulcisceretur*). He returns over the Rhine and breaks down the Rhine bridge he had built with such ingenuity and labour (*Gal.* 4.19.4; cf. *Florus* 1.45.14). The modern reader expects a rather more emphatic end to the campaign than this—but the modern reader is not trained, as Caesar’s reader was, in the subtleties of the code of challenge to battle in a world of *virtus*.⁴¹ For here again the battlefield analogy is at work. If an army in Caesar wishes to maintain its reputation for courage, it comes forth from its fortified camp to offer battle in a fair location (*aequum locum*), a location giving it no tactical advantage that will prevent the battle from being a proper test of courage (*Civ.* 3.55; cf. *Gal.* 7.19.3).⁴² Armies and generals do not, of course, always respond, but to fail to answer the challenge when the enemy has thus offered battle is potentially to admit that the enemy has greater *virtus*. With the Suebi, Caesar expects his reader to transfer this principle from the tactical to the strategic level: by hiding their kin and goods and by lurking in the middle of their own territory the Suebi have lost the contest of *virtus* without a fight, or so, anyway, Caesar would like his reader to think.

Two years later, Caesar launches another lightly motivated campaign against the Suebi (*Gal.* 6.9.1–2). Here again there is no battle, and Caesar

³⁹ A curious practice, as my colleague David Kovacs points out to me, because if the Suebi sell but do not buy, what do they do with the money?

⁴⁰ Keep territory around them waste, cf. *Gal.* 6.23.2, *hoc proprium virtutis existimant, expulsos agris finitimos cedere* (Potter (1992) argues that the Romans under the empire did much the same). And the earlier campaign against the Usipetes and Tencteri is preceded by yet another *virtus* challenge, *Gal.* 4.7, and a reckoning of their *virtus*, 4.4.1, 4.7.5.

⁴¹ Cf. Rawlings (1998) 178.

⁴² Lendon (1999) 310–11.

again declines to march into their territory, carefully pointing out that this time the Suebi had gathered to fight him not merely in the centre of their territory, like last time, but in its deepest recesses (*Gal.* 6.10.4, *penitus ad extremos finis*; cf. Florus 1.45.15). The Suebi have proved even more craven than earlier, but Caesar does not oblige his reader to recall the courage of the Suebi from two books earlier to grasp the magnitude of this victory in *virtus*. For once again he relies upon ethnography to tell the tale, wedging into his account of his second campaign against the Suebi his famous ethnographic and zoological digression about Gaul and Germany (*Gal.* 6.11–28), which (among other things) reiterates that ‘once the Gauls exceeded the Germans in *virtus*; now [corrupted by the luxuries of the Roman Province, inured to defeat] ... they do not presume to compare themselves’ (*Gal.* 6.24), and in which the description of the habits of the Germans (*Gal.* 6.22–3) repeats many of those attributed to the Suebi in particular at the beginning of Book IV. This ethnographic passage both helps to motivate Caesar’s advance upon the Suebi, and gives the reader a sense of what Caesar has accomplished by making the Suebi yield him a symbolic victory by refusing his challenge and scampering away into the trackless depths of their forests.

As with the Suebi, so the Britons. Once again Caesar’s expressed motivations for his two invasions of Britain are cursory (for the first, that the Britons had been sending reinforcements to the Gauls, and simple curiosity (*Gal.* 4.20); for the second, that most of the Britons refused to submit after the first (*Gal.* 4.38.4)). But into his account of the fighting Caesar inserts an ethnographic and geographical passage (*Gal.* 5.12–14) with much stress on the savagery and bravery of the inhabitants. War with such men, Caesar and his intended reader believe, is natural. He need explain it no more.

To move from Caesar’s story and how he tells it into the greater world of real Roman foreign relations, Caesar’s understanding of Rome’s relations with other states as a series of contests of courage mates well with the actual behaviour of the Romans in the time of Caesar and Augustus, that period when Roman ambitions were directed ever more at distant ‘barbarian’ enemies rather than at close-by threats or the Greek-speakers and relatively civilised Carthaginians the Romans had so often fought in the middle Republic. After centuries of assembling a dominion of rule and influence huddled close around the Mediterranean like a kingdom of beach umbrellas, now the Romans thrust their way far inland (a practice hitherto mostly limited to Spain and northern Italy): Julius Caesar subdued Gaul north of Rome’s old coastal Province, and crossed over into Germany and Britain. Augustus brought an end to Rome’s two centuries of Spanish wars, finally conquering the northern reaches of Iberia; subjugated the Balkans to the Danube; and advanced into Germany to the Elbe, until the *clades Variana* of AD 9 threw the Romans back to the Rhine. Expansion in these directions was hardly inevitable: the

folk were poor and fierce. It would involve wars fought (as Tacitus reported Claudius was advised, of a war he declined to fight in the East) ‘in a trackless land ... with ferocious kings, wandering peoples, and a soil ungenerous of crops’ (*Ann.* 12.20.1).⁴³

But *virtus* constitutes a challenge to be overcome, and overcoming it a source of glory. If Caesar’s contemporaries and immediate successors share this outlook, they too are likely to be aggressive into wild areas where *virtus* is strong, to test their own *virtus* against that of those who possess the most. Rather than choose their enemies strictly on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, the attitude of the Romans (as Tacitus has his voice-of-old-Rome barbarian speaker Calgacus say) is, ‘if an enemy is rich, they are greedy; if poor, rivalrous’ (*Tac. Agr.* 30.4, *si locuples hostis est, avari, si pauper, ambitiosi*).⁴⁴ Where the Romans had been defeated, as so often in Spain, there especially they must return to avenge the insult (*Vell.* 2.90; cf. *Tac. Ann.* 12.20.1). The enemy’s distance away, and difficulty of access, are not discouraging but appealing, because conquering far-away, hard-to-get-to foes displays the *virtus* of the Romans.⁴⁵ The bestial savagery of barbarians, which implies *virtus*, draws conquering Romans like moths to a flame.⁴⁶ It is a special point of pride—we see it in Augustus’ *Res Gestae*—to conquer or gain tokens of submission from peoples hitherto unknown to the Romans, and *ipso facto* savage.⁴⁷ And so also the Roman satisfaction exactly in the symbolic submission of their enemies and rivals: it was not only Caesar who loved to see enemies flop down on their bellies before him, hold out their hands, and beg.⁴⁸ ‘Take my weapons,’ says Vercingetorix to Caesar in Florus: ‘you have conquered a brave man, O you bravest of men’.⁴⁹ Such theatrical admissions of inferiority, often as valued as actual conquest, are also the spoor of the imperialism of competitive *virtus*.

⁴³ I accept Brunt’s account (1990b) of Augustan policy as boundlessly aggressive at least until AD 9; northern expansion not inevitable, p. 473.

⁴⁴ On the theme of rivalry with other powers, Strabo 11.9.2; *Vell.* 2.109.2; *Tac. Ann.* 2.44.2; 13.54.4; Florus 1.5.1; Dio 40.14.3.

⁴⁵ Distance, difficulty, *Gal.* 4.16.1 with 4.17; *Tac. Agr.* 33.2–6; cf. 17.2, 23, 25.1, 27; *Vell.* 2.106; Lucan 9.401–2; Florus 1.45.2 (Romans); 1.7.5, 38.1 (barbarians); Mattern (1999) 208–9; Krebs (2006) 127 n. 68. This is parallel to the glory of overcoming difficult terrain on the battlefield, Lendon (1999) 314–15, 319.

⁴⁶ *Vell.* 2.106.2; *Tac. Ann.* 12.33.1.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Tac. Agr.* 24.1; *Vell.* 2.106.1 (with Woodman (1977) *ad loc.*); *ILS* 986. On this theme, Mattern (1999) 30, 162–4, with many examples.

⁴⁸ Submission, cf. *Gal.* 7.89.4; *Vell.* 2.114.4; *ILS* 986; cf. *Tac. Ann.* 15.29. On symbolic dominance as an objective in Roman foreign affairs, Gag e (1959).

⁴⁹ Florus 1.45.26, *habe, inquit, fortem virum, vir fortissime vicisti*.

From a literary point of view, so widespread and casual was this Roman way of thinking about relations between peoples that it could obviate, in historical narrative, the need to give details of the causes of wars or reasons for Roman expansion. As even the brief account above has shown, Caesar in the *Gallic Wars* more and more neglected to report the reasons for his campaigns as his work progressed: the nature of his enemy, and the automatic contest of *virtus* with such an enemy, made other explanation superfluous.⁵⁰ Sometimes ethnography—in which the *virtus* of the enemy is described, or implied by presenting them as savage—stands in for or supplements a *casus belli*, as with the Suebi and Britons. But sometimes Caesar does not bother to provide even that. This elision of the causes of his wars is not a sign that Caesar was ashamed of his conquests and trying to hide something, as scholars argued when looking for *Kriegsschuld* in Caesar was fashionable. He just takes the mutual drive to war for granted. When he does stop to wonder why so many Gallic states joined with Ambiorix, he blandly says, ‘Actually, I don’t think it’s particularly surprising. There were many reasons, but greatest was that those who used to rank higher than all other peoples in martial courage (*virtute belli*) were profoundly pained that they had lost that reputation to such a degree (*tantum se eius opinionis deperdidisse*) as to obey the orders of the Roman people’ (*Gal.* 5.54.5; cf. 5.29.4; 7.76.2). And since Caesar assumes that his reader will automatically apply some such formulation to all Caesar’s later wars, Caesar does not really need to explain them one by one. He merely reminds his reader now and then that the Gauls are fighting to avenge Roman *iniuriae* and *contumeliae* (*Gal.* 5.29.4, 38.2) and to regain their liberty (*Gal.* 3.8.4; 5.27.6; 7.4.4, 66.4), the loss of which is painful in itself, but also (as in the passage just quoted) because it implies Gallic loss of *virtus* and because it exposed the Gauls to yet more Roman *iniuriae* (*Gal.* 5.38.2; cf. *Tac. Agr.* 15.1–2).

In the *Agricola* Tacitus similarly sees no need to explain why Agricola invades Scotland, any more than he needed to explain in detail why the Romans invaded and advanced through England and Wales. All he need do is emphasise the *virtus* of both sides (*Agr.* 17.2, 27, 30–4) and the fact that the Romans saw arrogance (implying a claim to *virtus*) in the locals (*Agr.* 27.2), and the locals *superbia* in the Romans (*Agr.* 30.3; cf. *Ann.* 2.15.3). As in Caesar, the ethnography of a brave people in large part takes the place of explaining why individual wars occur (*Agr.* 11). With the scene set for a contest of *virtus*, or where such a contest can simply be assumed by the Roman reader because the enemies were savage, it was redundant to mention the causes of

⁵⁰ E.g., *Gal.* 5.26.1; 6.1–2. Caesar’s loss of interest in explaining the causes of his wars is an old puzzle: see Collins (1972) 927; Seager (2003) 19–21.

war.⁵¹ Nor in the *Germania*, having described the *virtus* of the Germans at such length and having mentioned their success against the Romans in war, which Tacitus considers a ‘taunt’, does Tacitus have to draw the obvious conclusion: the Romans must conquer them too (*Germ.* 37.3, *obieceroit*; cf. 41.2). Both Roman author and reader assumed that the natural conduct of the Romans was *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*.

Latin historians overall were incurious about the causes of wars, at least compared to their Greek predecessors. At the outset of his work Herodotus presented the description of the *aitia*, cause, of the war between Greeks and Persians as one of the chief objectives of his investigation; Thucydides devoted his whole first book to arguments both open and subterranean for his thesis about the causes of the Peloponnesian War. Polybius too was acutely interested in the origins of the wars he described. But even when Livy is drawing on Greek authors, his eye often drifts quickly away from the cause of war to the drama of its conduct; his interest in why wars break out is frequently cursory, and the origins of many wars merit no analysis at all. The sense is strong in Livy that the Greek identification of causes of wars as a special and marked subject of historical inquiry is flagging. And it does not revive in Velieus Paterculus or Tacitus.

At first sight it seems curious that the Romans, whose history-writing methods were so derivative of Greek, and whose chronicles tell so much of war, should have demoted and slighted this topic so beloved of their teachers. But received ways of thinking about ‘Why Wars Happen’ and more broadly ‘How History Works’ made the investigation of the causes of specific wars far less compelling to Latin authors than to Greek. Neglect of the causes of wars sometimes resulted from the exaggerated tendency of Latin authors to locate historical agency in the moral character of individuals or groups, so that explanations at that level (explicit or more usually implicit) replace trying to explain individual instances. And Caesar’s expectation that war will break out inevitably when *virtus* encounters *virtus*—an expectation overtly echoed in Tacitus—constitutes a similar, generalising explanation of the causes of war.

Conclusion

In 191 BC, in a famous incident, the defeated north-Greek Aetolian League attempted to surrender to the Roman consul Acilius Glabrio. This they did in Roman form, by *deditio in fidem*, by consigning themselves to the good faith of the Roman people. But when, once the ceremony was complete, Glabrio

⁵¹ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.46.1, *contusis Thraecum gentibus, qui montium editis incultu atque eo ferocius agitabant. causa motus super hominum ingenium, quod pati dilectus*; cf. 2.52.2; 12.55.1; Caes. *Gal.* 1.33.4; Florus 1.7.2–6, 37.1–2.

gave them a set of harsh orders, the Aetolian envoys volubly protested. They had not understood that, formally, *deditio in fidem* was surrender without conditions, and that they must henceforward obey Rome's orders without argument. From the Romans' perspective, the Aetolians' proper position was abject pleading, not arguing, and Acilius Glabrio was furious at their complaints: he ordered the Aetolian envoys to be chained up as slaves, although when the ambassadors collapsed in terror, he did not carry through on the threat, and sent the Aetolians home (Pol. 20.10; Livy 36.28.1–7).⁵² Being *in fidem* to the Roman people gave one no legal rights, but, so long as one behaved with elaborate respect, gave one a moral claim to a certain sort of protection, analogous to that given to clients in Roman civil life, who were also *in fidem* to their patrons.⁵³

Beneath this slightly comic tale of cultural misunderstanding lies a Roman institution in foreign relations (*deditio in fidem*) with a metaphorical basis in Roman civic life, and the particular conception of trust, *fides*, that prevailed in the Roman forum. And as the story shows, Roman understanding of *deditio in fidem* had not moved very far from that metaphorical basis, or from the expectations of behaviour that governed the civic realm from which the metaphor was taken.

But Julius Caesar displays the limits of this analogy between foreign affairs and life in the forum. *Iniuria*—which Caesar insisted sent him against the Helvetii—was a Roman legal concept, and Romans sued each other when subjected to harmful insult. So it is an acute guess that Caesar's thinking about *iniuria* in the interstate realm draws upon an analogy to life in the forum.⁵⁴ But that guess is also, probably, wrong. For in the lives they lived at Rome, the Romans were not violent to their equals, were not a duelling people or given to blood-feud. Unlike, say, the Italians of the Renaissance, Romans went unarmed in the city, and did not attempt to kill those who insulted them. In Roman civic life litigation seems to have been near the top limit of socially acceptable reactions to *iniuria*, whether the Romans were drawing on present experience or upon a real or imagined Roman domestic past, for Romans' account of their own history stressed the freedom of their city from internal violence, except under rare and terrible circumstances. There *was* political violence in Rome, of course, especially in the late Republic—Marius and Sulla, Catiline, Clodius and Milo, the proscriptions of the Second Triumvirate—but however much it was repeated, the Romans always regarded violence in the city as horrifying and illegitimate.⁵⁵

⁵² Moreno Leoni (2014) gathers the literature on this famous episode.

⁵³ On *fides* see the classic Heinze (1929) and the literature in Burton (2011) 40–2.

⁵⁴ Riggsby (2006) 167, 179–80.

⁵⁵ On the limits of Roman revenge, and for the question of why Roman reactions to insult could be so different in different circumstances, Lendon (2011).

A Roman insulted in the forum did not regard it as normal or praiseworthy to murder the one who had insulted him, and to slaughter all his kin and connections. But that is exactly how Caesar behaved when Rome was subjected to *iniuria* in Gaul, and he boasted of it: he expected his Roman reader to find it natural and praiseworthy. So the analogy to life in the forum cannot explain the nature and degree of Roman public reaction to insult by other states. There was, however, another department of Roman experience where a sense of insult was indeed met by extreme violence: the field of battle. And it is thinking shared between the battlefield and the world of states, not the more pacific forum, that props up the sense Caesar and his contemporaries possessed of the appropriate reaction when *iniuriae* were inflicted upon Rome by parties like the Helvetii and Ariovistus.

The much-studied civic analogies the Romans used to understand foreign relations help us grasp how the Romans made peace and regulated—or tried to regulate—their broad dominion, as so often under the Republic, without direct rule. But the military analogies help us understand a far grimmer story, a story of aggression and brutality. They help us understand why the Romans—at least for a long period of their history—were eager to fight wars against poor, brave peoples, and why, from Caesar’s day through the fourth century AD, they had such unrelenting confidence in fear as an instrument of foreign policy. Caesar and the Romans after him borrowed metaphors to understand relations with foreign states from the intellectual machinery they used to understand battle (whether or not they had ever seen a battle, for ideas can pass from book to book), and their understandings of battle and foreign affairs shared basic assumptions about how things should, and did, work, a common set of assumptions that they—like Acilius Glabrio—never really managed to divide into the separate intellectual realms with which we are familiar. When Romans turned their eyes out from Rome, they half-saw not merely a somewhat disorderly version of their own forum, but equally a stricken field splattered blood-red by a different set of Roman values: a place of terror and courage and savagery. And on the basis of what they half-saw, they often fully acted.

There may be a hint here, finally, that also helps to explain the resort of late-Republican Roman magnates to civil strife. Caesar explains his decision to cross the Rubicon and fight the Senate in terms of *iniuriae* he had suffered (*Civ.* 1.7.1).⁵⁶ Sallust’s Catiline explained his rebellion in the same way (*Sall. Cat.* 35.3–4), and Sulla, we are told, had explained his acts similarly (*App. BC* 1.77). By the standards of the forum, launching a civil war was a grotesque

⁵⁶ Raaflaub (1974) 125–52; Morstein-Marx (2009) 122–35.

over-reaction to insult.⁵⁷ But Caesar boasts of this motive: he expects his Roman reader to understand and sympathise. He did not, it appears, expect his reader to judge him by the standards of the forum, by which he would have been found severely wanting. Nor did Octavian appeal to the ethics of Roman civic life when he fought Brutus and Cassius under the banner of revenge for the murder of Julius Caesar, vowing and eventually building a great temple to Mars the Avenger (Suet. *Aug.* 29.2). The murder of one's adoptive father was a greater *iniuria* than those suffered by Caesar before he crossed the Rubicon, to be sure, but civil war and proscription were hardly the response to it that the ways of the forum approved. Octavian and Caesar relied on Romans to judge them not by the standards of the forum, but by those of another, harsher, ethical realm, that shared by foreign affairs and the battlefield, where reacting to insult as they did was perfectly natural.

In Caesar's case, the analogy between beginning civil war and fighting a battle is emphasised by the pile-up of military terminology and metaphor when Caesar is describing (at *Civ.* 1.1–6) the politics at Rome that led to his crossing the Rubicon.⁵⁸ In this non-military context, we find, recollecting the world of military morale, four forms of *incitare*, two of *confirmare*, a blaze of fear words (*timere* twice, *terrere*, *perterrere*, *terror*, *metus*), *audacter et fortiter*, *exagitare*, *permovere*, *profugere*, and from battle's physics, *resistere*, *opponere*, *repulsare*, *turbare*, *decurrere*, *impedire*, and finally, of course, *virtus*. The presence of one or several of these words would mean little. But their concentration here tells us that Caesar thought that the politics of the situation (and not just the fighting of a civil war) were to be regarded (or presented) as a form of battle. And so, it is nice to think, Rome's centuries of fighting set Roman minds in a pattern that not only made them wolves to their neighbours, but also, in the extremity of political crisis, set them to claw at their own entrails.

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⁵⁷ Pace Morstein-Marx (2009) 128. If Caesar's reactions were normal, would there not have been constant resort to violence by great men? For they were certainly insulted frequently enough, especially in the courts and in politics.

⁵⁸ For the tone of violence and military terminology in *Civ.* 1.1–6, cf. Batstone and Damon (2006) 48–53, an observation for which I also thank Luca Grillo.

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