

**Moral Revision in Latin Ethnography: A Reassessment of Tacitus'
Germania and Caesar's Bellum Gallicum**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The preponderance of interest in the Roman frontier and its peripheral non-Roman cultures has manifested itself in all aspects of the discipline of Classical Studies: from material archaeology to the social historian's inquiry into the voiceless minorities in antiquity. Consequently, scholarship pertaining to the ethnography of those who inhabited the frontier has been made intrinsically more important. Nevertheless, outdated modes of inquiry and overly positivistic interpretations have dictated their study and, in some cases, stripped texts of their underlying significance. Tacitus' *Germania* is one such text.

Within the ethnographic tradition, the *Germania* exists as a series of puzzling singularities: as a monograph rather than an excursus; as a work without a didactic statement of intent; as an ethnographic work which adheres to neither scientific inquiry nor romantic exaggeration; and as text with an inordinate preoccupation towards moralism. As such, how do we rationalize the text in a manner which can account for these discrepancies? I believe Tacitus invites the reader to examine the text as a deliberate admonishment of Roman moral turpitude through a succession of idealized Germanic contrasts.

Although the reading of the *Germania* as a morally guided or 'revised' text has drawn the ire of a century's worth of Tacitean commentators, the deliberate historical anachronism, inconsistencies with the Tacitean corpus itself, and the novel rendering of the German people demands a critical reassessment. Furthermore, such interpretations of the text may reveal rather than an instance of literary anomaly, a discernable moralistic intent behind other seemingly 'innovative' ethnographies.

Key Words: Tacitus, ethnography, Latin historiography, Stoicism, Caesar, Gaul, Roman history, ancient Rome.

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Chapter I: Literature Review

I. Introduction

The periphery of the Roman Empire, whether by the inevitability of dwindling novelty within the field, or by assuming the current mantle of scholarly fashion, has become *de rigueur* in the contemporary Latinists' field of inquiry – from material archaeology, and its current fascination with the Roman frontier,¹ to the social historian's interest in the *mores* and customs of non-Mediterranean people (owing arguably to the relatively recent inclusion of social theory within Classics focusing on underrepresented and often voiceless minorities of the greater empire).² Nevertheless, there exists within the field of literary studies a scholarly contingent driven to the fringe, not by circumstance, but by a protracted effort to examine the underutilized, if not neglected, aspects of the Latin literary tradition – particularly in the case of perceived barbarian cultures – to ascertain a greater and more rounded understanding and image. But of whom? This thesis will examine the theory of 'moral revision' within Latin ethnographic tracts pertaining to the northern tribes of Europe and specifically offer a reassessment of moral revision within Tacitus' *Germania*, incorporating recent reevaluations of the Tacitean corpus concerning racial inequality and imperialism. Subsequently I intend to utilize this methodology and apply the theory of moral revision to a parallel culture – the

¹ The contemporary (N. American) archaeological interest in the frontier and its intrinsic relationship not only to Roman economic interests but also to the definition of Roman citizenship and changing self-identity in a rapidly increasing territorial empire is strong. For a cursory overview of the issue see Fitzpatrick (1996), pp. 238-251, Hines (2006), pp. 256-269, and Renfrew (2006), pp. 125-136, and Woolf (1998).

² The complex issue of the shifting focus of approach in Classical scholarship is detailed by Lianeri (2011). Here, the author outlines the conflict between late modern positivism in the age of rising European nationalism and self-identity (pp. 99-118), between the applications of universality and historicity (pp. 210-228), and between academic relevancy and the incorporations of social theory (pp. 307-314).

Gauls – to determine if Tacitus’ *Germania* was, as many assume, an oddity of rhetorical exercise, or in fact part of a literary tradition of allusive Roman criticism facilitated by the evaluation of perceived ‘lesser cultures.’

First I will define ‘moral revision,’ examine its genesis within the field of ancient ethnography, and ask how it can be used to address well-established, though faulty, analyses of these cultures. For the sake of facility – and also due to the scant secondary scholarship on the topic – I will refer to Richard Wenghofer’s assessment of moral revision within Tacitus’ *Germania* to establish the foundation of my definition. The tenets of moral revision must be outlined clearly, and in a manner which is conducive to arguing for, or against, a practice beyond (or rather prior to) Tacitus’ text. As such, I will repeat an abridged rendering of Wenghofer’s criteria,³ as well as my own additions, for a text to be considered a work of moral revision: a) a sociopolitical climate which necessitates allusive, rather than explicit, moral critique (against Romans); b) a pattern of historical anachronism and inconsistency – often masked as ‘innovative’⁴ ethnographic interpretation, with a fixation upon the moral proclivities of the subject; c) an inability to be classified within the established ethnographic subgenres – either scientific or romantic; and ultimately (in the absence of historicity) d) a noted and discernable influence of moral philosophy.⁵ The generally accepted scholarly interpretation of works such as the *Germania* (as it was when Wenghofer addressed the issue in 1994) is one of a

³ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 4-8.

⁴ That is to say, those instances of ethnographic ‘innovation,’ i.e. the idea of the Germans as being ignorant of adultery and secret correspondence (*Ger.* 19.1), which is ‘knowingly’ contrary to the historical record, i.e. the German’s lack of written language until 8 centuries after Tacitus’ monograph. See chapter 2 p. 66, n. 253.

⁵ Though Wenghofer’s assessment of moral revision deals exclusively with the *Germania*, it is my feeling that the tenets which he outlines can be used for other similar ethnographic works. See chapter 3.

‘straight’ ethnographic essay on the Germanic peoples of Tacitus’ age. This view ignores utterly the self-serving and idealized language of the monograph, the anachronistic archaeological data, and the rejection of accuracy – even in the face of Tacitus’ own tenets of historicity. Instead, it favours the worst aspects of positivism, if not sensationalism.⁶ Wenghofer posits that rather than straightforward ethnography, the *Germania* was written as a subversive and illusory cross-cultural criticism of Roman moral failings in the Flavian age using the Germans as a *de facto* archetype of idealized Roman virtues of golden age literature and bygone martial conquests, abdicating any attempt at veracity in the ‘realistic’ portrayal of early Germanic cultures.⁷ It is my hope not only to reassess and reaffirm these findings concerning the *Germania* with additional supporting theories which have come to light in the past two decades, but attempt to trace a discernable pattern of moral revision within other perceivably ‘straight-forward’ ethnological writings.

Before we delve headlong into the literature review to establish the current state of the question regarding ‘moral revision’ there is a worthwhile digression to be made concerning the academic reaction towards the concept and its inability to gain a significant foothold within scholarship.⁸ Prior to the 1920 work by Eduard Norden, *Die Germanische Urgeschichte in Tacitus’ Germania*, which we may use as a point of

⁶ Wenghofer (1994), p. 4. Although the issue of moralism in Tacitus’ monographic works, particularly in *Agricola* and *Germania*, had been raised by Anderson (1938) and Martin (1969), and explored more thoroughly by O’Gorman (1993), Wenghofer’s analysis was the first to synthesize the ethnographic, imperialistic, and philosophical implications of a moral revisionist reading of the text.

⁷ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 4-5.

⁸ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 3-4. Wenghofer posits that the first stirrings of revision, moral or otherwise, against the *Germania*, are unknown and that Norden’s work represents but the first recorded instance of a sentiment which he feels is much older than the 1924 publication date.

inception for ‘moral revision’ appearing on the scholarly radar, classical ethnography – in Norden’s specific case against the *Germania* – was taken at face value and lacked any desire to look beyond the ostensible.⁹ This assessment, however, did not spring from the ether, nor is the reasoning entirely nebulous when we consider the *Germania*’s storied past and the geo-political climate of Norden’s Weimar era Germany.¹⁰ Since the late Renaissance the *Germania* has been used for numerous political ends – both laudatory and derogatory. In 1471 Giovannantonio Campano, representative of the Holy Diet, opportunistically used the *Germania*, appealing to the Germanic ‘warrior spirit’, to drum support for a proposed, though entirely apathetic, crusade against the Turks. The same text was also used when Pope Pius II disarmed the grievances of one Martin Muir, Chancellor to the Bishop of Mainz, by claiming the church brought Germany out of the barbaric hell that was Tacitus’ *Germania*.¹¹ The 19th century, during the death rattle of European colonialism, saw the *Germania* used by a succession of political machines, which taint the monograph even now. The *Germania* became the cornerstone of the Anglo-Germanic nationalist movements of the Romantic era, exploited by authors such as Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), protégé of Charles de Villers (1765-1815),¹² who writes

⁹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 4.

¹⁰ The publication of Norden’s work was marred by the socio-political turmoil of post World War I Germany. The commentary’s despondent morale and attack upon the supposed superiority of the German *Volk* is indicative of the widespread dissatisfaction during the onset of the Weimar Republic. This is not to assume that Norden’s position is one of anachronistic contrarianism in a time of contemporary strife. Rather, the defeat of Germany in WWI allowed for the reassessment of the perceived ‘noble’ and ‘ancient’ German martial virtue. Nevertheless, his work had the unfortunate timing of preceding the rise of Anglo-Germanic nationalism which was to follow. See pp. 3-6 for an overview of the *Germania*’s storied misappropriation. For further reading see Krebs (2011).

¹¹ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 1, 2.

¹² Painter (2010), pp. 159-160. Painter argues that the seed of Carlyle’s rationale could be traced to the obscure French naturalist, and purveyor of curiosities. Carlyle took great

of the Germans as “the only genuine European People, unmixed with strangers . . . they have in fact never been subdued,”¹³ echoing almost verbatim, as we shall see, the sentiments of Tacitus.¹⁴ Even in America, the preeminent philosopher-king of American racial theory, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), sees in rural America the descendants of German pre-history: “I chanced to read Tacitus, *On the Manner of Germans*, . . . and I found abundant points of resemblance between the Germans of the Hercynian forest, and our Hoosiers (Indiana), Suckers (Illinois), and Badgers (Wisconsin) of the American Woods.”¹⁵ It is, however, the *Germania*’s appropriation by the National Socialists of the early 20th century which leaves the most lasting and ruinous consequences for subsequent scholarship. Pamphlets distributed by the ministry of Propaganda in 1934 and 1936, at the behest of Joseph Goebbels, cite Tacitus; more specifically, passages which reflect the purity of the German folk, as a rationalization of German racial homogeneity.¹⁶ The scholar Otto Höfner, a favourite author of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, noted the lost warrior spirit of Tacitus’ Germans and its ability to direct the military conquests of the Third Reich in his work *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen*.¹⁷ Other philologists and academics contemporary with the Nazi regime were more direct in their support of both the Reich and Tacitus’ monograph. Eugen Fehrle – professor at Heidelberg, and one of the first academics to openly support National Socialism – was editor of the *Germania*

pains to include the populations of Britain and northern France in his lectures on the Germanic peoples, the titles of which (*On the Teutonic People, the German Language, and the Northern Migration*) bear more than a passing resemblance to Tacitus’ text.

¹³ Quoted in Painter (2010), p. 160.

¹⁴ See Tacitus *Ger.* II.1, and IV.I on the racially ‘homogeneous’ origins of the Germans.

¹⁵ Quoted in Painter (2010), p. 182.

¹⁶ Wenghofer (1994), p. 3. See n. 14 for specific citation of this proposed racial purity.

¹⁷ Mees (2008), p. 91.

for Lehmann publishing;¹⁸ and an attempt by an SS commando to ‘reclaim’ the *Germania* manuscript from an Italian collector, at the behest of philologist Rudolf Till, in 1943 following the deposing of Mussolini, are just two examples.¹⁹ Not all, however, were convinced that the *Germania*’s admirable reputation among German nationalists was deserved. Hitler himself remarked: “at a time when our forbearers were producing stone troughs and clay vessels . . . the Greeks were building the Acropolis.”²⁰ As we can see with the *Germania*’s five-century pedigree as the preeminent text of German cultural and racial superiority, Norden’s thesis which argued against the veracity of the text, at least in 1924, did not stand a chance. After the decline of the Third Reich, and (arguably) the collective academic interest in scientific racism, one of the sole voices echoing Norden’s interpretation of the *Germania* as inherently critical against its subject was the innocuous figure of Cardinal Archbishop Michael Faulhaber.²¹

¹⁸ Mees (2008), p. 180. Lehmann was a notoriously racist publishing firm based out of Munich, which catered to pan-German nationalists.

¹⁹ Mees (2008), p. 202 & Schama (1995), pp. 75, 76. To further, or rather solidify, his personal relationship with the Reichsführer, Hölder dedicated his personal translation and Commentary of *Germania* to Himmler himself. Concerning the *Germania* manuscript, only one copy has survived the ages; Till felt it was uncouth for such a work to be in the possession of an ‘Italian.’

²⁰ Mees (2008), p. 112.

²¹ Concerning Faulhaber: it was during his midnight address at New Years’ mass on the night of December 31, 1933 which resonates mostly emphatically upon the studies of the *Germania*. After extolling the moral contributions of German Jews “who exhibited the noblest religious values,” Faulhaber set his sights upon what he perceived as the single greatest threat to church – the propagation of a neo-pagan Germanic religion at the behest of Alfred Rosenberg, and, with buttressing from Tacitus’ text, proceeded to construct the image of Germanic ancestors who reveled in polytheism and blood feuds, and admonished their “savage superstition . . . proverbial indolence, mania for drinking . . . and passion for dice play,” citing *Ger.* 23.2 and 25.2. For Faulhaber, Tacitus’ compliments of loyalty and unyielding fidelity hardly tempered the accusations noted above. Even now, Faulhaber’s catalog of vice is the most oft-cited refutation in commentary negating the reading of supposed Germanic moral superiority (see pp. 14-15 of the Literature review). For further reading see Krebs (2011), pp. 214-17.

We can trace a similar, although far more benign, path of appropriation for Gallic ethnocentrism. Within Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* - particularly Books VI and VII, concerning Vercingetorix – French nationalists, roughly contemporaneous to our previous German examples, found ‘*nos ancestres les Gaulois*’ – our ancestors the Gauls – coined by Francois de Belleforest (concerning the overthrow of the Frankish aristocracy in 1578).²² More recently, and in a far less malignant fashion, the account of Vercingetorix has lent itself to the branding of ‘Gaulois’ cigarettes and served as inspiration for the long-running cartoon Asterix.²³ Vercingetorix himself stands, even now, in a monument at Alesia and Clermont- Ferrand. While in Vercingetorix the French found an ancestral warrior-hero,²⁴ the Germans – in Arminius – a savior of the Rhineland.²⁵

As we can now deduce, the academic climate of pre-war scholarship was not particularly conducive to any indictment of the veracity of the ethnographic tracts, which served as the foundation for scientific racism and ethnocentric cultural superiority. Subsequently there was little, if any, interest in such topics following World War II— all the more if said piece of antiquity served as a rationalization for cultural imperialism. This brings us to the difficult question of ethnographic scholarship, which we shall assess in our literature review to ascertain a more complete state of the question regarding ‘moral revision.’

As a final introductory note, I wish to preemptively address the discrepancy in nomenclature when we refer to specific northern-European groups. A great deal of pre-

²² Painter (2010), p. 20.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Painter (2010), p. 20.

²⁵ Mees (2008), p. 3.

war scholarship served, often fruitlessly, to attempt to differentiate and clarify what exactly constituted a Gaul, a German, or a Briton, and, more broadly, their relationship to a pan-Celticness. Nell Painter (2010) has succinctly elucidated this issue. To Painter, civilization, not blood, determined the divisions of northern tribes.²⁶ Although Gauls, Germans, and Britons can all loosely be correlated as ‘Celts’, to the Roman ethnographer the wild, unconquered German was a truer form of Celt than the urbanized Gaul.²⁷ By the time of Caesar’s account in *BG* (ca. 58-50BCE), the differentiation between Celt, Gaul, and German often depended on the Roman context in which they were spoken of, but universally substituted or denoted ‘barbarian’ or traits of ‘barbarism.’²⁸ Thus when we speak of individual inhabitants specific to the territory we shall use the accepted ‘Gaul’, ‘German’, or ‘Briton,’ while the term ‘Celt’ or ‘Celtic’ will refer to the more pan-barbaric aspects shared between the three divisions. In terms of secondary scholarship any and all philology designated as ‘pre-war’ denotes scholarship prior to the onset of World-War II. As a final note of introduction I wish to acknowledge my debt to the work of Wenghofer (1994), and amount of which I will cite his MA. thesis, *Moral Revision in Tacitus’ Germania*. Although Wenghofer’s basic thesis, and his background to previous interpretations of the *Germania*, will be utilized, I will break from his critical analysis, methodology and conclusions quite radically. As such, I wish to preface this work as a reassessment and refocusing, rather than a simple and uncritical citation, of his efforts.

²⁶ Painter (2010), p. 17.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Painter (2010), p. 19. For example, Caesar made little real distinction ethnographically between ‘a Gaul’ and ‘a German’. ‘A German’ merely denoted a Gaul not under the control of the empire, whereas in Tacitus both groups are thought to be autochthonous. See n. 97 for an extensive list of commentaries concerning Caesar and the Gauls.

II. Literature Review

I divide my analysis into two specific thematic groups; firstly, the Germans (who are most prominent in terms of source material and scholarship, more specifically, Tacitus' *Germania*), followed by the Gauls. The literature review will reassess the scholarship of moral revision relevant to each ethnographic group chronologically – the chronology, and the socio-political climate of their publication, bears a great deal of importance.

Tacitus' Germania

As I have already stated, the *Germania*, the single greatest literary source on prehistoric Germany – and indeed the largest extant text of non-Mediterranean peoples in antiquity – assumed an importance which far outweighed its size.²⁹ The greatest source of scholarly contention remains in what the *Germania* fails to say: namely, Tacitus' purpose in writing it. Nowhere do we find a Thucydidean statement of intent beyond the title, *De Origine et Situ Germanorum*.³⁰ It is with this paradox in mind that we address the secondary scholarship which has sought to rectify it. Wenghofer (1994) outlines four schools of thought seeking the *Tacitean* purpose behind the *Germania*. A fifth may be added, which has emerged since his publication. Thus, in keeping with Wenghofer's division, the first, and earliest contrarian view – based upon, then burgeoning cross-cultural theories of sociology – is that of (i) moral revision; a subtle, though scathing, commentary upon the perceived moral failings of Rome contemporary to the age of

²⁹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 1.

³⁰ Wenghofer (1994), p. 37.

Tacitus.³¹ A (ii) second viewpoint posits the *Germania* as an indirect attempt to bolster the emperor Trajan for an offensive push into the German frontier, as the emperor had been concurrently strengthening garrisons along the Rhineland boundary.³² The third school of thought, popular with the more philologically-minded, suggests the original intent behind the *Germania* was that of a (iii) misjudged historiographical excursus which outgrew the confines of its text, thus necessitating its own separate publication in the form of a monograph.³³ The next, most cited interpretation is also the most simple; that the *Germania* is exactly what it purports to be, a (iv) straightforward ethnographical investigation for the furthering of scientific knowledge regarding the outlying inhabitants of the empire.³⁴ Owing to its simplicity, this theory, more often than all others, encumbers the pursuit towards a reading of moral revision. A (v) fifth interpretation, my own addition, as espoused by commentators of racism and ethnocentrism in antiquity such as Painter (2010) and Isaac (2004), argues works such as the *Germania*, along with Caesar's Gallic commentary, are instances of a greater programmatic occurrence within Latin ethnography to systematically slander, devalue, and barbarize any and all non-Mediterranean peoples through clearly discernable proto-racist writings.³⁵

Let us first examine the theory which assumes the *Germania* to be a work of political motivation in favour of an offensive military campaign across the German frontier. This theory, first posited by Mullenhoff in his 1920 work *Deutsche*

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 38.

³⁵ Isaac (2004), pp. 438-439, Painter (2010), pp. 27-29. Though I feel it is reductionist to summarize both of these authors' theses in such broad strokes, space demands it. I shall examine each author's analysis in detail in the forthcoming sections respectively.

Altertumskunde, is based upon the assumption that a martial strengthening along the Rhine, by Trajan, was roughly contemporaneous with the *Germania*'s publication date.³⁶ Mullenhoff states that the cross-cultural comparison of Germanic customs was to elicit a reaction of fear from Rome's military elite and justify a preemptive attack against superior Germanic military strength.³⁷ This sentiment is echoed, however provisionally, by both Painter and Isaac: that there was a protracted effort by Tacitus to highlight German ferocity and contrast it with Rome's perceived lackadaisical military infrastructure.³⁸ Gudeman, in his 1899 Tacitean commentary, refutes this theory wholly, surmising that no political motivation can be gleaned from a close reading of the text, nor would Tacitus have reason not to state such intimation directly.³⁹ Furthermore such a comment by Tacitus would be effectively moot; Tacitus, having never set foot in Germanic territory proper,⁴⁰ could have only provided second-hand knowledge which Trajan, having a presence *en masse* upon the Rhine, could have gathered first-hand.⁴¹ Anderson, in a 1938 commentary, further provides that Tacitus, though an accomplished

³⁶ Mullenhoff (1920), p. 13, Wenghofer (1994), p. 43.

³⁷ Anderson (1938), xi, Mullenhoff (1920), pp. 11-17, Wenghofer (1994), p. 43.

³⁸ Isaac (2004), p. 436, Painter (2010), p. 28.

³⁹ Gudeman (1938), xlv, Wenghofer (1994), p. 44.

⁴⁰ Academic opinion on the plausibility of Tacitus' travels to the German frontier remains fiercely divided. H.W Benario (1994), p. 3, J.G Anderson (1928), xii, and Wenghofer (1994) p. 44, all posit that Tacitus' position as an orator, his advanced age at the beginning of his literary career, and any lack of definitive textual evidence precluded Tacitus, unlike Caesar in his Gallic commentaries, from recording his findings first hand. Conversely J.B Rives (1999), pp. 48-56, posits that following his time as *praetor*, Tacitus 'may' have commanded a Rhine legion for three or four years (no sources given). As such, Rives assumes, uncritically, Tacitus' role as military adviser to the emperor Trajan for a presupposed (again unsupported by the sources) Germanic push, a theory also postulated by Isaac (2004). We know little of Tacitus' life beyond his extant texts, and other sources are silent; thus these theories – from Tacitus' commanding of a Rhine legion to his role as military adviser to the emperor – must remain theories.

⁴¹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 44.

orator and suffect-consul, would have no basis, professionally or tactically, on which to advise an emperor on martial strategy in so public a display, and to assume such a faction existed (calling for full military intervention on the Rhine) is both presumptuous and highly improbable given the wealth of Gaul, which was geographically closer and at that point subdued and annexed wholly into the empire.⁴²

A more philologically-minded interpretation suggests the *Germania* as originally, at least provisionally, a work of ethnographic excursus within a larger historiographical work, plausibly within Tacitus' *Histories*, detailing the reign of Domitian; however, the work, outgrowing the confines of ethnographic excursus, necessitated its own separate publication.⁴³ Though digressions of an ethnographic persuasion are found throughout Caesar and Sallust, this position can be duly rejected.⁴⁴ Firstly, Tacitus neither states nor implies this, even though such a work would likely have been intended to be read alongside the proposed historiography as a compendium.⁴⁵ Wenghofer, in refutation, states that nothing of historical importance concerning the reign of Domitian can be salvaged from the *Germania*, in the annalistic tradition, which seems to sever any tie to a historiographical text.⁴⁶ That being said, ethnographic excurses found within Caesar and Sallust often have little to offer in terms of contemporary historical significance (thus their treatments as excurses).⁴⁷ Furthermore, within Tacitus' own extant texts there exist ethnographic excurses both in the *Agricola* (concerning the Britons), and within the

⁴² Anderson (1938), xii, Wenghofer (1994), p. 44.

⁴³ Anderson (1938), xiii, Wenghofer (1994), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 37, 45.

⁴⁵ Wenghofer (1994), p. 46.

⁴⁶ Wenghofer (1994), p. 45.

⁴⁷ The universality of barbarian ethnographies, particularly in the way of stereotypes, and their supposed shared common source-material will be discussed further in section II (pp. 19-29), and chapter 2 section V (pp. 71-74).

Histories (concerning the Jews), neither of which required a separate publication. Should Tacitus have needed to break with his own precedent, Wenghofer argues, even a provisional statement of intent would be in order.⁴⁸ Finally, there is no other recorded instance of an excursus necessitating a separate publication, especially when we consider the *Germania*'s length of less than 30 pages.⁴⁹

Due to the differing quality of the previous two theories, and their inability to maintain any semblance of credibility upon even a cursory reading of the text, the onus has often fallen upon the third theory, arguably the most popular, to deduce the meaning of the *Germania*.⁵⁰ Simply, this theory states that the work is an accurate and forthright depiction of prehistoric German culture, devoid of political motivation or subliminal animus against the Roman populous.⁵¹ Wenghofer presents two rationales behind the prevalence of this interpretation: first, that a discernable pattern of moral revision had not at that point formed into any conclusive, or even convincing, theory, and that the text had not been critically assessed alongside Tacitus' own aims as an author of historiography as outlined in the *Annales* or *Histories*.⁵² Wenghofer's second reason is less convincing: that the theory of a 'straight reading' was born out of the rejection of previous theories; this stance, based entirely upon negation, is not acceptable.⁵³ Wenghofer's general objection is well founded. The most glaring problem with the 'straight reading' is the fact that it gives no reasoning beyond that "Tacitus never stated otherwise" (and fails to support the

⁴⁸ Wenghofer (1994), p. 45. The ethnographic excursus on the Britons and Jews can be found in *Agr.* 10-17 and *Hist.* 5.1-13 respectively.

⁴⁹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 46.

⁵⁰ Wenghofer (1994), p. 46.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

argument with in depth assessment or even cursory references).⁵⁴ Even if we are to assume the most general position of ‘moral revision’ – the *Germania* as a work of subtle political motivation – the comparable reduction of the ‘straight reading’ – a work devoid of allusive intent – is to ignore utterly the political climate of the age in which the *Germania* was produced and the general moralizing aspects of all Roman historiographical works.⁵⁵ Tacitus himself makes mention of the state of political affairs in the opening of the *Agricola*, most notably the Inquisition-like scenario of both the banning and burning of specific authors such as Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio; Domitian, under whose rule such actions were orchestrated, having been only two years dead.⁵⁶ A time which saw the refutation of civil liberties and the implementation of forced political silences is not particularly conducive to literature critical of the Romans— thus necessitating the allusive language, of which, Wenghofer argues, Tacitus was a master.⁵⁷

Though it may seem counterintuitive, having given a summation of my position regarding the intentions of Tacitean ethnography, and to a greater extent Latin ethnography, I intend to begin my initial discussion of moral revision by assessing the criticisms levied against it. Rather than leave the reader with lingering doubt, I propose to

⁵⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 47. Wenghofer often assumes his reader is familiar with Tacitus’ ‘aims’ as historian but never mentions these outright, which would greatly strengthen his position. I hope to deduce these aims and state them here, so the *Germania* may be set into proper context alongside Tacitus’ historical and annalistic works.

⁵⁵ Wenghofer (1994), p. 47.

⁵⁶ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 47-48. Rusticus’ work on Thrasea Paetus and Senecio on Helvidius Priscus were both considered works tantamount to capital offense, *Agr.* 2.2.

⁵⁷ Wenghofer (1994), p. 48. Wenghofer again assumes to make a rather broad, but substantial statement regarding the Tacitean corpus with no corroborative evidence. In our in-depth analysis of the *Germania*, in section III, I will cross-examine Tacitus’ ‘masterful’ illusory skills.

begin at the bottom and then raise the argument above and against such criticism; criticisms, which Anderson acknowledges, are often predicated on the lack of a ‘statement of intent.’⁵⁸ The most resounding argument against a reading of moral revision remains (as espoused by Anderson [1938] and Dudley [1968]) that Tacitus’ propensity towards the denigration of German customs and moral ineptitudes is intrinsically opposed to a reading of German moral superiority, citing particularly the passages pertaining to the German tendency towards bellicosity, inebriation, and inconstancy.⁵⁹ This refutation fails to acknowledge the very well-worn motif of the duality of the back-handed compliment (which we will see extensively in Caesar’s dealings with the Gauls). Wenghofer also addresses the bipartite structure of the *Germania* as a means of refutation, citing Sleeman, who argues that though there is a perceptible pattern of moralization, such trifles are negligible in comparison to the ‘elaborate’ and ‘scientific’ geography and ethnography of the final 19 chapters.⁶⁰ Though Wenghofer believes this to be a harsh truth that one must accept to continue with more pressing arguments,⁶¹ I believe the second half of the work – chapters 27 through 46 – to be as morally critical but in a far different and, as yet, unexplored fashion. The final two criticisms outlined by Wenghofer are more philologically based. First, that cross-cultural comparison is an inherent trope of the ethnological genre: Tacitus’ comparisons with Roman customs are intended to give the reader an understanding of foreign concepts and cultures in terms

⁵⁸ Anderson (1938), xiv-xv, Wenghofer (1994), p. 46.

⁵⁹ Dudley (1968), p. 13, Wenghofer (1994), p. 39. In *Ger.* 23.2 and 25.2, we read that the German love dicing while drinking, which often leads to violence, thus giving rise to the notion of their bellicosity, even in peace-time.

⁶⁰ Anderson (1938), x, Sleeman (1967), xxi, Wenghofer (1994) p. 41. For the issues concerning the *Germania* and its assessment alongside the works of ethnography, both scientific and fantastical, see chapter 2 sections II and III.

⁶¹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 41.

which are palatable to the readership.⁶² Wenghofer argues, correctly, that such comparisons are not inherent in Latin ethnography nor does Tacitus intend such comparisons to be benign sociological inquiry.⁶³ Furthermore, such instances of literal moralizing are, according to Sleeman, merely indicative of the rhetorical *declamatio* prevalent in silver-age Latin, and that any perceived moral revision is merely an affirmation of an ethical preoccupation.⁶⁴

For our final point in the literature review concerning the Germans, I intend to examine a branch of scholarship which posits the *Germania* as a work of pro-Roman proto-racism, an interpretation which has come to prominence following Wenghofer's division of theories concerning Tacitean scholarship. Isaac (2004) sees the Roman interpretations of Germanic cultures, alongside other 'barbarian' societies, as indicative of a larger exegetical predilection of Latin ethnographic literature towards proto-racism.⁶⁵ Isaac categorically examines the major authorial mentions of Germanic peoples to deduce his thesis, an abridged version of which I now outline. Despite Caesar's scant mention of the Germans on the periphery of northeastern Gaul, the people remained obscure and distant to the greater concerns of the empire. In the geographer Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, we begin to see the stereotype of the poor, nomadic tribesmen, living among beasts.⁶⁶ Though Strabo lived through the Varian disaster of 9 A.D, he argued the

⁶² Wenghofer (1994), p. 42.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Sleeman (1967), xxi, Wenghofer (1994), p. 43.

⁶⁵ Isaac (2004), p. 427.

⁶⁶ Isaac (2004), p. 428. *Strab.* 7.1.3. Strabo's views on nomadism are fairly congruous with most Roman attitudes: they lacked a complete and utter understanding of peripatetic lifestyles. For further reading concerning Strabo and 'barbarian' cultures see Almagor (2005), pp.42-55, Dueck (2010), and Erskine (2010), p. 152. For commentary on Strabo's extant works see Falconer (1913), Hamilton (1906), and Jones (1917).

martial quality of the Germans was inherently weak, and Germany itself a prime piece of geography for conquest—the only thing which befit a nation “born to lie.”⁶⁷ A sentiment echoed by Manilius concerning the perceived treacherous victory of Arminius: that Germany was a nation fit only to breed “wild beasts,” which Manilius saw as a threat to Roman interests in the north.⁶⁸ Seneca concurred, in his assessment of the Germans as an irascible and vicious race of warriors, and assumes this is indicative of their environment, reflecting the nature of their homeland.⁶⁹ Isaac is one of the few scholars to acknowledge the moralistic tract of authors like Plutarch who believe the Romans of his age (the late 1st century – early 2nd century CE) were too weak and content with the comforts of urban life to be able to defeat the Germans in open warfare, and that the manpower utilized in the recent civil wars would have been better used against the northern reaches.⁷⁰ However, it is Isaac’s reading of the *Germania* which give the greatest support to his theory. Isaac assumes the work to be a subjectively accurate assessment of German *mores* and customs – the basis of a ‘straight reading’ – but argues the true rationale behind the text is one of dire warning: the Germans are heirs to the mantle of manliness of bygone eras; never degenerates nor effeminate, despite being uncouth, and with a decided

⁶⁷ Isaac (2004), p. 430. Manilius 1.896-903, Strab. 7.1.4, Velleius 2.118. All of these authors shared the view that to trust the Germans was tantamount to self-harm, as those who were trusted were the most apt to cause problems. For further reading on Manilius and the Gauls see S.J Green and Volk (2011), Volk (2009), and Woolf (2011). For commentary on Manilius’ *Astronomica* see Housman (1932) and Van Wageningen (1915). For further reading concerning Velleius’ historiographic contributions see Cowan (2011). For commentary on *The Tiberian Narrative* see Woodman (1977).

⁶⁸ Isaac (2004), p. 430. Manilius 4.794.

⁶⁹ Isaac (2004), pp. 430-431. Sen. *Ira*. 2.15. For commentary see W.H Alexander (1943), and Kaster and Nussbaum (2010)

⁷⁰ Isaac (2004), pp. 431-432. Plut. *Pomp*. 70.3-5. For commentary see Forrest (1986), Perrin (1914), and Warner (1972).

propensity for extreme action.⁷¹ They represented the greatest external threat to the empire, having been disregarded in an age of internal Roman conflict. Isaac concludes, “the message of Tacitus’ *Germania*, therefore, is that the Germans are too dangerous for Rome to leave unconquered.”⁷² Nevertheless, to Isaac, the affirmation of Germanic purity, bellicosity, and hyper-masculinity still constitutes a pattern of racism and stereotype.⁷³

Painter (2010) reiterates many of Isaac’s sentiments but is more interested in the *Germania*’s influence on early-modern history. She notes the reversal of the essentially stereotypical, if not racist, views of prehistoric Germans and their use in rationalizing systematic racism two millennia later.⁷⁴ Painter wholeheartedly agrees with Isaac’s appraisal of Tacitean pessimism regarding any theoretical engagement with Germans and the likelihood of a Roman defeat.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, she states that the *Germania* belongs alongside the progenitors of “modern ethnic stereotyping,” and that “the wilderness of the *Germania* recalls a young manhood lost to the Roman Empire.”⁷⁶ Painter goes on, however anachronistically, to compare the plight of the Germans and the Gauls and their status as noble savages to native tribes during the era of American conquest; casting Vercingetorix and Arminius as Sioux chiefs such as Sitting-Bull or the Apache warrior

⁷¹ Isaac (2004), p. 436.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Isaac (2004), p. 438.

⁷⁴ Painter (2010), p. 28.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Painter (2010), p. 28.

Geronimo.⁷⁷ Again, however misguided such a comparison is, there does exist a notion of applicability in terms of rationale.

The Gauls: A Less Conspicuous Savage

The Gauls, and specifically Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, present us with a different aspect of moral revision, one which is more complex but also more easily accepted. From the sack of Rome in ca. 390 BCE to the late empire, Rome's relationship with Gaul represented a unique example of foreign policy and diplomacy, particularly in literature and political treatises; a shared bellicosity, but during the composition of their ethnographies, a homogeneity of interests and resources. As the Gauls began to 'infiltrate' the upper echelons of Roman society, the Romans faced a ponderous predicament; how do we depict a nation and race who are not particularly amiable (on account of three centuries of conflict) but are both vital (in terms of land allocation and resources), and plentiful in the seats of government? To this we can add the precarious *detente* between xenophobia and maintaining a working relationship with a people who embody a type of 'new money' or wealthy freedman status.

A preliminary discussion of early modern views of Celtic ethnography is of importance for contextualizing our previously mentioned assessment of German

⁷⁷ Painter (2010), p. 28. This is not to assume Painter's comparison to be distasteful. As we have seen with Tacitus, ethnographic cross-cultural assessments are often made in terms which the readership may comprehend. Nevertheless, I feel the comparison to be misguided on an intrinsic level, assuming colonialism is tantamount to invasion and pitched battle to genocide; although in the case of Caesar the comparison may be more apt, in the case of the mass-slaughter of Gauls and their subsequent enslavement (see Plut. *Caes.* 48). It has been posited that Plutarch's number of one million Gauls slaughtered or enslaved has been greatly exaggerated: see Goldsworthy (2006), pp. 184-204.

ethnography. The works of B.G Niebuhr are indicative of the intellectual comprehension of Gallic ethnography within pre-war philology. Niebuhr's 1856 work *Ancient Geography and Ethnography*, which concerns the Gauls, makes particular use of Caesar, Eratosthenes, and Strabo, in a rather idiosyncratic interpretation. His appraisal of Caesar on the Gauls in *Bellum Gallicum* is indicative of his ethnographic focus. He believes Caesar to be too cavalier in his summation of the Gauls, and argues, without a shred of corroborative evidence, that Gaul was a German-held territory, which has been re-appropriated by modern 'Frenchmen.'⁷⁸ Furthermore he holds that 'true' Gauls only ever inhabited the modern territorial divisions of Britain and Scotland.⁷⁹ Such outlandish assertions (his statements about ancient Gauls are based solely on his ability to understand modern Celtic languages) add little to his commentary,⁸⁰ and, as Painter notes, "humanity moves around so much that no clear lines of descent trace back over two millennia."⁸¹ Ultimately Niebuhr and his contemporaries had little interest in the veracity of the claims or deductive reasoning in their assessment of ethnography. *Bellum Gallicum* was taken as a straightforward scientific monograph, which catered both to European ethnocentrism and the inherent belief of the worthlessness of non-Mediterranean cultures in pre-war scholarship. His intent seems fixed upon establishing

⁷⁸ Niebuhr (1856), p. 302. Niebuhr ultimately blames this appropriation on Caesar's tripartite division of Gaul (*BG*. 1.1). Nevertheless, Niebuhr had positive intentions in such a claim, here in defense of Eratosthenes who he felt had a more well-defined grasp of Gallic boundaries. That said, the claim is still made with an air of Teutonic superiority. For commentary on Eratosthenes see Roller (2010).

⁷⁹ Niebuhr (1856), p. 302.

⁸⁰ The following may be considered a product of 19th century elitism: "I can speak positively on the subject, because I am to is a good extent acquainted with the Celtic language, and because, in my earlier years, I spent some time in Scotland." Niebuhr (1856), p. 305.

⁸¹ Painter (2010), p. 30.

racial and geographic boundaries between ‘Celtic’ (sic) and ‘Germanic’ tribes so one may properly claim modern descent accurately;⁸² a rather panegyric and ultimately fruitless endeavor.

Such outdated modes of inquiry persist even now, although they have been defanged of the more reprehensible aspects. Colin Renfrew, in his article “Prehistory and Identity of Europe,” stresses the importance of establishing ethnographic boundaries, not for the sake of tracing modern geo-social lineage, but for modern anthropology – going so far as to say that ‘Celtic’ ethnicity never existed and that such terms were a label enforced and imposed by Greek and Roman geographers for the sake of facility.⁸³ On one hand, it is undeniable that ‘Celticness’ was a creation of 18th century Romanticism, and that we know nothing of the peoples by way of autobiography. On the other hand, however, it is extremely reductionist to deny the validity of commentators such as Caesar, (here branded a mere narrator) due to a post-modern interpretation which posits that as “actors of the modern world” we have a responsibility to disavow loose concepts of race and ethnography in antiquity to dissuade the rise of nationalism.⁸⁴ It is quite clear we are

⁸² Niebuhr (1856), pp. 303-305.

⁸³ Renfrew (1996), pp. 131, 135. Renfrew makes a rather grievous error by connecting ancient works of Caesar, Strabo, Sallust, etc., with the pan-Celtic revival of 18th century Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall. Undeniably, claiming ‘Celtic’ ethnicity during the Romantic era was a product of historical revisionism, but it is folly to assume that the ancient commentaries are not extractable from later historical misappropriation. In *Ger.* 77-78 we read of the Germani, a powerful Gallic clan who gave their name to the people. Furthermore denying a ‘Celtic’ ethnicity is to deny that Latin ethnographers were, at least provisionally, interested enough to retain tribal divisions. We see a similar situation in the aforementioned case of Native American tribes: while tribal names are often Anglo-French bastardizations of the aboriginal language, i.e. Chippewa vs. Ojibwa, the tribal divisions are still valid and accurate.

⁸⁴ Renfrew (1996), p. 135. While nationalism derived from ancient texts is without a doubt a by-product of the worst aspects of aggressive positivism, denying the

not beyond our own form of moral revision: out of a justified fear of misguided nationalism we anachronistically attribute tenets of modern altruistic anthropology to ancient cultures (here the Gauls) relying on sources which neither were concerned with, nor had any understanding of, the concepts of objective scientific anthropology.⁸⁵

Although Isaac sees the ethnography of Gauls as more or less a prelude, or rather a precedent, to German racial stereotyping, his interpretations of Diodorus, Juvenal, and Cassius Dio's writings concerning the Gauls are succinct. It must be stated in preface that the Gauls appeared on the Roman geographical radar far before the majority of their imperial foes; this long history of interaction, spanning centuries, contributes to the discrepancy in creating any sort of overarching summation of 'the Gauls.' As stated previously, from Plato to the sack of Rome to Caesar and beyond, there is a long history, and a long memory – most of which is lost.⁸⁶ Isaac traces the source of the Gallic stereotype (in pursuit of a discernable proto-racist tendency of ancient ethnography) and ultimately the Germanic stereotype – to Polybius, who speaks of a 'pure' statuesque

applicability of, or even neglecting, the ancient texts is as equally damaging to the discipline.

⁸⁵ We are often quick to forget the ill repute of anthropology, born out of a colonial curiosity for knowledge of 'savages', and remained so until the institution of ethical codes and review boards. The early days of anthropology likely have more in common with aspects of ancient ethnography than many care to admit. For further reading see Ackerman (2008), pp. 143-158, Glick (2008), pp. 225-241, and Proctor (2008), pp. 259-274.

⁸⁶ Isaac (2004) p. 411. Isaac correctly assumes the literary history of the most powerful era of the Gallic military threat is lost to us and what remains is merely the Roman interpretation of provincial Gauls contemporary to, and after, Caesar. Plutarch (*Marc.* 3.2), and Polybius (2.31.7) both refer to the early Gauls as Rome's greatest enemy, with the ability to inspire fear beyond all others. The Celtic invasion of 231 BCE was described as "second to no war in history" by Polybius (2.54.2). For commentary on Plutarch see n. 70. On Polybius see McGing (2010), Walbank (1957), and Waterfield (2009). For further reading on Polybius and ethnography see Baronowski (2010) and Eckstein (1995). For further discussion on the discrepancy of definition pertaining to the Gauls see chapter 3, pp. 80-84.

population, their love of drink, bellicosity, and capriciousness.⁸⁷ These sentiments were echoed verbatim by Diodorus two centuries later – with the addition of an ‘inherent greed,’ an odd characteristic to be ascribed to a western people, but one which was, as we shall see, could be effectively wielded by a Roman aristocrat given the geo-political climate of the era.⁸⁸ While Strabo diverges little from the writings of Polybius,⁸⁹ there is a noted effort to rationalize the inherent traits of the Gauls: their physical size and sheer numbers contributed to their war-like nature, and their impulsiveness derived from a propensity to defend any insult or slight, perceived or otherwise, not only to themselves, but to neighboring clansmen.⁹⁰ Strabo, however, predicates the majority of his Gallic socio-cultural traits on the assumption that Germans, then unconquered, and Gauls, then subdued and amalgamated, were related enough to share any and all innate similarities, in contrast to Tacitus’ view of the autochthony of each people.⁹¹

Thus far I have merely summarized the ancient scholarly tendency towards the perceived universality of Gallic sociocultural habits, and while this may suffice for Isaac’s proclamation of proto-racism in ancient ethnography, it does little to further our claim of a decipherable moral revisionism in the case of the Gauls. For this I turn again to Tacitus, specifically the *Annales*, concerning the inclusion of provincials in the senate. Against inclusion it was argued that the senate should remain a body of ‘native’ Italian

⁸⁷ Isaac (2004), p. 412. Polybius, 2.7.5, 2.15.7, 2.19.4, 2.35.2, 3.49.2, 3.78.5. For commentaries on Polybius see n. 86.

⁸⁸ Isaac (2004), p. 416. Diod. 5.26.2-3, 5.28.1, 5.32.2, 5.32.4-5. For further reading concerning Diodorus and the Gauls see Sulimani (2011), pp. 165-307. For commentary on *Bibliothèque* see Oldfather (1933).

⁸⁹ Isaac (2004), p. 417.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Strabo 4.1.5, 4.4.2.

⁹¹ Isaac (2004), p. 418. Tacitus *Ger.* 1,2,4.

citizens, so as to not appear “vanquished by the conquered” (*vincendo victim sumus*).⁹² If any argument of moral revision is to be made, it is to be made here: while the Gauls are said to be wealthy (and according to Plutarch, inordinately greedy) they are never described as savages nor ‘true’ barbarians, as the Germans are, for reasons surrounding integration.⁹³ While Roman *equites* may have complained of Gallic provincial wealth, there is no notion of miscegenation or devalued lineages by foreign intrusion or Gallic intermarriage.⁹⁴ The emperor Claudius was one such advocate of Gallo-Roman integration, relates Tacitus, to both keep the peace and replenish the imperial coffers with Gallic wealth.⁹⁵ The ‘equality’ of the provincial Gauls was held at the behest and pleasure of the aristocracy, and could be revoked when seen as profitable.⁹⁶ Cassius Dio thus attributed the faults of the later emperor Caracalla to his Gallic birth: the familiar inconstancy, impulsiveness, and cowardice, which we see in the denigration of the Gauls,

⁹² Isaac (2004), p. 419. Tacitus *Ann.* 11.23-25, according to Isaac this was the common complaint about Gallic immigrations: the fear of foreign nationals taking positions of the ‘native’ population. This was of course legitimized by the aristocracy, who claimed that the ancestors of these Gallic senators to be the same men who fought Caesar (Plutarch *Pyrrhus* 26.6) and took the capitol (Cicero *Font.* 27-36). For commentary on Plutarch see n. 70; concerning the *Pro Font.* see Watts (2000).

⁹³ Isaac (2004), p. 419. The question surrounding Gallic integration into the empire, the stages of acculturation, and its varied implementations is not one to be summarized briefly. Gallic integration, acculturation, and – to many – Romanization, was a unique process, and scholarship on the subject has mostly now agreed on a two-way acculturation. See chapter 2 concerning issues of Gallic integration and its consequences regarding moral revision. For further reading see Woolf (1998).

⁹⁴ Isaac (2004), p. 418. The importance of this apparent ‘acceptance’ cannot be overstated. Although Greek marriage and paternity laws were far more strict, legitimacy and the retention of ancestral bloodlines, particularly to patrician families, were of the utmost importance. See Treggiari, (1991), pp. 83-124.

⁹⁵ Isaac (2004), p. 418 Tacitus *Ann.* 11.23-25.

⁹⁶ Isaac (2004), p. 421 See the following section on “Caesar and the Gauls” particularly the analysis of McDonnell.

are seen here as the essential character faults of Caracalla. This motif of transient virtue is far more prevalent in the works of Caesar, to which we shall now turn.

Caesar and the Gauls

The sheer amount of exegetical texts and opinions surrounding Caesar and his interaction with the Gauls necessitates its own section but space precludes anything more than a brief summary of current scholarship.⁹⁷ Thus I will limit my discussion to the most applicable items in secondary scholarship. Benjamin Isaac, who has thus far been invaluable in his compilation and commentary on Gallic representations in literature, is no less helpful in his assessment on Caesar's Gallic commentary. He argues that Caesar's decade-long first-hand interaction with the Gallic frontier resulted in an independent and idiosyncratic representation of Gallic customs and warfare, which is not wholly dependent, as many commentators are quick to claim, on previous authors such as Poseidonius and Polybius.⁹⁸ Caesar's praise of Gallic *virtus* cannot be overstated, (an aspect I will examine in the following section) but, nevertheless, in his construction of the dichotomy of Gallic *levitas* vs. Roman *gravitas*, as well as his praise of Vercingetorix and

⁹⁷ For further reading concerning Caesar's assessment of the Gauls see Aldhouse-Green (2010), Gruen (2011a. and b.), and James (1993), pp. 118-153. Concerning Caesar's authorial intent and literary style see Barlow (1998), pp. 139- 170, Hall (1998), pp. 11-44, Rawlings (1998), pp. 171-192, and Torigan (1998), pp. 45-60. For commentary on *BG.* see Coolidge (1961), Gould and Whiteley (1959), Kennedy (1959), Macdevitt (1923), Newhouse and Greig (1965), Rice-Holmes (1908), and Wiseman, A. & P. (1980).

⁹⁸ Isaac (2004), pp. 413-415. Isaac argues that the influence of Poseidonius upon Caesar's Gallic commentary has been greatly over exaggerated. Even so, Isaac is hesitant to attribute any other author of the Hellenic tradition (Polybius or Diodorus) as Caesar's frame of reference. Isaac sees more of said authors, and their instinctual denigration of the Gauls, in Cicero (*Pro Font.* 27-36). For further examination of Caesar's precursors see chapter 3.

the Gallic lust for freedom in the face of Roman servitude, Caesar sets a precedent for authors such as Diordorus and Plutarch to transmit lingering northern stereotypes.⁹⁹ Nor was Caesar himself immune to the reiteration of pre-established ethnic stereotypes, such as in the case of the *Belgae* and the equation of northerness with fierceness in battle.¹⁰⁰ Contrary to the previous statement, however, to Caesar such a trope was not gospel: those Gauls remaining in or emigrating to the south did not necessarily lose in their bellicosity due to the proximity of cities and urban life, but rather could retain their martial *virtus*.¹⁰¹ Isaac describes this as forward-thinking on the part of Caesar, who was “less impressed with the notion of pure lineage and the corrupting effects of wealth than some Roman authors.”¹⁰²

McDonnell (2006), writing on the transience of *virtus* in Caesar’s commentaries, follows a generally similar path to Isaac but creates a clear collection of inferences applicable to and conducive to arguing moral revision. For McDonnell and Isaac, Caesar created a unique literary approach to his Gallic foe, and his usages of *virtus*, and its meanings, are consistent, always relating to “martial prowess or courage.”¹⁰³ This sentiment, McDonnell believes, is directly in contrast to previous etymology, particularly Sallust, who argues that *virtus* is a civic quality reserved for Romans.¹⁰⁴ McDonnell sees

⁹⁹ Isaac (2004), pp. 413-414.

¹⁰⁰ Isaac (2004), pp. 413, 415. Caesar *BG*. 2.4

¹⁰¹ Isaac (2004), p. 415. As we can see Caesar was not beyond a bit of self-hypocrisy. Neither Isaac, nor McDonnell, nor Rawlings offers any sort of conciliatory assessment of why the abrupt shift in tone and stance. See *BG*. 1.1, 2.4, 24.5-6.

¹⁰² Isaac (2004), p. 415.

¹⁰³ McDonnell (2006), p. 301.

¹⁰⁴ McDonnell (2006), p. 379. Though Sallust argues an ethical definition of *virtus* reserved for Romans, he has nothing but praise for Gallic bellicosity: *gloria belli Gallos ante Romanos fuisse*, (“the Gauls stand before the Romans in the glory of war,” *BC*. 53.3). For a list of commentaries on Caesar and the Gauls see n. 97.

the type of reverence Caesar bestows upon the Gauls (such as the Nervii who are said to have shunned colonial luxuries so as to not enervate their martial valour) as indicative of a two-fold purpose. By emphasizing the *virtus* of the Gauls, Caesar elucidates the threat which Gauls pose in terms which are palatable to a Roman audience, while simultaneously validating his own colonialist intentions and magnifying Roman victory.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the *virtus* of the Gauls is a transient and ephemeral quality. In this regard, McDonnell suggests Caesar succumbed to ethnic stereotyping: loss of *virtus* is a direct result of recklessness, “the greatest natural characteristic of that race of men.”¹⁰⁶ McDonnell asserts that Caesar, ultimately, is the judge of *virtus*, and that, regardless of any ostensible praise, it is a term employed for propagandistic purposes on both sides of the line; Caesar claims it was the extraordinary *virtus* of the Roman legions which defeated the army of Vercingetorix at Avaricum, while Vercingetorix argues, via Caesar, that siegecraft, not *virtus*, won the day.¹⁰⁷

Criticism of Caesar’s portrayal of the Gauls is often misguided. That is not to say Caesar is beyond reproach, but that the focus, more often than not, falls upon accusations of plagiarism of prior sources (Poseidonius), rather than on a more effectual endeavor to assess the intentions of Caesar’s Gallic portrayal. Rawlings (1998) is more forthright in his examination than most, and prefaces his investigation by doubting Caesarian veracity both in the area of the legitimacy of reports – in terms of Gallic martial prowess – and his indulgence in ethnic stereotyping.¹⁰⁸ Rawlings outlines the tension between the influential works of Tierney (1960) and Nash (1976): the former believes the thrust of *BG*

¹⁰⁵ McDonnell (2006), p. 303.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ McDonnell (2006), pp. 307-308.

¹⁰⁸ Rawlings (1998), p. 171.

is an incoherent and ill-conceived attempt at establishing itself within the accepted genres of historiography by adopting well-worn motifs (such as ruggedness in relation to northernness);¹⁰⁹ the latter arguing that Caesar's personal experiences over a decade-long engagement would preclude the use of prior second-hand ethnographic accounts, and finds more *gravitas* in his use as a serious source on Gallic prehistory.¹¹⁰ Echoing McDonnell, Rawlings argues that the crux lay in Caesar's use of both racial stereotypes, and appealing to the weakness of his readership for justification and glory, subscribing to neither theory entirely.¹¹¹ In opposition to Tierney, Rawlings asserts that such descriptions of Gauls further from Italia proper do not intrinsically mean more a barbaric demeanor, as we see in the description of the Germans; but rather, that the encounters with increasingly distant cultures become exponentially less intelligible to the Roman purview.¹¹² This, taken in conjunction with Caesar's logical rendering of Gallic social *mores* and customs into a narrative intelligible to a Roman audience, creates an unavoidable ideological slant which is cast over Caesar's entire ethnological summation.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Rawlings (1998), p. 172, and above. Also within the textual analysis of the *Germania* I will extensively cover environmental theory and its relation to the northern tribes and its use as a motif among ethnographers. See chapter 2 sections II and III.

¹¹⁰ Rawlings (1998), p. 172.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Rawlings (1998), p. 173. Rawlings, more than any other author, has succinctly established the reason for the wildly varying accounts of the more northerly reaches of the empire.

¹¹³ Rawlings (1998), p. 174.

Chapter II: Tacitus' *Germania*

I. Introduction

Due to the general lack of moral revisionist theories within modern scholarship on ancient ethnography, I feel the need to preface this chapter in the following way. In order to argue convincingly in favour of moral revision in other works besides the *Germania*, I will first assess and deconstruct the text according to the tenets of the moral revisionist framework.¹¹⁴ As such, the following chapter is heavily indebted to the work of Richard Wenghofer, who has put forth one of the few encompassing and cogent arguments in favour of a moral revisionist reading of the *Germania*. It is my hope that in relating his findings, with complementary additions from more recent scholarship, I will expand this methodology beyond its application to Tacitus' monograph.

I will begin this in-depth analysis of primary source material with the largest monograph dedicated to non-Romans and concerning a singular people: the Germanic tribes. It is not enough, however, to simply state the *Germania*, and by association the Germanic peoples, is the product of a contrived moral revision. I will first establish how the *Germania* fails to adhere to any preexisting ethnographic genre, and attempt to place the monograph within a framework which allows us to trace a discernable slant of moral revision, both separate and existential, of Tacitus' own works. It must be stated that previous attempts arguing – or even alluding to – moral revision, from the brief contemplation of Anderson's Tacitean commentary¹¹⁵ to Wenghofer's groundbreaking effort, ultimately fall victim to a peripatetic approach which renders examination and

¹¹⁴ For a summation of the moral revisionist framework see chapter 1, pp. 2-3, 9-18.

¹¹⁵ Anderson (1938), x.

analysis of primary source material both haphazard and disjointed.¹¹⁶ In response I propose that we take as our starting point Anderson's statement: that there is a natural tendency to study foreign culture, both its customs and peoples, through a filter of one's own social norms – and use it to further our own investigation.¹¹⁷ Such an approach I consider viable as I believe my conclusions to be a reinforcing, and elucidation of, Flavian-era Roman (rather than German) moral commentary. Firstly, I will attempt to establish the *Germania* within the parameters of the genre of ancient ethnography to underscore both the irregularities and paradoxes of its composition. Next, following the implications of my findings regarding the question of genre, I will attempt to deduce the philosophical influences on Tacitus' moral inclinations. Finally, I intend to employ the following organizational breakdown which critically assesses the implicit moral inclination of the text: Tacitus' systematic rendering of an idealized Germanic 'lifecycle;' I. Birth and Childhood, II. Adolescence, III. Manhood, Warfare, and the Public Sphere, IV. Private Life, Marriage, and Sexuality, and V. Death & Burial. This provides a two-fold benefit: first, a homogenous analog to Tacitus' own sociological interests with established Roman models, and secondly, it provides the opportunity to streamline the argument within the context of perceived Roman moral failings of Tacitus' age while avoiding the broad pitfalls of the *topos* of continuous 'moral decline.'¹¹⁸ Such a position,

¹¹⁶ That is not to say either Anderson or Wenghofer approach the material, or the concept of moral revision, superficially, but both analyses lack a methodical approach to authorial intentions. I hope to rectify this by streamlining the discussion into an examination of the Germanic 'lifecycle.'

¹¹⁷ Anderson (1938), x, Wenghofer (1994), p. 42.

¹¹⁸ The *topos* of continual moral and societal decline has long been thought of as the hallmark of Silver Latin (ca. 14-117 CE), particularly within rhetoric and the writings of Juvenal and Lucan (the *Satires* and *Bellum Civile* respectively). Although 'moral revision' and the Silver Latin concept of 'moral decline' may appear synonymous, the

on the part of modern commentators, often assumes a rather rhetorical trajectory, and by extension, indulges a fairly outdated interpretation of Silver Latin; that is, an interpretation with a tendency to reduce its works to hollow rhetoric and exercises in futility, an ‘art for arts sake’ ideal imbued with an anachronistic air of post-modernity. But before delving headlong into the ‘lifecycle,’ we must first establish how the *Germania* fails to sit within the framework of the ethnographic genre, and furthermore, whether or not the work can be situated independently of the models of ethnography *en masse*. It is my intention that the question of genre, and whether or not the *Germania* belongs to a particular subset of ethnographic writing, will serve as the foundation upon which I will argue the work’s revisionist leanings.

II. A Hard Land: Dystopia and Irregularities of Genre

It is often the tendency when constructing cross-cultural sociological comparisons to see the subject through a filter of our own cultural and societal norms, either through a calculated effort or by subconscious reaction.¹¹⁹ As a result, Tacitean commentators, such as Earl (1967) and Anderson (1938), rationalize the *Germania*’s overt moralistic tone as characteristic of the ethnographic genre.¹²⁰ Indeed, a cursory glance at ancient ethnographical writings reveal a fascination with the fantastic and bizarre, far removed

ideas are not the same. The *topos* of moral decline within Silver Latin dealt broadly with the belief that, according to Henderson (2010): “civilization is just an orgiastic procession of self-mutilation, built on the self-falsifying logic of war.” Blundell (1986) interprets the animus of Silver Latin to be a reaction against the moral and societal progressivism of writers like Diodorus. In contrast, as I will posit, the idea of moral revision is a clearly protracted critique against a specific ‘fault’ or instance of societal failing. For further reading see Blundell (1986), pp. 198-202, Dilke (1972), pp. 62-82, Henderson (2010), and Rawson (1985), pp. 143-55.

¹¹⁹ Anderson (1938), x, xiv.

¹²⁰ Anderson (1938), xiv, Earl (1967), p. 90, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 68-69.

from the safeties of the western Mediterranean— but to assume that lists of curios and oddities equate to moral commentary is a grievous overstatement. Wenghofer establishes two broad categories of ancient ethnography; the first being scientific (those mainly concerned with, and contained within, larger geographical volumes), and the second bearing a more romantic slant (concerned with exoticism, utopia, and a general predilection towards cultural exploitation).¹²¹ Though Wenghofer suggests the *Germania* contains elements of both, it rigidly adheres to neither, as Syme notes: “Germany or Britain, Tacitus shows little [genuine ethnographic] interest in it.”¹²²

Concerning scientific ethnography, it is easy to be fooled by Tacitus’ convincingly constructed landscape, and misled by his straightforward and sober treatment of the material. One could almost argue that the *Germania* could be placed alongside Strabo or Ptolemy – notwithstanding the crucial difference that the monograph lacks any scientific data, preferring to omit “distances, place names, and topographical detail.”¹²³ That is not to say the *Germania* fails to subscribe to any semblance of scientifically-minded ethnography; on the contrary, we read of tribal origins, methods of rule, marriage, and burial customs.¹²⁴ But the idiosyncrasies of the *Germania* overpower its ethnographical mundanity; as stated, it is unparalleled in its monographic treatment of

¹²¹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 70. This is not a division without merit. The bipartite division contains the major aspects and genre tropes, while creating a coherent and cogent organizational breakdown. Of course, this is not to say that all ethnographic writing, monograph, excursus, or other, rigidly conforms solely to one form of ethnography. Clearly the extant literature is rife with overlap: one instance is Caesar’s factual yet self-serving treatment of the Gallic war, while at the same time embracing the fantastic elements of romantic ethnography.

¹²² Syme (1956), p. 26, quoted in Wenghofer (1994), p. 70.

¹²³ Wenghofer (1994), p. 73.

¹²⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 70.

a singular people.¹²⁵ The tendency is often to relegate such treatments to ethnological excurses within a larger historiographical volume (for instance, Gallic, Germanic, and British customs in Caesar's *BG*, or within Pliny's *Natural History*)¹²⁶ a likely holdover from ethnography's Greek origins.¹²⁷ Strabo's universal history by nature of its scope contains such scientific ethnographical digression,¹²⁸ while Diodorus Siculus, whose work I will examine in detail in the following section, provides analogous excurses with a decided partiality for the curious and romantic.¹²⁹ As such, the singularity of the *Germania*'s form is puzzling. Although some attribute its publication to a separate elongated ethnographical excursus detached from its larger volume, as noted above,¹³⁰ there persists a lingering sentiment which argues that classical Greek curiosity, which drove the study of foreign cultures, was notably absent from Roman literary priorities.¹³¹ Though the assertions are broad, and unsubstantiated, the implications are intriguing. Rawson, in her tracing of intellectual trends in the late Empire, notes this distinct lack of

¹²⁵ Wenghofer (1994), p. 71. Rives (1999 pp. 56-66) posits that 'Germani' are an entirely Roman creation, and attempts to outline the issues of Tacitus' approach of defining a people through this construction, and from a stance of imperial dominance. Both authors Rives (1999) and Renfrew (1996) cite imperialistic motivation in the creation of ethnography, Rives – Latin imperial ethnography under both the Republic and Principate, Renfrew – the tribal divisions of Native Americans, and the changing definitions of tribal unity from the time of first European contact to American-Indian conflicts during the time of displacement. Both authors pursue, and are successful, in their assessment of imperialism as the source of 'created' ethnographic divisions, however, in terms of 'moral revision' such conflict surrounding semantics is a moot issue if we consider these tribes, and their applicable ethnographic treatment, to be constructions in service of moral contrast. For further examinations of tribal divisions in ancient ethnography see chapter 1, pp. 21-22, n. 83.

¹²⁶ Ibid. See chapter 2, sec. V

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 72. For further commentary on Diodorus see chapter 1, n. 88.

¹³⁰ For the various theories concerning the composition of the *Germania* see chapter 1, pp. 8-11.

¹³¹ Rawson (1985), p. 257.

Roman interest in foreign cultures – scientific or otherwise.¹³² Anderson, ever the Tacitean, argues otherwise; with subjugation, Greek intellectual curiosity waned, thus leaving the threads of ethnography to be picked up by the Romans – the irony being (as Strabo notes)¹³³ the Roman tendency to copy Greek models, borne out of a lack of curiosity which resulted in the aforementioned cultural apathy. With both sides presenting convincing propositions, I do not intend to reconstruct the reasons behind Roman intellectual drive; nevertheless, I will examine the correlation between imperialism and inquiry in section IV. Peripheral as the argument may be, it does expose another intriguing facet: if there did exist, as both sides argue, an ever-diminishing interest in scientific ethnography, why then does there exist a monograph conspicuously unlike both Greek and Roman predecessors?

As stated, Tacitus, though clearly pursuing the shadow of scientific ethnography, has little patience for taking on its substantive aspects. This does not, however, place the *Germania* within the parameters of so-called ‘romantic ethnography,’ concerned with exploitative and fantastical elements and designed primarily to entertain, as Wenghofer rightly asserts.¹³⁴ Like the Thucydidean statement of intent which often began scientific

¹³² Rawson (1985), p. 257, Wenghofer (1994), p. 72. Rawson postulates that such Roman ethnographic apathy was born out of the cultural inferiority complex with Greek literature, and that it was a reflection of Roman literary pursuits abdicating their Greek forbearers to create their own literary mark. This assessment is reductively suppositional. Wenghofer provides a far more plausible rationale: foremost, that Greek and Roman models must be, in this case, assessed and analyzed against militaristic and imperialistic pursuits. In the case of Roman ethnographic curiosity we cannot discount the shift of interest, among the public, from scientific to exploitative assessments of foreign, and subjugated, cultures. For further reading concerning the progression of ethnographic focus in Latin literature see Rawson (1985), pp. 251-266.

¹³³ *Strab.* 3.166, Wenghofer (1994), p. 72. For further reading and commentary on Strabo and ethnography see chapter 1, n. 66

¹³⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 73

ethnographic excurses, romantic ethnography similarly led with a Herodotean authorial distancing – the compulsory “they say” or “it is said” – and the *Germania* lacks either.¹³⁵

Diodorus Siculus is often noted for his predilection for the odd and obscure elements of foreign cultures, such instances ranging from the innocuous¹³⁶ to the outlandish.¹³⁷

Whether or not one places stock in the aforementioned statement (that the Romans were less culturally curious than their Greek forbearers), there is a great deal of evidence of the Roman fondness for the peculiarities of defeated foreign cultures.¹³⁸ This is traceable to the early days of Caesarian conquest (ca. 58-51 BCE); Caesar himself speaks of the wondrous German fauna, which, again, spans from the arguably accurate¹³⁹ to the

¹³⁵ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 73-74. As we shall see, the correlation between Tacitean statement of intent and a text’s relative abstruseness is dependent upon the subject and level of moralistic intent. Whereas the *Histories* and the *Annals* bear clear statements of didactic intent, the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, written following the reign of Domitian, are particularly veiled. For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Tacitean intent and didactic relevance see pp. 69-72.

¹³⁶ Such as the power of Gallic diviners who “when two armies approach each other in battle, with swords drawn and spears thrust forward, these men step forth between them and cause them to cease, as though having cast a spell over certain kinds of wild beasts” (*Diod.* 31.5). For further commentary concerning Diodorus and ethnography see chapter 1, n. 88

¹³⁷ For example, the recollections of materialized sphinxes “in both Troglodyte country and Ethiopia, and in shape, not unlike those depicted in art” (*Diod.* 35.4),¹³⁷ or the *cynocephali*, who “are in body like misshapen men, and they make a sound like the whimpering of humans . . . the female . . . carries the womb on the outside of its body during its entire existence” (*Diod.* 35.5). For commentary see n. 88.

¹³⁸ Wenghofer (1994), p. 76.

¹³⁹ Such as the depiction of reindeer as “an ox of the shape of a stag, between whose ears a horn rises from the center of the forehead . . . like palms stretched out to a considerable distance” (*BG.* 6.26). Hyde (1918), pp. 234-239, makes a commendable effort at teasing out the tangible thread of development of the ‘unicorn myth’ from Ktesias’ *Indica* to Caesar’s treatment of the single-antlered reindeer. Hyde’s clear and linear description of the traditional dissemination of the ethnographic tropes provides an informative introduction to the conventions of the genre, but it is inherently a product of late modern positivism and a recipient of all its incumbent criticisms and baggage: namely that Caesar’s reporting of flora and fauna of the Gallic and Germanic territories was far from fantastical and not, some exceptions notwithstanding, ‘romantic ethnography.’

unbelievable.¹⁴⁰ It is not difficult to deduce Caesar's intent: as a militant self-promoter, Caesar saw the value in appealing to the literate public by divulging the results of aggressive military expansion – the wonders of the subdued, if not thoroughly defeated, foreign opponents.¹⁴¹ Tacitus engages in such fantastical speculation only once in the *Germania* (“the rest is now the realm of fable: that the Hellusii and Oxiones have the faces of and visages of men, but the bodies of wild beasts: I shall put this aside as unproven” [*Ger.* 46.4], note, however, that this is bookended with the caveats of “fable” and “improbable).” Tacitus employs neither the empirical data of scientific ethnography as used by Strabo, nor the entertaining and romanticized fables of ‘far-off lands’, which so amused the masses.¹⁴²

Idealized moral conditions and comparisons, not unlike Tacitus' praise of Germanic moral fortitude, are often found alongside romantic ethnography's most archaic, and infamous, *topos* – the utopia. As Wenghofer outlines (citing the work of Blundell [1986]), such utopias are usually indicative of what we may refer to as an early form of escapist fiction.¹⁴³ Utopias, within ethnographic excurses, are characterized by

¹⁴⁰ See the description of the jointless elks who “have legs without joints or ligaments . . . nor do they lie down for purposes of rest . . . trees serve as beds to them” (*BG* 6.27). Such animals are hunted for game by cutting the ‘tree bed’ in such a way as to ensnare the unsuspecting creature. For further reading and commentary concerning Caesar and Gallic ethnography see chapter 1, n. 97.

¹⁴¹ Hyde (1918), pp. 232-233, Wenghofer (1994), p. 76.

¹⁴² Hyde (1918), p. 233, Wenghofer (1994), p. 76. Rawson (1985 pp. 257-258) notes that it was not uncommon for both the flora and fauna of defeated lands to be paraded in the procession of a triumphant general; for instance, Pompey's parading of Judean balsam and ebony, as well as the display of exotic animals in games, and his exhibition of the Gallic lynx and the *cephi* (theorized as baboons). For further reading on triumphal processions displaying flora and fauna of conquered enemies, and the influence of Egyptian art and its use of exotic and fantastical fauna in wealthy Roman households, see Rawson (1985), pp. 257-258.

¹⁴³ Wenghofer (1994), p. 77.

their far-off, indeed altogether indiscernible, distance; by an abundance of readily available sustenance; by an abundance of leisure; and by a static climate of perfection which renders its inhabitants exempt from moral and emotional extremity.¹⁴⁴ We may again turn to Diodorus, who spans the spectrum of utopianism from the unpretentious¹⁴⁵ to the ideally utopic.¹⁴⁶ Tacitus' work itself is not completely innocent of such utopic exaggeration: in his treatment of the Chauci, the northernmost Germanic tribe, they are described as "without greed, without violent passion, peaceful and isolated, they cause no wars, lay no waste by rape or plunder" (*Ger.* 35.2). They had no martial or imperial ambition, as Isaac notes, "they are an idealized people living close to the edge of the

¹⁴⁴ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 77-76. Tacitus' utopic exaggeration has much to do with the Roman literary *topos* of the 'Golden Age' (the Golden Age was a legendary time of universal bliss and leisure, in which people lived free from war and fear). Such utopias are often situated at the edge of the known world, unreachable by the inhabitants of the contemporary age. The concept is idealized and, as Blundell (1985) states, indicative of a clearly constructed inversion of the deficiencies and fears of the present. Although the idea of the Golden Age has existed at least since the time of Hesiod, it found its apex in Roman literature during the age of Augustus. Horace fabricated a form of geographical utopia in *Ep.* 16.64-5, while Vergil was preoccupied from the onset of his literary career with the Golden Age, particularly *Eclogue* 4 and in *Aeneid* 8. The most obvious instance comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Bk. I), in which a Hesiodic basis is closely maintained in the retelling of the first human beings: who were created in the image of the gods, born from the earth, and free from toil and war. For further reading on the Golden Age see Blundell (1985), pp. 135-227, Duff (1960), pp. 432-672, Griffin (2005), pp. 306-320, Wallace-Hadrill (1982) pp. 19-36, and White (2005), pp. 321-339. For commentary on the Golden Age in Horace's *Epodes* see Garrison (1991), Mankin (1995), and Watson (2003); in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* see Blundell (1985), pp. 135-227, Claeys (1999), pp. 6-9, and Harrison (2003) in Vergil see Adler (2003), pp.147-166, Van Sickle (2011).

¹⁴⁵ His view of the Britons is that they are "simple and far removed from the shrewdness and vice which characterize the men of our day. Their way of living is modest since they are well clear of the luxury which is begotten of wealth" (*Diod.* 21.6),

¹⁴⁶ Particularly regarding the plains of Panara, in which we read of the lofty cypresses, fruit bearing groves, and unmitigated forest, providing men leisure and the most abundant sustenance for enjoyment of all seasons, a land fit for gods (*Diod.* 43.1-3).

world.”¹⁴⁷ That said, the remainder of the text is conspicuously devoid of idealized generality. Rather, the reverse: Germany and its inhabitants are the quintessential northwesterners of environmental theory: the harsh landscape and foreboding climate are a reflection of its peoples — pure, hyper-masculine, and unyielding¹⁴⁸ — in short, everything which a hardnosed Catonian believed the Romans once were, and are now not.¹⁴⁹ What nature has denied the Germanic people (leisure, a moderate climate, abundant sustenance, literature, and philosophy) is responsible for the lack of moral turpitude, which, as we shall see, Tacitus believed plagued the Roman populace of his day.¹⁵⁰

Clearly, we cannot then ascribe Tacitus’ *Germania* to either form of classical ethnography. There is a distinct lack of, or even an attempt at, collection of empirical data, nor is there the indulgent inclusion of fantastical oddities and ethnographic curios popular with the reading public.¹⁵¹ Although subdued language governs the monograph, it is vacuous and without attempt at scientific reason or cartographical instruction. In addition, Tacitus presents us with a grim and frostbitten landscape— this is no utopia, nor

¹⁴⁷ Isaac (2004), p. 434. As discussed, and as I shall comment on below, Isaac adheres to the theory of aggressive militarism as the reason behind the composition of the *Germania*. To Isaac, the manifestation of Tacitean intent as a militaristic call to arms against a plausible Germanic threat is extractable from the monograph. Although its tone of militaristic virtue invites such an interpretation, Isaac goes to lengths to avoid the obvious criticism of Tacitus’ lack of military experience informing high command. Indeed the authorship of a monograph on a ‘singular’ people is odd, and with little precedent, but that Tacitus would publish a monograph as a thinly veiled critique, not in the form of a Philippic but in the form of counsel, is odder and purely suppositional.

¹⁴⁸ Isaac (2004), pp. 436-437, see Tacitus *Ger. 2,4, & 25, Hist. 4.76.9*.

¹⁴⁹ Isaac (2004), p. 436, Rives (1999) p. 62, Wenghofer (1994) pp. 61, 68.

¹⁵⁰ Wenghofer (1994) p. 78.

¹⁵¹ The question of who in fact such ‘romantic’ ethnographies were intended for begs for an independent scholarly investigation. Woolf outlines the issues concerning written ethnography, the exuberant price of books in antiquity, and the question of literacy among its intended audience. For further reading see Riggsby (2006), and Woolf (2011).

are its inhabitants physically dissimilar to the monograph's audience. In place of topographical and geographical description there is a discernable moralism, far removed from what can be comfortably thought of as the conventions of ethnography, leaving us, ultimately, a work without a recognizable genre.

III: Hard Primitivism and the Philosophical Forbearers of Tacitus

To successfully argue in favour of a moral revisionist reading of the *Germania*, I believe we must firmly establish the genre of the work. Clearly, we cannot comfortably place the *Germania* within the rather strict confines of either scientific or romantic ethnography. If indeed there is weight to be placed on the idea and framing of genre, we must examine literary predecessors to the *Germania* outside the area of classical ethnography.

I will first turn to Tacitus' own mention of Germany (in the *Annals* and the *Histories*)¹⁵² to establish, through his inconsistencies and anachronisms, the distinct lack of importance he placed on ethnographic integrity. Wenghofer outlines four specific instances of historical inconsistency, which are blatantly damaging to any argument that states that *Germania* functions as straight ethnography.

The first instance is a description of German women in the *Germania* as sacrosanct and revered, but not deified: "in time past they also worshipped *Aurinia* and several others, not because of fawning nor as if to make them goddesses" (*Ger.* 8.2). This

¹⁵² The scant mentions of Germanic culture in Tacitus' historiographical works, the *Annals* and *Histories*, stand in glaring opposition to the *Germania*; they, conversely, or rather predictably, have far more in common with stereotypical portraits of Germans found within other Roman authors, which I shall examine in the conclusion. See chapter 2, sec. V for an assessment of prior ethnographic accounts of the Germans in antiquity.

is different than Tacitus' portrayal of the Germans in his *Histories* (ca. 105/06 CE) who perpetrated the attack upon the legionary outpost at Vetera. German custom, he wrote, "regards many women as endowed with prophetic powers and . . . attributes divinity to them" (*Hist.* 4.61).¹⁵³ Tacitus is here revising his own literary past: the *Histories* assumes the Germans, much like their Roman counterparts, bore no qualms in elevating human women to divinity.¹⁵⁴ He mentions one Veleda – in the *Histories* a goddess, in the *Germania* revered – but the use of *adulatio*¹⁵⁵ at *Ger.* 8.2 suggests an air of insincerity, and the moral contrast is clear when we consider the word's use in the account of the deification of Nero's recently deceased four-month-old daughter Augustina in the *Annals*.¹⁵⁶ To further illustrate this tendency towards self-revision we may turn, as Wenghofer suggests, to Tacitus' conflicting depictions of German battle dress. In the *Germania*, military garb is light and stoically restrained: "[the Germans go about] naked or lightly garbed in a cloak. There is no show in their appearance" (*Ger.* 6.1). In the later *Histories*, the battle dress of the Germans attacking the encampment at Cologne in 70 C.E. is ostentatious, and easily targetable: the Romans "could clearly see . . . especially anyone who was marked by his courage and decorations" (*Hist.* 4.29).¹⁵⁷ It is possible, however, that restraint in garb was limited to the common soldier (*Ger.* 15.2), and that

¹⁵³ Wenghofer (1994), p. 32.

¹⁵⁴ Benario (1994), p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ *Veledam diu apud plerosque numinis loco habitam; sed et olim Auriniam et compluris alias venerati sunt, non adulatione nec tamquam facerent deas.* "... Veleda was for a long time considered a divinity by many; but in time past they also worshiped Aurina and several others, not because of fawning nor as if to make them goddesses." (*Ger.* 8.3).

¹⁵⁶ Here in reference to the sycophantic fawning of those quick to deify the recently dead. *Ann.* 15.23.3, Benario (1994), p. 74.

¹⁵⁷ Wenghofer (1994), p. 33.

Germanic chieftains only indulge in ostentation befitting rank.¹⁵⁸ An unimportant point to many commentators, it nevertheless reinforces a kind of Tacitean opportunism.¹⁵⁹ When befitting the glory of Rome – the Roman military’s capacity to hold back the Germanic, or rather foreign, foe on their own land – the failure of the enemy is the fault of barbarian greed, an innate character flaw of the ‘foreigner.’¹⁶⁰ Conversely, when Tacitus sets his sights upon his own countrymen, he does not hesitate to reverse his own literary past to suit his current critique.

While these first two instances are clearly socio-cultural (regarding topics which a Roman audience would find curious), the following examples which Wenghofer outlines stand in greater and more significant contrast to the main thrust of the moral tone of the *Germania*, and truly elucidate the lack of apprehension Tacitus had in revising his own literary past to pursue a new means of subversive critique. Two of the greatest virtues of the tribes in the *Germania*, in contrast to previous ethnographic characterization in Manilius and Velleius,¹⁶¹ are the strength of familial bonds and their lack of underhanded political machinations.¹⁶² Yet within the *Histories* we read of Briganticus (nephew of the rebel Rhinelanders Civilis), who, now a Roman pawn, bears nothing but contempt for his

¹⁵⁸ Benario (1994), p. 70.

¹⁵⁹ In the *Germania*, the German battle-lines, though willful and disobedient, fight with a stoic reserve, and apparent nudity, reminiscent of the tropes of epic (fearlessness, and a precedence given to individual, rather than unified, combat engagements). Again, such tropes are more applicable to the Gauls (i.e the ‘Dying Gaul’), but Tacitus is not beyond making epic allusion in his Germanic assessment. This is something far more apparent in his treatment of Germanic women, see pp. 63-64, and n. 243, 244.

¹⁶⁰ This inherent character flaw of the northern barbarians as governed by greed will become far more critical in our assessment of Gallic ethnographic moral revision. See chapter 3.

¹⁶¹ See chapter 1, n. 67.

¹⁶² Tacitus *Ger.* 9.3, 20.5, Wenghofer (1994), p. 34.

kin;¹⁶³ and of Italicus, a Cheruscan who, vying for monarchical candidacy, triumphs through back-alley politics and subterfuge.¹⁶⁴ While the deification of women and the description of battle dress are curios of sociological interest, it is the revision of the power of familial bonds and political integrity which are the most telling. Tacitus undercuts the institutions by which the Germans were formally defined and characterized.¹⁶⁵ While I restrict my commentary, for the sake of brevity, to literary inconsistencies, the numerous instances of historical anachronism only serves to reinforce the impression that Tacitus does not place much importance upon ethnographic validity.¹⁶⁶ I will not be so bold as to state these inconsistencies are decisive against

¹⁶³ Tacitus *Hist.* 4.70, Anderson (1938), pp. 116-117, Wenghofer (1994), p. 35.

¹⁶⁴ Tacitus *Ann.* 11.16, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 35-36.

¹⁶⁵ Benario (1994), p. 86. This revision of Germanic moral fortitude is formed with a rhetorical *sententia* which Benario singles out as one of Tacitus' most famous judgments of Roman vice: the active and passive repetition of *corrumpere* and *corrumpi*. He also notes the use of both passive and active verb forms as particularly emphatic. This construction appears, albeit with the verb order reversed, within *Ann.* 14.20.4 concerning the dissolution of morality under the principate of Nero. *Nemo enim illic vitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi saeculum vocatur*, "There no one laughs at vices, and corruption and being corrupted are not excused by invoking the times" (*Ger.* 19.1), compare with: *ut quod usquam corrumpi et corrumpere queat in urbe visatur*, "so that all which could suffer or produce corruption was to be seen at Rome," (*Ann.* 14.20.4).

¹⁶⁶ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 27-32. Wenghofer outlines several instances of Tacitean inaccuracy and anachronism out of keeping with archaeological evidence of Iron Age Germany. First, a statement concerning a lack of iron (*Ger.* 6.1) is incongruous with the fact the German Iron Age had begun 500 years prior to Tacitus' monograph, and that there was extensive ore mining at Schleswig-Holstein, the Bohemian Plateau, and in the area of Taunus. In *Ger.* 23.1 there is the suggestion that wine was an unknown commodity on the German frontier, but this is negated by the findings of elaborate wine-skins in both Jutland and Thuringia, and by Caesar's mention of the Germanic belief that wine was a source of effeminacy (*BG.* 4.2). Most tellingly, Tacitus believes that the Germans rejected luxury items of precious metals in favour of more practical earthenware (*Ger.* 5), but grave finds from the late first century CE until the Viking age often reveal a wealth of goods in silver, bronze, and glass, along with the aforementioned finds at Hildesheim in both silver and gold. To assert that these items hold no importance is illogical as these sites yielded some of the greatest finds from antiquity. Furthermore, there is Tacitus' assertion that the Germans practiced cremation, which is false.

placing the *Germania* within the ranks of either scientific or romantic ethnography, but I believe these findings to be sufficient to allow us to turn to the specifics of a true moral revisionist reading of the text.¹⁶⁷

If we cannot look to ethnography, in any deviation, nor to Tacitus' own literary past to give some semblance of generic context, how then do we contextualize the *Germania* in such a way which both places it convincingly within an established literary tradition, and is conducive to an argument of moral revision? Thus far it should be clear that I am both a proponent of, and have relied heavily upon, Wenghofer's assertions; but on the topic of Tacitus' literary forbearers and their influence upon the *Germania*, I find Wenghofer's conclusions unconvincing and out of keeping with the thrust of his admirable work. As such, I will make use of a collection of more recent theories concerning the *Germania*'s motivation which build upon Wenghofer's findings, but have, thus far, yet to meet on the page or in scholarly discussions on the issue. As we have discussed in the preceding section, the *Germania* does not lay in the tradition of romantic ethnography (particularly the concept of utopia); however, as Wenghofer argues, citing

Inhumation, from the 1st century BCE onwards, was the most common form of burial within the Germanic region. This is true from Jutland to the foothills of the Alpine border; one example from the Danish island of Hoby revealed a grave rife with bronze, silver, and gold ornaments, implements of precious metals and horn, and a massive mound surrounding the structure as a grave marker. Finally, the various geographic regions which Tacitus delineates as ancient *Germania* are inconsistent with the archaeological record. For further reading on the issue see Benario (1986) pp. 99-106, Brogan (1936), Cunliffe (1988), p. 179, Eriksen (2010), pp. 22-33, Syme (1958), Todd (1975), pp. 38, 149, and Wenghofer (1994), pp. 27-32.

¹⁶⁷ Commentators drawn towards a straight reading of the text, or at least a more positivistic approach, particularly Rives (1999, p. 155), gloss over these inconsistencies in the portrayal of the Germans in the Tacitean corpus. Such scholars often engage in a dialectal debate concerning the origin of German ethnic identity (Renfrew 1996), or make use of anachronistic data dating from the time of Charlemagne to the Viking age (Rives 1999) to support Germanic cultural *mores* in Tacitus' work. Neither identify nor rationalize the issue of Tacitean inconsistency.

the theories of Blundell (1986),¹⁶⁸ this idea of utopia, or ‘soft-primitivism’, has a philosophical counterpoint in the idea of a proto-Hobbesian ‘hard-primitivism:’ a philosophical ideal which dictates an ascetic existence, extolling virtue, labor, and honor, while eschewing greed, luxury, and vice¹⁶⁹ – the rough terrain and frigid climate of Germany being a harmonious analog to the breeding ground of character and spirit.¹⁷⁰ It is in analysis of philosophical rhetoric where Wenghofer’s argument begins to lose touch with practicality, and as a result we must seek a more reasonable path – which we may find in the writings of both Rives (1999), and Isaac (2004). Returning briefly to Wenghofer, he concludes his assessment on a note of philosophical advocacy, which while valid, is reductive and digressive, on a point which should be succinct and galvanizing. He argues that we must turn to Plato’s third book of *Laws* to find the genesis of the *Germania*’s literary predecessors, an excerpt which characterizes the survivors of Deucalion’s flood as paragons of virtue, and participants in ‘hard-primitivism’ – a people unskilled in the arts, and ignorant of scheming and machinations against their fellow countrymen conducive to greed and treachery.¹⁷¹ Furthermore the collection of sustenance for the survivors occupies such an inordinate amount of time that the cultivation of any wealth is impossible, resulting in a harmonious existence free from

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in, Wenghofer (2004), p. 82. For further reading on the concepts of utopianism and the Golden Age see n. 144.

¹⁶⁹ Rives (1999), p. 61, Wenghofer (1994), p. 82. This particular ethnographical concept finds its genesis in Ephorus’ ca. 4th century BCE treatise on the Scythians. For further reading on Ephorus and ethnography see Barber (1979), Nash (1979), and Tierney (1960).

¹⁷⁰ Wenghofer (1994), p. 83.

¹⁷¹ Plato *Laws* 3.677b, Wenghofer (1994), p. 83. For further reading on Plato and the myth of Deucalion see Benardete (2000), and Heidel (1933). For commentary on Plato’s *Laws* see England (1976).

quarrel.¹⁷² This connection, while ostensibly similar to Tacitus' portrait of the Germans, is intrinsically incompatible with our understanding of Romano-Germanic relations, their mutual relationship of bellicosity, the wealth of Germanic grave goods, and German reliance upon both kings and slaves.¹⁷³ Wenghofer even goes so far as to root the basis of his conclusion in the idea of 'the Golden Age', much akin to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, an idea completely at odds with the preceding thrust of his work.¹⁷⁴ Wenghofer notes that the most plausible Roman philosophical inspiration for the *Germania's* moralistic foundations is the works of the Stoics, particularly Seneca.¹⁷⁵ In the *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca outlines the tenets of simple existence. Borrowing heavily from Plato, he espouses that through the struggle for mere existence, nature provides all things born of practicality and need (never want) and thus, vice and luxury, the effects of sophistication, are kept at bay.¹⁷⁶ Wenghofer posits that "one gets the impression that Tacitus may have had Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* in front of him as he was composing the monograph."¹⁷⁷ Particularly striking is the reference to the Epicurean phrase in Seneca's *Ep.* 2.6, which expounds upon the correlation between liberty and poverty, and its similarity to Tacitus' treatment of the Fenni tribe: "there are no arms, no horses, no household; herbs serve as their food, hides as their clothing, the ground as their bed (*Ger.* 46.3)."¹⁷⁸ And indeed, this thesis would disprove the long-standing and well-entrenched notion that the

¹⁷² Plato *Laws* 3.677b. For further reading see Wenghofer (1994), p. 83.

¹⁷³ For archaeological inconsistencies and anachronism in the *Germania* see n. 166.

¹⁷⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 82. For further reading on Vergil and the Golden Age see n. 144.

¹⁷⁵ Wenghofer (1994), p. 84.

¹⁷⁶ Wenghofer (1994), p. 85.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

moralistic tone of the *Germania* does not continue past the monograph's 27th chapter.¹⁷⁹ It is even more convincing when we consider the correlation between Seneca's *Ep* 5.6 ("he is a great man who uses earthenware dishes as if they were silver") and *Germania* 5.4: ("... silver vessels, given as gifts, ... are considered no more valuable than clay") as such a comparison is exclusive to these passages in Latin literature.¹⁸⁰

When we look at these connections to Stoic texts, it is hard to argue against a strong influence; however, Wenghofer feels this revelation – the text's clear tone of Stoic philosophy – to be the *purpose* of the *Germania*, rather than another stepping-stone on the path to an understanding of the text. To argue that Tacitus had mildly Stoic sympathies is not beyond reason: we need only look to his treatment of Seneca's death in the *Annals*.¹⁸¹ But considering Tacitus to be not only an advocate of Stoic moralism – which is plausible, but a stalwart pillar of Stoicism not only introduces a host of philosophical issues which cannot be sufficiently examined alongside an argument in favour of moral revision, but overwhelms our analysis with an unsalvageable exegetical

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Wenghofer 1994: 86. Again Tacitus states that the Germans consider precious metals to be worthless, at odds with grave finds of Hildesheim, Saxony, Silesia, and Pomerania. For further reading on historical anachronism see n. 166. For commentary on Tacitus' literary inconsistency see Anderson (1938), p. 59, Benario (1994), p. 69, Gudeman (1900), lxii, Rives (1999), pp. 133-134. Gudeman, although critical of any insinuation of a moralist interpretation of the *Germania*, is invaluable in his philological comparisons with Stoic texts. In this passage alone, he identifies the use of *finguntur* (feigned or fictitious) and its connection with *ficilia* (obstinacy) within Seneca as well as the Senecian prepositional phrase *in pretio habent*. See *Germ* 5.4 *quamquam proximi ob usum commerciorum aurum et argentum in pretio habent formasque quasdam nostrae pecuniae agnoscunt atque eligunt*. "nonetheless, those nearest our border value gold and silver for commercial purposes and recognize and prefer certain types of our money."

¹⁸¹ Tacitus *Ann.* 15.58-61, Wenghofer 1994: 87. Here, Tacitus outlines the treachery which led to the death of Seneca. He also clearly believed (*Agr.* 46), that the just may perish under the rule of despots, and that the result of imperial succession is having to submit to the will and caprice of madmen. For a more in depth analysis see pp. 58-64.

inheritance. This linear connection from Plato to Seneca to Tacitus is interesting, and certainly not without merit, but we must consider the concept of the ‘noble savage’¹⁸² as another facet of this dense monograph; otherwise, Tacitus is simply eschewing reason in favour of an aesthetic ideal, placing himself among the ranks of Senecean tradition, and turning the *Germania* into a rhetorical exercise (and indulging a deluded concept of Silver Latin).¹⁸³ All of this is marred by the idea of ‘singular’ and ‘monocausal’ intent, an idea which perversely plagues ethnographic study and is rooted in the worst aspects of positivism. Should we espouse a singular reasoning, then a ‘straight’ reading of the *Germania* is sufficient. It is arguable that as we possess so little qualitative information on non-Roman culture, particularly that of the north, that we cannot afford to be reductive or posit anything beyond our available evidence. This reduction of the Latin ethnographic tradition is summarized by Rives as ‘simple curiosity’ on the part of Roman authors, and that we should merely find such a monograph ‘interesting’ as was Tacitus’ intent.¹⁸⁴ Such a line of reasoning does a disservice to the material, which should be held to the same standards as other comparable texts.

¹⁸² For further reading on the connection between Stoicism and ‘hard primitivism’ see pp. 46-51. For commentary on the concept of ‘hard primitivism’ see Blundell (1986), pp. 203-224.

¹⁸³ For further reading and commentary on Silver Latin see n. 118.

¹⁸⁴ Duff (1927), p. 459, Gudeman (1900), lxii. Gudeman maintains that the trustworthiness and ethnographic value of the *Germania* is without question, and a direct result of Tacitus’ use of ‘lost’ sources. Furthermore, he states that nothing within the *Germania* is ‘improbable’ (unlike content in Diodorus or Caesar), and as such the *Germania* contains neither false information nor ulterior motive. Gudeman also asserts that both sociologically and archaeologically Tacitus fails to make one factual misstep (attributable to the state of frontier archaeology in 1900). Regarding inaccuracy and anachronism see n. 166. On the state of archaeology of the frontier contemporary to Gudeman’s commentary, see Pelham (1910). For more recent studies on the Roman frontier in Germany see Schönberger (1969), and Woolliscroft (2001).

To position the *Germania* as a philosophical text is, ironically, to disavow the basis of Wenghofer's foundation – practicality. It would be illogical to maintain a deep philosophical reasoning over the practicality of 'hard-primitivism.' Not only is such an argument mutually exclusive in its constituent parts (hard-primitivism is devoid of luxury and is concerned solely with need over want, while philosophy is the luxury of affluence – and as such, philosophy cannot inform practicality), it ignores Tacitus' own criticisms of over-indulgence in philosophy in *Agr.* 4.3 and 4.2 (“[Agricola] would have devoted himself too enthusiastically to philosophy, more than was fitting for a Roman of the senatorial class”). If we are to assume moral revision is rooted in practicality (i.e. hard primitivism) we must recognize its debt to Stoicism, but acknowledge Tacitus as an author sympathetic to Stoic moralism rather than a slave to its rhetoric. If we fail to do so, it would serve only to galvanize the detractors who see moralist readings of the text as being far removed from its sociopolitical overtones. To that end, we must turn to a compendium of Tacitean commentators, Rives (1999), Benario (1994), and Isaac (2004), all of whom take a complimentary¹⁸⁵ approach to the *Germania*, but fail to achieve any measurable cohesion. Benario briefly addresses a long-standing interpretation of the *Germania*, covered in our literature review, first posited by Reitzenstein in 1914, concerning the political nature of the text: that is, that it was designed as a veiled warning to the emperor Trajan of the dangers posed by those who inhabited the northern reaches beyond the Rhine.¹⁸⁶ While we have acknowledged the unlikelihood of such an intention

¹⁸⁵ These commentators provide the constituent parts which will compose my interpretation of the *Germania*'s moral framework. As my analysis of the 'life-cycle' will show, these commentators, while disparate in their motivations, all make note of specific instances of moral revision by Tacitus without stating so directly.

¹⁸⁶ Benario (1994), p. 3, Rives (1999), p. 52.

– put best by Syme who maintains the suffect-consul Tacitus was in no position to mentor the military high-command – this theory cannot be so easily dismissed, especially if, as Benario suggests, we do away with the assumption of Tacitus’ patronizing tone (in advising Trajan’s military strategy), and rather, examine the situation surrounding Domitian’s supposed ‘pacification’ of the Rhine.¹⁸⁷ As we know, Tacitus saw Domitian as an enemy to the literary arts, and a nemesis of civil liberties. With Trajan maintaining the ‘status-quo’ of his forbearer in the supposed pacification of Germany,¹⁸⁸ it stands to reason that rather than martial instruction, the *Germania* may have served as a subversive castigation, or at least – as Rives posits, a “way of setting straight the historical record.”¹⁸⁹ As we shall see in the following section, as Nesselhauf argues, the work shares a direct motive with the *Agricola*, not in instruction, but in truth – subjective as it may be.¹⁹⁰ It is no coincidence that the *Agricola*, so firm in its critique of Domitian’s rule, was composed a mere three months prior to the *Germania*.¹⁹¹ Though I will not go so far as Isaac, who maintains the monograph is a thinly-veiled appeal for a full invasion of Germany, it is hard not to read the criticism in statements such as: “not the Samnites, not the Carthaginians, not Spain or Gaul, not even the Parthians have often given us warning: for the liberty of the Germans is a greater threat than the kingdom of Arasces” (*Ger.*

¹⁸⁷ Rives (1999), p. 52. Concerning Domitian and Germanic ‘pacification,’ see n. 189, 196.

¹⁸⁸ Benario (1994), p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Rives (1999), p. 52. Coinage under Domitian, beginning ca. 85 CE until his death in 96 CE, bears the script ‘*Germanicus*,’ denoting the supposed conquest and pacification of the Germanic frontier. Trajan would continue the ruse. For further reading on the numismatics of the Flavian dynasty see Cody (2003), pp.103-124, and Evans (2003), pp. 255-276. For further reading on Domitian and Trajan’s foreign policies regarding Germany see Waters (1969).

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Wenghofer (1994), p. 92, Rives (1999), p. 52.

¹⁹¹ Rives (1999), p. 53, Wenghofer (1994), p. 92.

36.3). Ultimately “we may therefore deduce once again that it is the lesson, as much as the facts, which is important to Tacitus,”¹⁹² and further, that, not so much the work of a military treatise, as a revision of Domitian’s revisionist history.

IV. The Life Cycle: A Critical Commentary of Germanic and Roman Models

The organizational breakdowns of previous interpretations have often suffered from a notable lack of cohesion, often resulting in a rather peripatetic and random assessment of material. Former attempts at organizing an interpretive analysis vary from Wenghofer’s commendable effort – in which the ‘detriments’ of Germanic culture are reassessed as ‘German Honesty’ and ‘German Virtue,’¹⁹³ to the overly philosophical, such as Rives’ or Renfrew’s dialectical study of what constitutes a nation – or the idea of a collective Germani, and to what extent Tacitus’ tribal divisions are historically valid. There are also the many commentaries which purport to be historical analyses, but actually serve as philological commentary, which while perfectly viable, allow these issues – questions of intent, genre and the effect of the political climate of Flavian Rome – to linger unsolved.¹⁹⁴ Such modes of interpretation fail to make use of any comparative

¹⁹² Isaac (2004), p. 435.

¹⁹³ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 51-55 (‘German Honesty’), 56-62 (‘German Virtus’), 62-69 (‘German Morals’). This is not to Wenghofer’s detriment. In his analysis such thematic breakdowns work in his favour and bolster his conclusion of reading the *Germania* as a philosophical treatise.

¹⁹⁴ Rives (1999), pp. 48-75. Rives’ commentary, while expansive and thorough, attempts to combine an objective philological account of the *Germania* with only a half-hearted assessment of its intent. The result is a thorough and informative study of Tacitean language and self-reference, but framed by an interpretation which harkens to Gudeman’s commentary in a fairly unflattering manner: namely an overly positivistic approach which assumes both Tacitus’ ethnographic objectivity and a genuine belief in Tacitus’ scientific intent. Rives tries to analyze what constituted an ‘ethnic identity,’ but we have

methodology, which Tacitus not only lays at our feet, but invites us to use; namely the insertion, throughout the *Germania*'s first 27 chapters, of the typical, idealized, Germanic lifecycle. This is, I argue, comparable to the undeniable moralistic tone of the *Agricola*, which provides a complementary, albeit considerably more direct, assessment of typical Roman social *mores* and moral turpitude of the Flavian political climate. I, of course, cannot claim originality in positing a literary similarity between the *Germania* and the *Agricola*; their close publication date invites such comparison, and in modern scholarship such links have been made since Nesselhauf's championing of the connection in 1952.¹⁹⁵ However, modern works attempting to argue against moralistic readings tend to ignore Germanic sociocultural interactions and habits, and Tacitus' inclusions of Roman counter-examples found throughout the Tacitean corpus. This is not to imply that Tacitus was motivated solely by moralism, but as I intend to argue, the clearly delineated contrasts cannot be coincidence, or (as Duff would have us believe) a coincidence born of a sincere, naïve, ethnographic interest, albeit a dilettante's interest, in the frontier.¹⁹⁶

Though the organization of the *Germania*'s sociocultural aspects into categories pertaining to the idea of a 'lifecycle' may seem arbitrary, this method both elucidates

no written records or accounts of opposing viewpoints from the period, or Germanic source material to provide comparative context.

¹⁹⁵ Rives (1999), p. 52. Rives outlines the thesis of Nesselhauf's position thus; the *Agricola* was the result of the political disenfranchisement of Tacitus' beloved father-in-law under a tyrannical ruler, and a chance at literary redemption, while the *Germania* provided a capstone to the revision of Domitian's rule by describing the Germani "as they actually were."

¹⁹⁶ Rives (1999), pp. 56-66. Rives posits a novel theory in that Tacitus was motivated by the official stance of the Flavian dynasty concerning Germanic 'defeat' (i.e., that Germany was wholly conquered and pacified) and that the publication provided an opportunity to set the record straight. Rives, however, ignores the wealth of contradictory material within the text, choosing rather to see the *Germania* an accurate portrait of pre-historic Germany and its peoples. For further reading on inaccuracy and overestimation in the *Germania* see n. 166, 184.

moralistic overtones and avoids the reductive tendency of either a ‘straight reading’ or forcefully pushing the work into a unilateral and singular statement of intent. The lifecycle can be broken into five constituent parts, relatable both thematically and philologically to the Tacitean corpus, particularly those morally preoccupied; I. Birth and Childhood, II. Adolescence, III. Manhood, Warfare, and the Public Sphere, IV. Private Life, Marriage, and Sexuality, and V. Death & Burial. This affords us the opportunity to embrace an analytical methodology and examine sociological concepts through a close philological reading of applicable excerpts of the Tacitean corpus.

Birth and Childhood

Academic opinion concerning the moralistic subtext of the *Germania*, as noted, has been roundly disregarded: Rives states “as a general interpretation of the text . . . [moralism] is not sufficient . . . as he [Tacitus] criticizes their [the Germans] way of life at least as much as he praises it.”¹⁹⁷ Duff (1928), while he notes that too much scholarly ink has been spilled in the pursuit of whether the *Germania* was a sincere inquiry or moral treatise,¹⁹⁸ lends credence to my position in his refutation of moral revision. He affirms that Tacitus praises the German’s “bravery, loyalty, purity, hospitality, and simplicity of life,” but that these laudatory qualities are negated by criticism of “drunkenness, gambling and unpunctuality.”¹⁹⁹ It is obvious which moral character set trumps the other. Despite such claims of character flaws, a note of rustic nobility sounds in each instance of important section of the (idealized) Germanic lifecycle, which often

¹⁹⁷ Rives (1999), p. 51.

¹⁹⁸ Duff (1928), p. 459. Despite Duff’s statement on the deluge of moral interpretations of the *Germania* he references only two articles.

¹⁹⁹ Duff (1928), p. 459.

harkens to a romanticized Roman past. Firstly, on the subject of birth, Tacitus recounts “each child nurses at his own mother’s breast, and the children are not handed over to slaves or nursemaids” (*Ger.* 20.1), which stands in glaring contrast to the arguably widespread use of wet-nurses in Tacitus’ Rome, where the feeding of children, in the upper echelon of society, may have been treated as something of an inconvenience.²⁰⁰ This is reinforced in Tacitus’ *Dialogues*: “far in the past, each man’s child, born by a chaste mother, was reared not in the room of a nursemaid who had been bought, but in the bosom and embrace of his mother; it was her particular merit to supervise the home and be devoted to the children” (*Dial.* 28.1). Tacitus not only laments this neglect of one’s children at the level of family affection, but goes on to claim that such neglect has led to the wider decline of both oratory and military prowess. Only involved parenting (such as the mothers of Caesar or Augustus gave their sons) stripped the men of poor behavior and wanton ways.²⁰¹

This connection between being nursed by one’s own mother, and being of sound character, is reinforced by Tacitus when he describes Agricola, a paragon of virtue, as being the son of “Julia Proclia . . . from whose breast he took his education” (*Agr.* 4.1). Contemporary with Tacitus, Musonius Rufus, in his theoretical treatise, states succinctly, “For it is enough that she has practiced being high-minded, self reliant, and enduring, since she has nursed the child at her own breast” (3), which anticipated Favorinus’ thoughts on the subject a century later: “let [a woman] be completely the mother of her own child . . . why corrupt that nobility of body and mind of a newborn . . . with the alien

²⁰⁰ Anderson (1938), p. 115, Benario (1994), p. 87, Rives (1999), pp. 206-207. For further reading and commentary on breastfeeding and wetnursing in antiquity see n. 202.

²⁰¹ Tacitus *Dial.* 28.2, Benario (1994), p. 87.

and degraded food of the milk of a stranger? . . . The disposition of the nurse and the quality of the milk play a great role in character development” (12.1).²⁰² Far removed from the pages of philosophy, a grave inscription from the 2nd century CE states: “of Graxia Alexandria, distinguished for her virtue and fidelity. She nursed her children with her own breasts” (*CIL VI.19128.L*). The frequent mention in the literary sources concerning the subject of nursing, particularly the connection drawn between virtue and being nursed by one’s own mother, is also seen in the *Germania* (as in the *Agricola* and the *Histories*). The opposite of such maternal care (the perceived neglect of Tacitus’ day) and its malevolent effect upon one’s young are recounted within his *Dialogues* 29.1: “now, the child, while still unable to speak, is entrusted to some worthless Greek maid . . . generally of the poorest character and unsuited for her important duty.” Within the upper echelons of Roman society, to nurse one’s young was a point of pride to traditionalists (such as we read in the *Life of Cato*),²⁰³ but in Tacitus’ Germany, far from being peculiar, it is the accepted norm. The Germani demonstrate a moral fiber reminiscent of archaic and early Republican Rome, though as Rives notes (in consensus with Anderson, Duff

²⁰² For a collection of philosophical treatments and inscriptions regarding breastfeeding and wet nursing see Lefkowitz & Fant (1982), pp. 20, 34, 45, 51, 67, 189, 314, 316. For further reading on breastfeeding and wet nursing in antiquity see Bagnall and Frier (1994), Bradley (1980), (1991a), (1991b), (1992), and (1994), Fildes (1988), Frier (1994), and Shaw (1987).

²⁰³ Plutarch *Cato* 20.3. Licinia, wife of Cato, is said to have nursed her own sons, as well as those of their slaves to strengthen a ‘familial’ bond. For further reading on the character of Licinia see Churchill (2001). For further reading on moralism in Plutarch’s parallel lives see Duff (1999) pp. 52-71, 131-160. For commentary on Plutarch’s *Cato* see Sansone (1989).

and Wenghofer), it is impossible to determine if this is merely a reflection of moral stereotyping or true practice.²⁰⁴

Tacitus also states of the Germans that: “it is considered a crime to limit the amount of children, or to put any child to death” (*Ger.*19.2).²⁰⁵ As noted by Benario, men and women of the Roman upper classes often limited the number of their children, and possibly exposed female children.²⁰⁶ There was also a law which gave the *pater familias* the ability to kill his own children, and this included refusing to raise them immediately after birth.²⁰⁷ Elsewhere, Tacitus, particularly in the *Histories* 5.5.4, praises the Jews of antiquity and their aversion to infanticide, as well as their habit of increasing their numbers through the propagation of lawful children: “they take thought to increase their numbers for they regard it as a crime to kill any late-born children.” Such practices – abortion, exposure, and contraception – may have been commonplace within Rome by Tacitus’ day, but we should note that the reforms of Augustus, promoting marriage and childbirth, were still in place.²⁰⁸

Returning to the issue of childlessness among the Roman elite, Tacitus states in the *Germania* that “there are no rewards for childlessness” (*Ger.* 20.3), which may seem

²⁰⁴ Anderson (1938), p. 115, Duff (1999), pp. 52-71, Rives (1999), p. 205, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 62-68.

²⁰⁵ Rives (1999), p. 205. Purportedly by the time of Charlemagne (the 9th century), Frisians had enacted a law allowing the exposure of children provided they had not yet tasted food. Although I do not endorse Rives’ anachronistic use of Germanic law to elucidate the *Germania*, in this instance the similarity cannot be ignored. On Germanic law in the early medieval period see Coleman (1974), and Harding (2002), pp. 10-42, 69-108.

²⁰⁶ Benario (1994), p. 87.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* For a further analysis of Roman familial law see Gardner (1998), and Riggsby (2010), pp. 165-186, 205-214. For primary sources and case studies concerning Roman familial law see Frier & McGinn (2004), pp. 27-186.

²⁰⁸ Rives (1999), p. 205. For further reading concerning Augustan marriage laws see McGinn (1998), pp. 14, 78-82, 106.

an odd ending to his treatment of inter-familial relations, but as Benario argues, we need only look to Horace's *Satire 2.5* to read of the prevalence of 'legacy hunting' in the city of Rome, in which the wealthy and childless are courted lavishly by those seeking a sizable inheritance.²⁰⁹ This practice was made impossible among the Germani by strict inheritance laws: "each person's own children are his heirs . . . there is no will" (*Ger.* 20.3), denoting a direct transference of property through blood relations.²¹⁰ The testamentary habit would have likely come to Germany as a Roman cultural inheritance,²¹¹ but nevertheless such a concept of a written legal document is anachronistic in archaic Germany (as we shall see below in our analysis of private life marriage, and sexuality). The horror of dying intestate would have been a thoroughly foreign concept.²¹² Regarding 'legacy hunting,' Roman aristocrats who were childless and nearing the end of life could expect to be lavishly courted by those seeking to be named as heir, but an unattainable end for those caring for any number of children.²¹³ As Seneca notes, "in our city childlessness confers more influence than it takes away, and for that reason solitude, which used to be the ruin of old age, now brings it to power . . . creating childlessness on purpose" (*Ad Marciam* 19).²¹⁴

Tacitus says little of the Germans' early childhood, although the young are described as "naked and dirty, [and] grow to possess those limbs, these bodies, we admire

²⁰⁹ Benario (1994), p. 87. For further reading concerning Horace and 'legacy hunting' see Salmon (1947). For further reading and commentary on Horace's *Satires* see Juster (2008).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Rives (1999), p. 208. For examination of this anachronism see sec. IV, p. 66, n. 253.

²¹² Rives (1999), pp. 208-209.

²¹³ Rives (1999), p. 209.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* For further commentary on Seneca see chapter 1, n. 69. For further commentary on the *Ad Marciam* see Clode (1888), and Manning (1981).

. . . they live amongst the same animals and on the same ground until age sets the freeborn apart and valor recognizes them [as worthy]” (*Ger.* 20.1). Living conditions for prepubescent children, lacking any differentiation between men and animal, were designed to “mitigate the condition of slavery,”²¹⁵ so as to not spoil any inherent martial virtue. This is a sentiment not unlike those held by conservative Romans, who postulated that virtue, bravery, and hatred of idleness set apart the citizen from the slave.²¹⁶ This is an incredibly telling position to take concerning a race which prior to Tacitus²¹⁷ was stereotypically renowned for laziness and inconstancy. Rather here, as Anderson notes, this valor, and recognition of *virtus*, is high praise indeed.²¹⁸

Adolescence

Adolescence, although a brief period of time for both German and Roman children alike, is in the case of the Germans extended, as the geographer Mela (ca. 43 CE) believed: “childhood lasts very long among them” (*De Situ Orbis* 3.26), Tacitus states “The young men experience love late.”²¹⁹ Many commentators, Rives among them, argue that such an insinuation is in line with previous ethnographic treatments of Germans, and earlier stereotypes of Gauls and northerners as a whole: that those who inhabit the northern frontiers were particularly uninterested in sex, and (in the case of the

²¹⁵ Anderson (1938), p. 116.

²¹⁶ Rives (1999), p. 207.

²¹⁷ See pp. 72-75 for prior mentions of the Germanic tribes, their stereotyped ethnographic treatments, and their incompatibility with Tacitus’ characterization.

²¹⁸ Anderson (1938), p. 116.

²¹⁹ Benario (1994), p. 87, Rives (1999), p. 207.

Gauls), sex with women.²²⁰ An oft-cited precursor to this sentiment comes to us from Caesar's brief excursus on the Germani in the *BG*: "those who have postponed adolescence the longest receive the most praise among their comrades. . . they think it shameful to be with a woman before [age] twenty" (*BG* 6.21.4-5).²²¹ Indeed, it does seem Tacitus himself may be participating in this ethnographic *topos*: "nor are the girls hurried into marriage; they have the same youthful vigor and slender stature [as their husbands]" (*Ger.* 20.2). As Benario notes, this idea fit well with the preconception of barbarian women who equaled the stature, and often ferocity, of the men (such as Boudicca).²²² But these points are merely reflect Tacitus' rather revisionist take on the typical northern ethnographical *topos*.

First, if we may refer back to the lines regarding sexual abstinence until late adolescence, he ends by stating "and for this reason their strength is not exhausted" (*Ger.* 20.2), which, since it has no comparable precedents in other works work (such as Caesar's *BG*) can hardly be construed as anything but a moralistic jab at the free and easy sexual proclivities of comparably aged Roman males.²²³ Concerning girls, it is not enough to state merely the difference in age at time of marriage. Treggiari (1991) notes the age of marriage for girls at Rome to be within the range of 14 years old to the late teens, producing a 10-15 year age hiatus with a husband.²²⁴ The oddity of an equal-age marriage between youthful 20-year-olds is enough for proponents of 'straight reading' to

²²⁰ Benario (1994), p. 87, Rives (1999), p. 208. Rives cites such instances of female ferocity in *Dio.* 5.32.2, 5.39.2-3 and *Strab.* 3.14.17. Such a *topos* was also noted in both the Gauls and Britons. For further commentary on Diodorus and ethnography see chapter 1, n. 88; Strabo and ethnography see chapter 1, n. 66.

²²¹ Rives (1999), p. 208.

²²² Benario (1994), p. 87, Rives (1999), p. 207. See n. 220, 243.

²²³ Benario (1994), p. 87.

²²⁴ Anderson (1938), p. 116, Rives (1999), p. 207, Treggiari (1999), pp. 399-400.

write off such a sentiment as an ethnographic curio. This would, however, neglect a clearly delineated, philosophically-based moralistic tone in seemingly innocuous passages, such as, “[partners] are well matched in age when they enter upon marriage and the children reproduce the strength of the parents” (*Ger.* 20.2). The idea of racial ‘purity’ occurs in the *Germania*’s opening passage: “the Germans themselves are indigenous and have hardly been affected by intermarriage with other peoples and intermarriage with them” (*Ger.* 2.1), but the idea of strong parents birthing strong offspring can be traced to Aristotle, who muses that sex between the immature breeds sick and weakly children.²²⁵ Such a sentiment would be welcome in Wenghofer’s argument for a philosophically-based interpretation of the *Germania*’s literary tone. Independent of philosophical analysis, this passage serves to bolster the idea of Germanic restraint, clear thinking, and moral fortitude. Most telling, however, is the concept of spousal equality (as put forth by Anderson): namely, that both *eadem inventa, similis proceritas* and *pares validaeque miscentur* underscore the similarity of both male and female.²²⁶ This sentiment, when assessed alongside Tacitus’ laudatory statements on maternal involvement in childrearing (particularly when those women are imbued with a ‘masculine’ level of character and moral fortitude)²²⁷ creates a unique treatment of German ‘ethnography.’

²²⁵ Aristotle *Pol.* 7.16, 1335a 6-29, Rives (199), p. 207.

²²⁶ Anderson (1938), p. 116. Anderson argues the adjectives are repeated to stress both the concept of marital equality, and the emphasis upon the ‘factual.’ *Eadem iuventa, similis proceritas: pares validaeque miscentur, ac robora parentum liberi referent*, “They [the girls] have the same youthful vigor and similar stature [to their husbands]; they are well matched in age and strength when they enter upon marriage, and the children reproduce the strength of their parents.” (*Ger.* 20.2).

²²⁷ It is worth noting the parallel (and contradictory) image of ‘masculine’ female, or *dux femina*, and its recurrent use throughout the Tacitean corpus. The *topos* of the *dux femina*, exemplified by figures such as Agrippina the Elder and Boudicca (cf. *Annals*), while assuming the common characteristics and motivations of historiographically male figures,

Manhood, Warfare, and The Public Sphere

Although Tacitus' account of German childhood and adolescence occurs within a general narrative of moral decline, his treatment of Germanic public institutions and government is a more scathing and protracted effort to highlight contemporary Roman failings. Tacitus describes the initiation to manhood: "either the chieftains or the father present the young man with shield and spear; among the Germans these are the equivalent of the toga, the first honor of manhood; before they are part of the household, after, part of the state" (*Ger.* 13.1). Similarly, Roman boys at the age of sixteen would take up the *toga virilis*, a ritual in which the father and extended family escorted the boy to enlist in the citizens' registry. The tone of the ceremony was private and civilian, and as Cicero notes, the toga, in metonymical terms, was a sign of peace.²²⁸ Conversely, the Germanic ceremony concerns the gift of arms, in a public ceremony, witnessed by the community, in which the young man is made accountable (for his actions in warfare), and the *gravitas* of adulthood made abundantly clear: the spear and shield (symbolically opposed to the toga by of way Ciceronian metonymic) brings warfare and death.²²⁹ This aspect of Germanic culture is particularly important to Isaac, as well as other scholars who advocate for a racially-biased interpretation of the *Germania*. Isaac believes that this 'creation' of an overbearingly martial society was product of a consciously-constructed

are often qualified negatively as tolerated by those males who are "devoid of masculinity." For further reading see L'Hoir (1994).

²²⁸ Anderson (1938), p. 91, Benario (1994), p. 79, Gudeman (1900), p. 199, Rives (1999), pp. 179-80. Rives notes Cicero's use of metonymy in *de Orat.* 3.167. For further commentary on Cicero's *de Oratore* see Mankin (2011). For further reading on the *toga virilis* and its ceremonial use see Christ (1997), and Davies (2005), pp. 121-130.

²²⁹ Anderson (1938), p. 91, Benario (1994), p. 79, Gudeman (1900), p. 200, Rives (1999), p. 180.

culture by Republican sympathizers to highlight the Germanic threat – a cultivation of lost Roman virtues found within Rome’s enemy to the north.²³⁰

Tacitus’ most telling criticism of Roman politics occurs in the section on Germanic self-governance. “They pick their kings on the basis of noble birth, their generals on the basis of bravery. Nor do their kings have limitless or arbitrary power, and the generals win public favour by the example they set if they are energetic, if they are distinguished, if they fight before the line, rather than by the power they wield” (*Ger.* 7.1). As Wenghofer notes, such a statement was tantamount to Tacitus reiterating the Republican values of Sallust and Cato: the concept of ‘new men’ wielding power through virtue of character rather than by inherited privilege.²³¹ Both Wenghofer and Martin note the emphasis on *virtus*, both in chapters of the *Germania*, and more frequently, in the opening fifteen lines of the *Agricola* (four instances), all of which indicate a construction of a *memoria virtutis*, an echo of Cato’s *Origines*, thus aligning Tacitus’ literary intent with the gatekeeper of Republican virtue.²³² Such ideals of Republican virtue, as outlined by Tacitus in *Annals* 1.4, were, by then, probably thought of as relics of a bygone era: “it was thus an altered world, and of the old unspoiled Roman character not a trace lingered. Equality was an outworn creed, and all eyes looked to the mandate of the princeps.” Former virtue was now replaced by the scourge of imperial nepotism, beginning with Tiberius: “. . . wishing to be regarded as the called and chosen of the state, rather than as

²³⁰ Isaac (2004), p. 436.

²³¹ Wenghofer (1999), p. 56.

²³² Cato *Orig.* 1.1, Tacitus *Agr.* 1.1, Martin (1969), p.125, Wenghofer (1994), p. 56. For further reading and commentary on the *Origines* fragments see Chassignet (1986).

an interloper who had wormed his way to power with the help of intrigue and a senile act of adoption” (*Ann.* 1.7-10).²³³

Despite this praise of Germanic autochthony, Tacitus is decidedly brief on actual details of rule: “the nobles make decisions about lesser matters, all free men about things of greater significance, with this proviso, nonetheless: that those subjects of which ultimate judgment is in the hands of the mass of the people receive preliminary consideration among the nobles” (*Ger.* 11.1).²³⁴ This lack of any real specificity concerning the manner of rule, along with our aforementioned lack of precise geographic details, repudiates the point of the work’s ‘impetus’ (*Origine et Situ Germanorum*), not only raising questions of intent, but the reader’s suspicions regarding accuracy. As Anderson notes, echoed by Wenghofer, Tacitus makes a conscious effort to concern himself primarily with forms of Germanic government which most closely emulate Republican values. He glosses over the more northerly reaches which relied upon autocratic kinship so that he can instead create the greatest contrast to what he perceives as a ‘state of servitude’ in contemporary Rome.²³⁵ Of course such a statement is not wholly pessimistic: as noted in the *Agricola*, the ability for good men to flourish under tyranny is a trope of Tacitean literature: “Let those whose custom it is to admire actions that are forbidden know that great men exist even under bad emperors,” (*Agr.* 42.5) he writes the Germani represented such an ideal, particularly in the early stages of

²³³ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 57-58.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Anderson (1938), pp. 33, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 57-58. Wenghofer notes the tendency of early modern commentators such as Gudeman and Sleeman to reject the basis of moralist interpretations based solely on the fact that Tacitus mentions Germanic forms of government— while ignoring utterly the contradictions in his lack of detail and opportunistic treatment of material.

adulthood, in which they were solely concerned with, and ruled by, *virtus* – free from the capricious will of despots,²³⁶ and thus akin to those literary dissidents who perished under Domitian.²³⁷ Such a form of rule, governed by *virtus*, begat a *libertas* sorely lacking in Tacitean Rome.²³⁸

Such emphasis upon *virtus* and inherent *libertas*, however, does not have its origins in a senate-house dialogue or a nebulous philosophical ideal, but on the battlefield. Tacitus goes to great lengths to underline the martial valor of young German warriors, particularly in *Ger.* 13.3: “and each one has this renown and glory, not only in his own tribe but also among neighboring tribes . . . for chieftains are sought out by embassies . . . and bring wars to end by their reputation.”²³⁹ Benario notes that such custom has no Roman equivalent, but the enthusiastic nature of Tacitus’ language betrays his admiration of the concept, particularly the alliteration of *primus apud principum* . . . *principem cur plurimi* closely followed by *in pace decus, in bello praesidium*.²⁴⁰ Such martial conduct informed by moralism is also the subject of *Ger.* 14.1: “when they come to battle, it is shameful for the chieftain to be excelled in valor;” a value shared by the

²³⁶ Benario (1994), p. 72, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 59-62. Benario notes the severely limited power of Germanic kings in comparison to a triumphant chieftain. He also notes the emphasis which Tacitus places on the qualities of a good general (*Ger.* 7.1) through the use of an extended tricolon with the triple use of *si*, preceding two adjective and a clause with the triple alliteration of ‘a’: “*Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt. nec regibus infinita ac libera potestas, et duces exemplo potius quam imperio, si prompti, si conspicui, si ante aciem agant*” (*Ger.* 7.1).

²³⁷ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 59-62.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Nec solum in sua gente cuique, sed apud finitimas quoque civitates id nomen . . . expetuntur enim legationibus . . . et ipsa plerumque fama bella profligant.* (*Ger.* 13.3)

²⁴⁰ Benario (1994), p. 80. In reference to *Ger.* 13: this alliteration, through chiasmic order, is emphasized by both *dignitas* and *vires* which repeat the ideas expressed in the passage. Benario also notes the lack of verbs which creates an urgency through staccato.

noble Agricola: “nor did Agricola ever boast of his achievements to enhance his own reputation; he referred his good fortune to the general as much as possible” (*Agr.* 19.2).²⁴¹

It would be reductionist, and ultimately counterintuitive (particularly when we acknowledge the emphasis placed upon maternal duty) to ignore the role of women in the public sphere. Battle lines in Germany apparently were not solely the domain of men, but “close by are the dear ones . . . the wailing of women and the crying of children. These are each man’s most sacred witnesses . . . it is to their mothers and wives that they bring their wounds” (*Ger.* 7.2).²⁴² As Benario notes, in this way the men are reminded they fight not for themselves but for the existence of their families and way of life.²⁴³

Elsewhere in Germanic ethnography it is suggested that women, under extenuating circumstances, would take up arms in the form of an auxiliary force (as read in Plutarch’s *Marius*),²⁴⁴ but Tacitus is careful to maintain a clearly delineated boundary between the domains of men and women regarding warfare. Rather than exploit this stereotype of Germanic women on the battlefield, Tacitus is content to describe them, and their martial role, in quasi-Homeric terms.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 92.

²⁴² “*et in proximo pignora, unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus infantium. hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores: ad matres, ad coniuges vulnera ferunt,*” (*Ger.* 7.2).

²⁴³ Benario (1994), pp. 72-73. Benario cites *Ann.* 13.34.2 as a complimentary Tacitean passage outlining the importance of familial bonds in warfare, this regarding the revolt of Boudicca: they [the Britons] even brought their wives to witness the victory and installed them in wagons.”

²⁴⁴ Anderson (1938), p. 71, Benario (1994), p. 73. Benario outlines the intervention of women in Germanic battles, as found in Plutarch *Mar.* 19.7, 27.2. and Tacitus *Ger.* 8.1. For further reading on Plutarch’s assessment of Germanic warfare see Thompson (1958). For commentary on Plutarch’s *Marius* see Seager (1972).

²⁴⁵ Anderson (1938), p. 71, Benario (1994), p. 73, Rives (1999), pp. 152- 153. Anderson notes the strong allusion to *Iliad* 22.81 in *Ger.* 7.2, specifically Hecuba’s lament to face death rather than captivity: “have regard unto this bosom and pity me if I ever gave you

Private Life, Marriage, and Sexuality

The Tacitean agenda of moral revision is at no point more succinct or forthright than in his assessment of Germanic marriage customs, and it is in this section that we come the closest to a statement of intent: “Marriages there are strict, and one would praise no other aspect of their civilization more.” (*Ger.* 18.1).²⁴⁶ Firstly, the Germans practiced a form of singular marriage: one without divorce and – it is implied – without remarriage. Benario notes the placement of *illic* between *severia* and *matrimonia* serves to reinforce a contrast with Rome and the pervasiveness of divorce among the upper echelons of society.²⁴⁷ Anderson concurs that Tacitus’ intent in highlighting the insoluble character of Germanic marriage was to create a moment of self-reflection among his readership.²⁴⁸ That divorce was easy and frequent in Roman society was an impression held by Tacitus and other morally preoccupied authors.²⁴⁹ A funeral eulogy from ca. 1st

the consolation of this breast.” We may also recall, again, the statue of the “Dying Gaul” and the applicable passage in Caesar *BG.* 1.51.3, which described the female retinue of Ariovistus beseeching the soldiers not to let them fall into Roman captivity. There is also a tangible link to the *interpretatio Romana*: a literary device by which Latin authors created a connection with Roman readers by incorporating Latin mythology into foreign religions. For further reading on *interpretatio Romana* see Benario (1994) p. 66. For commentary on lament and the role of women in *Iliad* 24, see Holmes (2007), pp. 30-37), and Rutherford (1982). For further reading and commentary on Caesar, see chapter 1, n. 97.

²⁴⁶ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 62-63. “*Quamquam severa illic matrimonia, nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris,*” (*Ger.* 18.1).

²⁴⁷ Benario (1994), p. 84, Isaac (2004), p. 432.

²⁴⁸ Anderson (1938), p. 109.

²⁴⁹ The frequency of divorce in Rome is cited by a range of Latin authors including Juvenal: “she [a Roman aristocratic woman] flits from one home to another wearing out her bridal veil. . . . Thus does the tale of her husbands grow; there will be eight of them in the course of five autumns a fact worthy of commemoration on her tomb,” (VI.224); Martial: “she [a Roman aristocratic woman] is now marrying her tenth husband . . . by a more straightforward prostitute I am offended less” (VI.7), and Seneca: “No woman need blush to break off her marriage since the most illustrious ladies have adopted the practice of reckoning the year not by the names of the consuls but by those of their

century BCE echoes this impression: “marriages as long as ours are rare, marriages that are ended by death and not broken by divorce” (*ILS* 8393. 23). In addition, the concept of the Germanic bride-price would have been exceptionally strange to the Roman audience (“the wife does not bring a dowry to the husband, but rather the reverse occurs;” *Ger.* 18.2). Rives notes that Roman custom allowed for the bride, and the bride’s family, to maintain a certain amount of control over property in most types of Roman marriage; thus while Roman men are in some sense beholden to their wives (who can in effect withhold property), Germanic custom dictates the wife is ‘purchased’ and so the man retains full financial control.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, a German wife “is reminded by the very first ceremonies with which the marriage begins that she comes as a partner in labors and dangers” (*Ger.* 18.3).²⁵¹ In Germanic society there is no concept of clandestine love affairs, “men and women alike are ignorant of secret correspondence” (*Ger.* 19.1). This raises a particularly divisive interpretation: Wenghofer and Anderson both believe that this statement indicates Tacitus’ lack of ethnographic veracity, as written language was not widespread throughout northern Europe until after the migration period (4th-8th century CE). Anderson notes that Charlemagne himself attempted, unsuccessfully, to

husbands. They divorce in order to re-marry. They marry in order to divorce,” (*de Beneficiis* III.16.2) For furthering reading on Latin authors’ perception of divorce in Rome see Bradley (1991), pp. 125-176.

²⁵⁰ Rives (1999), p. 201.

²⁵¹ Wenghofer (1994), p. 86. “*ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur venire se laborum periculorumque sociam,*” (*Ger.* 18.3). The stress of the language and use of anaphora (i.e., repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses), “*ipsis. . . idem. . . idem*” harkens back to marriage ideals mentioned in *Agr.* 6.1: “[Agricola and Domitita] had a singular harmony, through mutual affection, and particular regard for one another; the good wife deserves greater praise as the bad merits greater reproach.” There is equality in both labor and toil. For further reading on Tacitus’ use of anaphora see Bews (1987), and Murgia (1987).

learn the written word, and Benario is inclined to agree.²⁵² Conversely, Rives interprets the statement and its phrasing as acknowledgement, not of the German's lack of illicit intent, but of their illiteracy – a novel interpretation, but one without firm evidence.²⁵³

The pervasiveness of adultery in Rome and its poisonous effects are found throughout the Tacitean corpus, most notably in the account of the affair of Messalina, which chronicles the far-reaching political machinations of Messalina, wife of Claudius, and one Gaius Silvus, for control of the principate (*Annals* 2.26-27).²⁵⁴ It is this ability of adultery to infect the highest seats of government which so unsettled Tacitus, as in the case of Agrippina the Elder instigating her freedman lover Pallas to persuade an ailing Claudius to adopt the young Nero as heir (which also in effect transferred power, during the interim, to Agrippina herself).²⁵⁵ Most damning of all was the ability of an adulteress, should she be of means, to remarry and reinstate herself within high-society (such as the wealthy and beautiful Poppaea Sabina, who was flaunted before Nero by her lover Marcus Salvius Otho while still married to equestrian Rufius Crispinus).²⁵⁶ Such an infraction was impossible under Tacitus' version of the Germanic marital code: "the punishment [for adultery] is immediate and left to the husbands: in the presence of her relatives, the husband drives her naked from the home, with her hair cut off, and whips

²⁵² Anderson (1938), p. 112, Benario (1994), p. 86, Wenghofer (1994), p. 64.

²⁵³ Rives (1999), p. 203. Rives' proposition, while novel, is odd, and there is no basis for this interpretation of which I am aware. Rives posits that it is plausible, though no evidence is given, that Germanic nobility would have conversed in an early form of the runic alphabet. Tacitus, however, remarks in *Ann.* 2.63 that letters from Germanic princes were read in the senate house from the frontier (although I am more inclined towards Anderson's interpretation that these 'letters' were likely dictated and transliterated into Latin prior to reaching Rome proper). See Anderson (1938), p. 112.

²⁵⁴ Wenghofer (1994), p. 63.

²⁵⁵ Tacitus *Ann.* 12.25, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 64-65.

²⁵⁶ Tacitus *Ann.* 13.45, *Hist.* 1.13, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 65-66.

her through the whole village . . . such a woman would not find a husband regardless of her beauty, youth, or wealth” (*Ger.* 19.1).²⁵⁷ To Rives, the Germanic custom, and its use of public shaming and disenfranchisement, is far closer to Republican values than Tacitus’ contemporary Rome, a Rome which had long since abandoned all respect for marriage which the Germans, rustic and close to nature, had kept sacred.²⁵⁸ Rives goes further in stating that, far more than a product of idealized moral revision, this law, as repeated by Tacitus, had a factual basis in reality stemming from recorded, albeit later, Germanic law codes.²⁵⁹

Leisure activities in Germanic culture have long been the rallying post to which the detractors of a moral revisionist reading have gathered, often regardless of the commentator’s degree of positivistic interpretation, from Anderson’s arguably objective standpoint (“if the virtues of the Germans are emphasized, their failings are not veiled”²⁶⁰), to Rives’ and Duff’s outright denials.²⁶¹ If I have been successful in summarizing the previous interpretations of the *Germania* and the various reasons that scholars give for being inclined against a reading of moral revision, when Duff’s

²⁵⁷ Rives (1999), p. 203, Treggiari (1991), pp. 277-290, Wenghofer (1994), p. 66. Tacitus is clearly attacking both promiscuity and its resultant political ramifications: under Augustan law, a Roman man could not summarily kill his adulterous wife, although he did have to divorce her.

²⁵⁸ Rives (1999), p. 203.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Rives again dubiously provides the phrase ‘likely true’ in reference to the assertion that Germanic law, centuries after the fact, would have been applicable to Tacitus’ literary timeframe.

²⁶⁰ Anderson (1938), x.

²⁶¹ Duff (1927) and Rives (1999) maintain that Tacitus’ motive is based solely in Roman ethnographic curiosity, thus accounting for both the praise of German morals and condemnation of their vices. They argue that we should find this section of the work merely ‘interesting’ rather than illusory and subversive. See n. 184.

breakdown for and against moral revision is laid before us²⁶² it is clear what aspects are more convincing concerning each position. But, Wenghofer, rather than assume moral revision as a forgone conclusion, a conclusion which has been roundly rejected since Norden first posited the theory in 1920, has brilliantly proposed an interpretative reaction against these indictments by positing such ‘criticisms’ as a form of backhanded compliment: thus the charges of drunkenness, gambling, and inconstancy need not be so damning as to injure my argument.

It is true that Tacitus forcefully derides the Germans for their love of drink: “it is not disgraceful for anyone to pass day and night drinking” and “they satisfy their hunger without seasonings; they do not have the same moderation regarding thirst.” But in these states of drunkenness (often occurring at banquets), “at no other time is the mind more open to honest thoughts . . . the [Germanic] race, without natural cunning . . . reveals its innermost thoughts . . . every persons thought is laid bare . . . they deliberate while they know not how to act falsely” (*Ger.* 22.1-3). The implication of such an observation are I think obvious: the idea of openness and honesty as positive qualities in the Tacitean corpus is well documented in secondary scholarship.²⁶³ Should we, as Tacitus intends, use Agricola as the high-water mark of virtue, his values are comparable to the Germans: Agricola championed a rustic form of free-speaking, much the same as the Germans show in their state of ‘drunkenness.’²⁶⁴ Duplicity is not beneficial to a people (the

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Benario (1994), p. 89, Gudeman (1900), p. 102, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 52, 92. Tacitus’ advocacy of forthright speaking is bolstered by a statement from *Agr.* 22.4: “But no traces of his [Agricola’s] anger remained hidden away, so that one did not have to fear his silence.”

²⁶⁴ Wenghofer (1994), pp. 52, 92. Tacitus reserves choice words for those who withhold thoughts in the service of personal advancement, particularly in *Annals* I.7.7 and

Germans) who disclose hidden thoughts without an ‘acquired’ cunning.²⁶⁵ Benario interprets this characterization as indicative of a Hobbesian ‘noble savage,’ while Rives claims that Tacitus’ use of an ethnographic *topos* (the dull northerner) is somehow compatible with Strabo’s assessment of the Germani as a cunning and treacherous people.²⁶⁶

The second point of contention for scholars who neglect a moral revisionist reading concerns the Germanic love of dice games, which “while sober they play as one of their serious pursuits” (*Ger.* 24.2) Horace observes that while dice play was technically illegal in Rome, the practice was often tolerated.²⁶⁷ A Germanic vice as much as a Roman institution, we read of Augustus’ love of gaming in Suetonius.²⁶⁸ Germanic dice-play, however, could apparently result in the loss of juridical freedom: “they put their liberty and persons as the stake on the very last throw” (*Ger.* 24.2). This was a practice considered reprehensible by Tacitus’ chief philosophical influence.²⁶⁹ Even so, there is degree of reverence for a people willing to risk everything for a vice, “There is a stubbornness in this perverse business; they themselves call it honor” (*Ger.* 24.2).²⁷⁰

Tiberius’ manipulation of the senate: “his coyness had been assumed with the further object of gaining insight into the feeling of the aristocracy.”

²⁶⁵ Isaac (2004), p. 433.

²⁶⁶ Benario (1994), p. 89, Rives (1999), pp. 212-213. For Strabo’s view of the Germans see pp. 72-75. For commentary on Strabo’s *Geographica* see chapter 1, n. 66.

²⁶⁷ Horace *Carm.* 3. 24.58; Anderson (1938), p. 126, Rives (1999), p. 217, Wenghofer (1994), p. 53. For commentary on Horace see n. 144, 209. For further reading on dice-play and Roman gaming see Schwartz (1998), pp. 145-166, Trifilo (2011), pp. 312-331, and Toner (1995).

²⁶⁸ Suetonius *Aug.* 7.20, Benario (1994), p. 90, Wenghofer (1994), pp. 53-54.

²⁶⁹ Seneca *Ep.* 47.17, Benario (1994), p. 90, Rives (1999), p. 217. In epistle 47 Seneca admonishes those who suffer slavery voluntarily. Rives further notes that to incur slavery as a result of frivolity (gambling) would be especially perverse to Tacitus’ readership.

²⁷⁰ Anderson (1938), p. 127, Wenghofer (1994), p. 53.

When we consider the praise heaped upon the Germanic tribes, and the aforementioned German ‘vice,’ the argument against moral revision is left without much substance.

Death and Burial

Though occupying minimal space in Tacitus’ monograph, burial customs are the final item in my discussion of the Germanic lifecycle. Tacitus writes that the Germans “recover the bodies of their own, even in battles where success is doubtful . . . to have abandoned one’s shield is the greatest crime . . . any who have survived wars ended their disgrace by hanging themselves” (*Ger.* 6.4), as “it is shameful for all of one’s life to have survived one’s chieftain and left the battle” (*Ger.* 14.1). Though Tacitus fails to frame his remarks with any personal commentary, Anderson notes the use of *infame* as particularly emphatic.²⁷¹ The concept of following one’s leader into death is a trait often associated with the Gauls in Caesar’s *Commentaries*: “if any violence befalls their leader, they either endure that disaster along with him, or commit suicide” (*BG.* 3.22.1-3). Tacitus writes similarly of the death of British leader Chariovalda: “[he] falls from his wounded horse, and many of the nobles around him.”²⁷² Benario believes that the method of suicide following disgrace in battle (by hanging) has a negatively judgmental tone, as it brings to mind the longstanding Roman belief of death by hanging as both shameful and effeminate.²⁷³ While these successive Tacitean mentions of ‘honorable’ death in battle may not immediately appear relevant to an argument of moral revision, it elucidates the importance upon which Tacitus placed military virtue – even in death. Furthermore, these

²⁷¹ Anderson (1938), p. 95. *Ger.* 13.1 “*iam vero infame in omnem vitam ac probrosum superstitem principi suo ex acie recessisse.*”

²⁷² *Ann.* 2.11.3, Benario (1994), p. 80, Rives (1999), p. 186.

²⁷³ Anderson (1938), p. 67, Benario (1994), p. 72, Rives (1999), p. 172.

instances of ‘following one’s leader into death’ span Tacitus’ entire corpus, from the *Germania* to the *Annals*.

Of Germanic funerals, Tacitus writes: “there is no pomp . . . they do not heap the pile of the pyre with clothing and perfumes . . . they quickly put aside their lamentations and tears, their grief and sadness slowly. It is honorable for women to mourn, for men to remember” (*Ger.* 27.1). Much is often made of the contrast between the pomp of Roman funerary ceremonies and the relative simplicity of the Germanic affair, though, as both Rives and Wenghofer note, Tacitus was clearly either selective in his use of sources, or ignorant of custom, as German funerary deposits (which were inhumation rather than cremation) were rife with luxury goods.²⁷⁴ I believe the often overlooked sentiment in Tacitus, however, is that in Germanic culture “men remember [the deceased]” (*Ger.* 27.1). Memory is the most powerful and honorable gift that can be showered upon the dead,²⁷⁵ as Tacitus states in the *Agricola*: “oblivion will overwhelm many men of old as if they were without glory and of no consequence; Agricola will survive, his story told and transmitted to posterity” (*Agr.* 46.4).

V. Conclusions

I have thus avoided previous primary sources which treat the Germani. This is not out of a fear of opposing evidence, but rather I feel that earlier and highly contradictory passages concerning the Germans (to which we will now turn) underline the implausibility of considering Tacitus’ monograph in the same category as previous ethnographic treatments. Caesar, whose excursus on the Germans we have examined

²⁷⁴ For inconsistencies and anachronism in the *Germania* see n. 166.

²⁷⁵ Benario (1994), p. 92.

thoroughly, is notable for first collectively referring to the Germanic tribes as ‘Germani.’²⁷⁶ Strabo (ca. 23 CE), writing after Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul, maintains that the Germani were a nomadic and indigent people who used their land opportunistically – the further north, the more applicable the characterization.²⁷⁷ The eventual incorporation of Gaul into the Roman empire made Germany a permanent fixture of the Imperial purview and afforded the *princeps* a constant source of triumph.²⁷⁸ In fact, Strabo maintained the plausibility of a total Roman conquest, so long as they avoided straying too far and engaging the eastern tribes (who lived in relative peace).²⁷⁹ Velleius (ca. 30 CE) comments upon the ferocity of the Germans, the *feritas Germana*, and their inability to be governed or ruled by law: they are human only in shape, with the mind and irascibility of beasts, a sentiment echoed by both Manilius (ca. 9 CE) and Josephus (ca. 75 CE).²⁸⁰ The sentiment universally shared by Strabo, Velleius and Manilius is the utter untrustworthiness of the Germanic spirit: they are “a nation born to lie.”²⁸¹ Seneca provides the only positive assessment of the Germani, particularly in reference to their hard-primitivism: they are a people oppressed by their eternally frigid climate, barren soil, and wild beasts, but they have “been brought back to nature . . . good men are shaken in order that they may grow strong” (*De providentia* 4.14). To Seneca they are the fiercest of foes, a severity made possible by their freedom (*libertas*), but he

²⁷⁶ Caesar *BG* 1.1.3, Isaac (2004), p. 428.

²⁷⁷ *Strab.* 7.1.3, Isaac (2004), p. 428.

²⁷⁸ *Strab.* 7.1.4, Isaac (2004), p. 429.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*

²⁸⁰ Josephus *BJ* 2.16.4, Manilius 4.794, Isaac (2004), p. 430. For further reading concerning Josephus and ethnography see Matyszak (2004), pp. 191 -212. For further reading on Manilius see chapter 1, n. 67

²⁸¹ Manilius 1.896-903, *Strab.* 7.1.4, Velleius 2.118, Isaac (2004), p. 430. For further reading regarding on Velleius and ethnography see chapter 1, n. 67.

did not concern himself with the possibility of a tangible Germanic threat as, he states, they were a people unable to exercise dominion.²⁸² The fact that Seneca provides the only possible evidence that supports a morally revisionist view of the *Germania* should come as no surprise, as Wenghofer notes the usage of Stoic doctrine, particularly the *Epistulae Morales*, as a moral guideline to the Tacitean corpus.²⁸³

This idea of Roman imperial expansion on the northern frontier, repeated by ancient and modern authors alike, is a fact which bears great importance to my conclusion. Domitian, self-proclaimed conqueror of Germany, had been dead less than two years when Tacitus composed the monograph, during which time Trajan, an experienced soldier, had assumed command of the Rhine and been awarded the title of *imperator* by his troops; as Rives notes, it is impossible to not consider the sociopolitical climate in the work's composition.²⁸⁴ We need only turn to *Agr.* 39.1 to understand Tacitus' true sentiment regarding the inflated imperial victory: "he [Domitian] realized that his fake triumph over Germany had held him up to ridicule, when slaves had been purchased whose appearance and hair were worked on to make them look like captives." As stated, we need not assume (as Syme notes),²⁸⁵ that Tacitus was in a position to advise high command of impending military engagement. Nevertheless, it is not beyond reason that Tacitus was attempting (along with the *Agricola*) to 'set the record straight' concerning Flavian military 'success' against the Germans, through a combined use of

²⁸² Seneca *de Ira* 2.15, Isaac (2004), p. 431, For further reading regarding Seneca's *de Ira* see Kaster & Nussbaum (2010). For further commentary see chapter 1, n. 69.

²⁸³ See chapter 2, sec. II.

²⁸⁴ Rives (1999), p. 52.

²⁸⁵ See n. 122.

ethnography, philosophy, and moral revision to create an idealized, theoretical landscape of morals and values lost (by Roman citizens) under the yoke of imperial tyranny.

Indeed the idea of monocausality (i.e. considering the *Germania* as straight ethnography, or a military ‘call to arms’) is a reductive standpoint, but one which manages to hold fast in this instance of ancient ‘ethnography.’ A position of multicausality regarding the *Germania*’s composition (i.e. ‘setting the record straight’ on German pacification, while simultaneously meditating on the loss of virtue and morals under the rule of tyranny through allusion), though less glamorous, is far more plausible. To consider the *Germania* as a sincere ethnographic portrait is simply no longer valid. To do so is to ignore the political climate which heralded the end of the Flavian dynasty, the opportunistic use of the Germanic frontier (for inflated military victories), and Tacitus’ use of moralism in his literary corpus. The question remains, was the composition of the *Germania* an isolated incident of allusive literary moralism precipitated by the socio-political climate of the Flavian dynasty, or another instance of an as-yet unobserved *topos* of ethnographic subterfuge?

Chapter III: Notions of Moral Revision in Caesar's Gallic Commentary

I. Introduction

The most logical subject to examine, as a parallel instance of moral revision to the *Germania*, is the ethnographic accounts of the Gauls. This decision goes beyond the obvious proximity in locale between the two regions (Gaul sharing its northeastern border with Germany) and is influenced rather by the inimitable history between the two peoples. Indeed when the Gauls are mentioned in ancient literature, the Germans often follow, and vice-versa.²⁸⁶ To many early commentators of Gallic ethnography the peoples are thought to have shared common ancestry. Caesar made such proclamations, particularly concerning the northeastern tribes of Gaul (specifically the Belgae): “the Belgae were sprung from the same stock as the Germans, and, having crossed the Rhine at an earlier period, settled there [in Gaul]” (*BG* 2.4).²⁸⁷ Strabo concurs that, “these peoples [the Gauls and Germans] are by nature and in their institutions similar and related to each other; they also live in a country with a common boundary” (4.4.2).²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Strabo is considered the first author to formally establish a strong distinction between the Gauls (here referred to as *Celtae*), and Germans (addressed in individual tribal names – *Cimbri*, *Teutoni* etc.²⁸⁹ – and as a collective group).²⁹⁰ Although Diodorus never explicitly refers to ‘Germans’ in name, he does reference the “*Galatae*

²⁸⁶ Caesar (*BG*. 2.1-4, 6.24.1, 6.24.5-6), Strabo (4.4.2), and Diodorus (5.28.1, 32.2) all make note of the shared ancestry between the Germans and the Gauls, and the former glory of Gallic martial prowess. For further commentary on Diodorus see chapter 1, n. 88.

²⁸⁷ For further commentary on Caesar and the Gauls see chapter 1, n. 97.

²⁸⁸ For further commentary on Strabo see chapter 1, n. 66.

²⁸⁹ *Strab.* 7.1-2.

²⁹⁰ *Strab.* 4.4.2.

(Gauls) who live across the Rhine” (5.25.4).²⁹¹ This shared ethnographic past extends far beyond geographic observation, and at more intimate level of assessment Caesar notes, “there was a time when the Gauls bested the Germans in *virtus*, and waged war upon them . . . [now] they do not consider themselves equal to the Germans in *virtus*” (*BG.* 6.24.1, 6.24.6). It is this notion of diminishing Gallic *virtus*, in the face of superior military prowess (be it the Germans or the Romans), which will serve as the focus of my Gallic analysis.

First, under what set of circumstances and in what capacity can we judge the Gallic ethnographies to be indicative of a protracted moral revision? Although outlined previously, the tenets of moral revision bear repeating: a) a sociopolitical climate which necessitates allusive, rather than explicit, moral critique (against Romans); b) a pattern of historical anachronism and inconsistency – often masked as ‘innovative’ ethnographic interpretation, with a fixation upon the moral proclivities of the subject; c) an inability to be classified within the established ethnographic subgenres – either scientific or romantic; and ultimately (in the absence of historicity) d) a noted and discernable influence of moral philosophy – Stoic or otherwise. It is my intention to assess whether the extant texts dealing specifically with Gallic ethnography can be read as morally revisionist within the above parameters.

Given that Germanic stereotypes and fear of Germanic military strength was (in literature) borrowed wholesale from earlier Gallic ethnic stereotyping and martial

²⁹¹ As it will become clear in my analysis, the most northerly reaches of Gaul – those which border Germany in the northeast – become almost indistinguishable from the German tribes, and as a result, German stereotypes. This trope is thought to have began in the lost work of Poseidonius, and is clearly apparent in the later works of Caesar and Strabo. As Riggsby notes, however, the number of lost ethnographic accounts of the Gauls precludes us from assuming this as fact. See Riggsby (2006), p. 48

fears,²⁹² the composition of Gallic ethnography as markedly revisionist (particularly in light of my analysis of the *Germania*) would appear a forgone conclusion. However, to assume this is to disregard the unique relationship shared between Gaul and Rome – one which was not applicable to Romano-Germanic relations, as Germany remained, in comparison to Gaul, arguably unconquered. This was “the single worst failure of the empire. It was a matter of safety, as well as honor . . . [as] those who are *not* subjugated remain dangerous.”²⁹³ The relationship between Gaul and Rome was inimitable: predicated on a former bellicosity – the lasting implications of the 390 BCE Gallic sack of Rome, and Caesar’s conquest – and eventual dependency – in the form of trade, resources, and arable land.²⁹⁴ During the composition of the early Gallic ethnographies,²⁹⁵ Gaul, though annexed by Caesar, had yet to be, considered thoroughly Roman, as it would in the late 1st to early 2nd century CE.²⁹⁶ As such, and specifically within the confines of ethnography, Gaul was considered the proverbial ‘other:’ a land and people against which the Romans could define themselves, both measurably in war and morally in culture.²⁹⁷ Based upon this unique set of circumstances, the idea of Gallic ‘otherness,’ in conjunction with what Isaac (2004) terms as a consistent visual presence and

²⁹² Isaac (2004), pp. 413-418.

²⁹³ Isaac (2004), p. 439.

²⁹⁴ Isaac (2004), pp. 419-425.

²⁹⁵ Polybius ca. mid-2nd century BCE, Caesar ca. 50 BCE, Diodorus ca. 60-40 BCE, Strabo ca. 23 CE, and to an extent Cicero 69 BCE. Cicero’s *Pro Fonteio* is noted as the most acerbic assessment of Gallic culture and the lingering Celtic threat to Rome.

²⁹⁶ For further reading on the Romanization of provincial Gaul see Woolf (1994), which provides a thorough analysis of the two-way acculturation in the age of imperialism.

²⁹⁷ Regarding the concept of the rendering of Gallic ‘otherness’ see Woolf (2011).

geographic proximity to the Roman populace, precludes us from coming to the same conclusions about other ‘northerners’ (specifically Germans) in the Roman purview.²⁹⁸

Returning to the topic of moral revision, as is clear concerning my analysis of the *Germania*, it is not an interpretation which can be applied to Latin ethnography *en masse*, as its composition necessitates a specific set of sociopolitical circumstances and literary occurrences. No comparable text to the *Germania* exists for the Gallic subject, however, I believe Caesar’s chapters of Gallic ethnographic excursus in *Bellum Gallicum* provides an appropriate case study with which to examine whether or not my methodology of moral revision can be applied. Moral preoccupation in the *BG* may in theory work from both angles: on one hand, admonishing the moral turpitude of Rome while praising the Gauls, and on the other praising Roman moral fortitude while deprecating Gallic barbarousness. That said, to argue the former we would need to possess a text comparable in length and scope to *Germania* in praising Gallic ways and manners. Thus, we must be mindful of the lack of ethnographic context against which we can place Caesar’s commentary. Given the restriction of space, I limit myself to asking whether it is possible to argue moral revision outside of the *Germania*. First I will consider Gallic ethnography prior to Caesar’s text, which will establish the basis of prior Gallic ethnic characterization. Following this, I will examine Caesar’s text in depth according to the parameters set above.²⁹⁹ Specifically, we will consider the notion of the Gallic ‘other’ and its ramifications on Caesar’s rendering of Gallic moralism. Following this I will turn to Caesar’s innovation in the praising of Gallic *virtus*, which may extend beyond the

²⁹⁸ Isaac (2004), pp. 419-421.

²⁹⁹ See p. 77.

parameters of its usual military connotations and be informed by a pliable conception of geography.

II. Ethnographic Accounts of the Gauls prior to Caesar

Gallic ethnic stereotypes were well entrenched in the literary landscape, prior to Caesar's commentary, among the Greek authors of the Roman era. These stereotypes which should appear familiar given the above analysis of the *Germania*: tall, fair, mustachioed barbarians, indigent and lustful for war;³⁰⁰ and other characteristics which are unique to the Gauls; their habitual consumption of unmixed wine,³⁰¹ men that are excessively boastful³⁰² and promiscuously homosexual,³⁰³ who practice human sacrifice³⁰⁴ and possess an inordinate capacity for wit and erudition (given the right circumstance).³⁰⁵ That Caesar relied and drew upon these early works – those of Polybius, Diodorus, and Strabo (and the lost works of Poseidonius) – remains a highly contested point of debate, and a debate which Gruen believes, given Caesar's innovative and intensive first-hand experience with Gaul, is needlessly divisive and ultimately negligible.³⁰⁶ That said, a brief overview of the prior accounts which served as Caesar's

³⁰⁰ *Diod.* 5.28.1, *Strabo* 4.4.5, 4.5.2, *Polyb.* 2.15.7, 2.18.1-2, 2.35.2, 3.34.2.

³⁰¹ *Diod.* 5.26.3, *Strabo* 4.4.3.

³⁰² *Diod.* 5.29.3, 5.31.1, *Strabo* 4.4.5.

³⁰³ *Diod.* 5.32.7, *Strabo* 4.4.6.

³⁰⁴ *Diod.* 5.31.6, 6, *Strabo* 4.4.5.

³⁰⁵ *Cato Origines* fr. 34, *Juv.* 7.147, *Strabo* 4.4.2.

³⁰⁶ Both Gruen and Isaac agree that the tendency to position the lost ethnography of Poseidonius as not only the basis for Caesar, but for all subsequent post-Caesarian renderings is inherently baseless and attributable to Teirney's (1960) overestimation of Poseidonian influence. Momigliano was likely the first to forward the contention that Caesar, given both his first-hand experience and innovative rendering of the Gallic character, was no plagiarist. For further reading on the issue see Gruen (2011), p. 141, and Isaac (2004), pp.412-413.

supposed influences remains relevant to establish the degree to which his readership would find his account familiar and revisionist.

Polybius,³⁰⁷ writing in the late 2nd century BCE, is considered the first ancient author to examine the Gauls beyond a mere passing mention.³⁰⁸ His account is noted for an emphasis on early Romano-Gallic engagements – from the Gallic sack of Rome to the wars of expansion in the late 3rd century BCE – and a discernable air of caution concerning the lingering Gallic threat.³⁰⁹ Polybius’ treatment is conspicuously generalized, with no clear distinctions made between individual tribes and no attempt at sociological observation. But the characteristic stereotypes that would come to inform later ethnographic accounts of the Gauls – greed, untrustworthiness, unpredictability, and bellicosity – find their genesis (within our extant texts) in Polybius’ account. That said, we must not, as Riggsby notes, assume a direct descent from Polybius to Caesar’s commentary, nor a common literary ancestor, as we do not possess enough evidence for such statements.³¹⁰ Though Polybius’ account is decidedly antagonistic, there is a brief allocation for praise of the Gauls; Polybius remarks positively on Gallic physical traits – height, complexion, and strength³¹¹ – and acknowledges their bold, albeit reckless, proficiency in war (although this is tempered by an accusation of inconstancy).³¹²

Diodorus, ca. 50-40 BCE, provides a distinctly more ethnographic approach than Polybius, but one which, in the opinion of Gruen (as well as Isaac and Riggsby), is a

³⁰⁷ For further commentary on Polybius’ *Histories* see chapter 1, n. 86.

³⁰⁸ The earliest extant accounts of the Gauls come to us from both Plato, 637d, and Aristotle, *Pol.* 1269b, 1324b.

³⁰⁹ *Polyb.* 2.31.7, 2.35.2.

³¹⁰ Riggsby (2006), p. 48.

³¹¹ *Diod.* 2.15.7, 2.18.1-2, 2.35.2, 3.34.2.

³¹² *Diod.* 2.35.6.

particularly dry and bland regurgitation of character traits which would have been familiar to the readers of Polybius. Indeed, the descriptions read as a gratuitous catalog of oddities – a portrait of consistently inebriated war mongers, who use their mustaches as sieves to catch the dregs of wine, and practice human sacrifice in divination.³¹³ Unlike the account of Polybius, Diodorus rarely writes in a tone of censure, rather, as previously noted in our overview of the ethnographic subgenres,³¹⁴ there is a decided predilection for the romantic and fantastical.³¹⁵

Strabo, of our three authors, provides the most scientific and explicitly sociological assessment. That being said, the familiar tropes which appear in Polybius reappear in Strabo's account: the Gauls are war mad and tempestuous, courageous but belligerent, and physically imposing with a preference for strong wine – clearly, “even a fine scholar like Strabo could mix facts with traditional commonplaces.”³¹⁶ Strabo's account, in the opinions of Gruen, Isaac, and Riggsby, is notable for its lack of subjective criticism and for an even-handed presentation of Gallic simplicity and honorableness.³¹⁷ Strabo also relates the most sociologically in-depth passage (in an example concerning Gallic government) of any of our early extant authors: the Gauls participate in an aristocratic government, whereby one ruler is elected annually, as well as one general per

³¹³ *Diod.* 5.26.3, 5.28.1-3, 5.31.3, Gruen (2011), p. 143, Isaac (2004), pp. 416-417, Riggsby (2006), pp. 48-49.

³¹⁴ For a discussion of the ethnographic subgenres within Greek and Latin literature see chapter 2, pp. 31-39.

³¹⁵ An example of the former (5.28.4) occurs in the suggestion that the Gallic practice of allocating the best meat at a feast to those who are considered the most admirable is evocative of Homeric custom; the latter (5.31.5) in the recapitulation that Gallic diviners (perhaps Druids) possessed the ability to stop an encroaching army as if by magic.

³¹⁶ Isaac (2004), p. 417.

³¹⁷ Gruen (2011), p. 145, Isaac (2004), p. 417. Riggsby (2006), pp. 51-53.

campaign (4.4.3).³¹⁸ This passage, however, serves merely as a preamble for the recitation of a peculiar digression.³¹⁹ More intrinsically it underscores the shared tendencies of our Hellenic authors: these loose writings on ‘ethnography’ (much like Roman historiography generally), focus on individuals rather than the structure of societal groups.³²⁰ They are unlike historiography, however, in that this individual focus was upon a single generic people and their mundanity, rather than the great deeds of nobles and aristocrats.³²¹

In Cicero’s *Pro Fonteio* (69 BCE)³²² emerges the most damning and vitriolic portrait of the Gauls. Defaming both witness and prosecution was not unusual on the part of the orator and in fact was customary in court proceedings.³²³ Cicero makes a protracted effort to consistently deploy Gallic ethnographic stereotypes, and in a Catonian-like fashion, he accuses the Gauls *en masse* of being oath-breakers, faithless, and without reverence for the gods.³²⁴ Cicero’s position is perhaps best encapsulated his assertion that “the most eminent of Gauls are not to be compared with the lowliest of Romans (27).” The extent to which we can interpret Cicero’s portrait of the Gauls as opportunistic pandering is made palpably obvious when we consider that one Allobroges,

³¹⁸ Riggsby (2006), pp.48-49.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.* This account of Gallic governmental rule (4.4.3) serves as a transitional prelude for a digression concerning the sanctity of Gallic cloaks among the warrior class. For further reading see Riggsby (2006), pp. 48-49.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² For further commentary on the *Pro Fonteio* see chapter 1, n. 92.

³²³ For further reading concerning Cicero’s position as legal orator see Tempest (2011).

³²⁴ *Pro Font.* 12, 23, 26, 29-30.

in the *Pro Fonteio* defamed as a faithless Gallic witness and exemplary of all Gallic turpitude,³²⁵ is later employed by Cicero as stalwart witness against the Catilinarians.³²⁶

Although it is debatable whether Diodorus began his excursus prior to, or following Caesar's publication,³²⁷ Strabo without question composed during the reign of Augustus. Thus in chronological terms, Strabo may not be considered as having written on the Gauls prior to Caesar, however, the similarity in the rendering of the Gallic character by the Greek authors can be reasonably assumed to be part of an earlier ethnographic tradition which predates the work of Caesar (possibly from Poseidonius). Although Caesar reiterates much of the assumed conviction, his 'innovation' would suggest a progression from 'prior' treatments. Thus, as Riggsby (2011) proposes, we need not think of Caesar's work as intertextually backwards to that of Strabo and Diodorus, rather, in this specific instance of interdiscursivity, "we can read in either direction."³²⁸

III. Caesar's Variation

From the onset, an obvious conflict within my methodology and its applicability to Caesar's text is apparent: the first tenet outlined above – a sociopolitical climate which demands allusive moral critique – is simply not valid in the case of Caesar during the Gallic campaign (ca. 58-50 BCE). While space precludes an in-depth analysis of the late-republic political sphere, it is sufficient to say that Caesar's position of power, although

³²⁵ *Pro Font.* 27-36.

³²⁶ *Cat.* 4.5, 4.10.

³²⁷ Riggsby (2006), p.58. For further reading on the issues surrounding Diodorus' composition date, and the extent of his reliance upon Caesar's text, see Riggsby (2006), pp. 47-59.

³²⁸ Riggsby (2006), pp. 58-59.

not yet having reached its apex,³²⁹ did not necessitate any form of allusive literary allegory, nor was there the impetus to critique the moral fortitude of the Roman citizens serving in his legions.³³⁰ This does not, however, render Caesar's ethnographic contributions as morally inert, indeed, there is still much to be considered of the innovations in his revisionist treatment.

In lieu of arguing for a discernable allusive tendency of *BG*, I propose a substitution in focus: the unique literary crafting of the Gallic 'other' by Caesar. While this may appear only tangentially concerned with moral revision, its application in framing Caesar's narrative within a revisionist purview is relevant. How, and to what end Caesar crafted an innovative³³¹ characterization of the Gauls, or the concept of the Gallic 'other,' has been the focus of a great deal of recent scholarship: Gruen (2011), Riggsby (2006), and Woolf (2011) all consider the issue of 'otherness' and Caesarian intent. Nevertheless, consensus is far from unanimous; rather there exists two diametrically opposed stances, with Gruen and Riggsby's positions being particularly antithetical. Riggsby cites a repetition of successive 'divisions' within Caesar's text: the tripartite division of Gaul, and the binary division of Gallic hierarchy, which is rendered in terms evocative of Roman *mores* to create a familiar and ordered social landscape which would resound with his readership.³³² As such, when Caesar pronounces moral judgments on

³²⁹ For further reading concerning the late republican political climate see Goldsworthy (1998), pp. 193-200, McDonnell (2006), pp. 300-319, Syme (1939), pp. 47-59, and Wiseman (1998), pp. 1-10.

³³⁰ See pp. 88-92 for discussion of Caesar's moral subjects.

³³¹ Gruen outlines a succession of conventions which, despite Caesarian innovation, reappear in *BG*: specifically, Gallic capriciousness (2.1.3, 3.8.3, 4.5.1, 4.13.3), inconstancy (3.19.6), recklessness in battle (7.42.2), and untrustworthiness (4.13.1, 7.17.7, 7.54.2). For further reading see Gruen (2011), p. 148.

³³² Riggsby (2006), pp. 63-64.

Gallic society (whether positive or negative), the statement possesses greater ramifications than previous ethnographic portraits. Conversely, Gruen infers an altogether simpler intent behind Caesar's literary constructions: namely, that Caesar had neither the agenda nor the predilection to create a vaguely familiar (albeit corrupted) race against which to highlight superior Roman morals; rather (much akin to Tacitean moral critique), his rendering of positive Gallic attributes "shed an unflattering light on Romans."³³³ Again, while I do not intend to come to conclusions concerning what stance is objectively more convincing, I posit that regardless of stance, both interpretations reinforce a reading of moral revision by means of Caesarian intention (and ethnographic innovation). Caesar's Gallic ethnography does not lend itself to a schematized analysis such as the 'life cycle' in Tacitus' *Germania*; thus I will analyze the Gallic commentary with a consistent emphasis on the allusive moral proclivities of Caesar's prose. I will specifically consider Caesar's use of both Gallic geographic and societal divisions and how such divisions are rendered in familiar Romanized terms as a possible means to further a moral agenda, and that ultimately – though Casear breaks with previous Gallic ethnographic tradition – his literary construction is no less calculated.

The Gallic Other: Tripartite and Binary Divisions

Caesar, although not entirely innocent of the reiteration of Gallic ethnographic convention, begins his variation on a note of revision: "all of Gaul is divided into three parts" (*BG* 1.1), a concept which has no geographic or ethnographic precedence.

However odd the decision appears to divide Gaul in such a way, Caesar's assessment

³³³ Gruen (2011), pp. 148-149.

begins with a declaration of a recurrent preoccupation – division. In the opening paragraph of the text, not only is Gaul divided geographically, but also by its peoples and respective tribal cultures: within Caesar’s overarching tripartite division there appears a repetition of successive binary divisions within Gallic social order.³³⁴ Foremost, “all states are divided into two parts” (*BG* 6.11.5) and within Gallic states, social and political hierarchy is delineated by a further binary division: “in all of Gaul there are two kinds of men” (*BG* 6.13.1) these two kinds of men being the lower classes (nearly slaves)³³⁵ and the elite; to which even this division is bifurcated into Druids and knights.³³⁶ While many commentators (Gruen, Isaac, and Momigliano specifically)³³⁷ preface their assessments of Caesar’s Gallic ethnography with proclamations of his definitive first-hand accounts and extended interaction with Gallic tribes as evidence of ethnographic veracity his variation on Gallic society is no less deliberate than his Hellenic predecessors. This is particularly evident when we consider the emphasis on neat binary divisions of Gallic social structure within a tripartite geographic division – even going so far as to ignore Gallic bards and philosophers (well-attested in Strabo and Diodorus as well as in later accounts by Juvenal)³³⁸ as to not disrupt the neatly crafted division.³³⁹

On the surface such evidence of deliberate division does not appear to lend itself to moral criticism; however, this is not the case. As to the reasons why Caesar frames both Gallic geographic and social order in such a way, two scholarly interpretations are

³³⁴ Riggsby (2006), p. 63.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ See n. 306.

³³⁸ See p. 80, n. 305.

³³⁹ Riggsby (2006), p.63

currently prevalent.³⁴⁰ Although neither interpretation frames authorial intent in a reading of moral revision, moralizing applicability is nevertheless explicit. Riggsby, in endorsing the theory of binary division, believes the intent to be a literary creation or simulacrum of perceivable ‘order:’ that is, unlike Caesar’s perception of the lack of German social order, there exists within Caesar’s Gallic society a social structure dictated by Roman concepts – clientage, plebs, Roman gods, and knights.³⁴¹ As such, the Gallic landscape was made familiar, even palatable, to a Roman audience. Riggsby, however, feels that such a societal frame of reference is dictated unambiguously by pro-Roman moral motivation: that is, the tendency of inversion of Roman social *mores* precipitates the inevitable perversion of said *mores*. Thus, the Gallic corruption of Roman morals (described in specifically familiar Roman terms) appears all the more perverse.³⁴² Riggsby outlines four specific instances of Gallic cultural inversion: first, the practice of human sacrifice victims immolated to the gods as punishment for lesser crimes, such as theft.³⁴³ Unlike Caesar’s descriptions of the Germans as inherently compelled towards banditry, the Gauls punish criminals, but the manner would seem excessively draconian to a Roman audience.³⁴⁴ Such inherent Gallic cruelty extends further, to legal proceedings: although the torture of slaves to provide evidence (especially in crimes against a master) in a law

³⁴⁰ The second interpretation of Caesarian ‘ordering’ will be examined on pp. 88-90.

³⁴¹ Clientage (6.12.2), plebs (6.13.1), Latin gods (6.17.1-2 [also see chapter 2, p. 63, n. 245 concerning *interpretatio Romana*]), and knights (6.13.3). For further reading see Riggsby (2006), pp. 62-64.

³⁴² Riggsby (2006), pp. 63-64.

³⁴³ This practice of sacrifice is applied to Gaul as a whole (“... *omnis Gallorum*” 6.16.1-5). Caesar further notes that when sacrificial victims cannot be found amongst thieves and bandits, the innocent are used without hesitation (6.16.5). For further reading see Riggsby (2006), p. 63-64.

³⁴⁴ Riggsby (2006), pp. 63-64.

case would be familiar – even mundane – to Caesar’s readership,³⁴⁵ the Gallic practice of extending such treatment to the wife of a murdered slave-owner (6.19.3) would rate as excessive and perverse.³⁴⁶ More specific inversion appears in 6.18.3, in which Caesar recounts that amongst the Gauls sons are not acknowledged by their fathers until they are capable of military service – the opposite of a Roman patriarch acknowledging (or refusing) legitimate children directly following birth.³⁴⁷ Although a familiar social order is in place – criminal justice, investigative inquisition, familial law – the specifics of the Gallic order are corrupted and in some cases inverted – Riggsby extrapolates that even the Gauls’ concept of time (days, months, and years counted from sunset rather than midnight) would affront Roman sensibilities.³⁴⁸ Ultimately, to those convinced of Gallic moral inferiority, Caesar’s motivation in dividing, familiarizing, and demonizing Gallic social structure is rooted in the practice of ‘ordering:’ the Gauls may be ordered in clear-cut divisions (either tripartite or binary – making them geographically manageable); they may be familiar to Roman readership in many ways and manners, but the ways are a corrupted facsimile of (perceivably) superior Roman models in what O’Gorman states is the affirmation of “a discourse of duality and polarity” which informs much of ancient ethnography.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ The torture of slaves to facilitate confession is particularly well attested in the ancient sources, ranging from the republic to the late empire, see Cicero *Pro Cluent.* 63, 64, Quintilian *Declam.* 328, 338, 353, and Tacitus *Ann.* 2.30, 3.14.2-3, 3.67.

³⁴⁶ Riggsby (2006), p. 64.

³⁴⁷ For further reading on paternity laws and the post-natal acceptance of children within the Roman household, see chapter 2, pp.53-54, n. 206.

³⁴⁸ Gell. *NA* 3.2, Plin. *HN* 2.188, Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 84. For further reading on the use of the lunar calendar in antiquity see Llewelyn (2002), p. 113, Riggsby (2006), p. 64.

³⁴⁹ Quoted in Riggsby (2006), pp. 65-66.

The Fluidity of Virtus?

The examination of *virtus*,³⁵⁰ and its high incidence within *BG*, has consistently been at the forefront of scholarship which considers Caesar's literary construction of the Gallic other. *Virtus* (traditionally defined as courage in warfare) has figured most prominently in the assessment of military tactics and Gallic proficiency in warfare – neither of which subjects lends itself particularly to a sociological examination of moralism (either in favour, or repudiation of, Gallic moral fortitude). Gruen, however, in a reassessment of Gallic *virtus*, has attempted to not only define *virtus* outside of its traditionally martial parameters, but also to forward such incidence as proof of Caesar's critique of Roman moral failings.

Gruen's interpretation of pro-Gallic moralism, based around the examination of *virtus*, is diametrically opposed to Riggsby. Gruen states that, rather than Caesar's divisions (and the element of *virtus* in a geographic context below) reflecting Roman moral fortitude, we are in fact given something far more akin to a Tacitean critique. Gruen's approach upon first glance appears particularly thin compared to Riggsby's thoroughly analytical approach: what Riggsby considers Caesarian ethnographic innovation (multilayered geographic and societal division), Gruen interprets as a reinforcement of pre-established Gallic convention – the trope of Gallic divisiveness and fractured disorder among the tribes due to capriciousness and emotional instability.³⁵¹ Furthermore, there is an attempt on Gruen's part to temper Caesar's more damning Gallic criticisms by explaining them away as singular indictments against individuals and tribes

³⁵⁰ For a preliminary discussion on the role of *virtus* as a martial quality and its use in *BG* see chapter 1, pp. 25-28.

³⁵¹ See n. 323, 331.

rather than sweeping accusations against all of Gaul.³⁵² Given Riggsby's analysis (and the preponderance of Caesar's broad prefaces, i.e. 'all of Gaul,' or 'within Gaul') this is simply not the case. Nevertheless, there is value in Gruen's work. *Virtus*, within *BG* is often considered an emphatically martial quality,³⁵³ and has been disregarded as a political or philosophical trait within the text.³⁵⁴ Gruen specifically cites the episode of Critognatus' speech prior to the battle of Alesia as indicative of both pro-Gallic moralism and an existential application of *virtus*. In the Critognatus episode, the eponymous war-chief advocates forethought in the imminent attack upon Roman forces, and appeals against the *virtus* of their Gallic forefathers (by riding into certain defeat) – as such assured self-sacrifice is antithetical to *virtus* (*mollitia*).³⁵⁵ Thus, Gruen interprets the *virtus* of Critognatus' speech (which we must acknowledge as Caesar's words put into the mouth of a Gaul) as a non-martial instance of the word, dealing rather with self-preservation of a collective cause than the brash confidence usually synonymous with Gallic *virtus*.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Gruen's interpretation fails to find any successive instances of existential *virtus* and neglects the fact that Caesar (on occasion) levels criticism and

³⁵² Gruen (2011), p. 148. Gruen assumes that Caesar's indictments against individual Gauls outweigh criticism of the Gallic nation. However, Gruen fails to account for the seriousness of the accusations levied against "*omnia Gallorum*." Though fewer, the implications (outlined via Riggsby) would appear far more severe to a Roman audience.

³⁵³ See chapter 1, pp. 25-28. For further reading on the martial aspects of *virtus* see McDonnell (2006), pp. 300-319.

³⁵⁴ For the concept of *virtus* as a sociopolitical attribute (particularly in Sallust), see chapter 1, p. 26, n. 104.

³⁵⁵ *Mollitia* is often (and rather controversially) translated as 'softness' - an antonymic to *virtus*. Critognatus defines the established form of Gallic *virtus* - a brash and bold attack without forethought or endurance - as "*animi est ista mollitia, non virtus, paulisper inopiam ferre non posse*" (to not be able to endure hardship for a brief time is weakness, not valor, *BG* 7.77). For further reading on the use of *mollitia* as a martial insult see Erickson (2002), pp. 601-622, and McDonnell (2006), p. 63, 301, n. 141.

³⁵⁶ Gruen (2011), pp. 151-153.

praise upon individuals (in the historiographic tradition)³⁵⁷ rather than on the Gallic people as a whole; as such, we cannot let one instance of existential *virtus* (itself an invention of Caesar) dictate a pattern of pro-Gallic moral proclivity.

The Geography of Virtus

Caesar's attribution of Gallic *virtus* can be assessed both quantitatively (by the mention of *virtus* credited to northerners [36 times] vs. Romans [28 times])³⁵⁸ and qualitatively (as a martial and socially existential quality),³⁵⁹ but neither in isolation lends itself to a particularly moralist reading of the text. Thus, I will examine the issue of geographic location dictating the incidence of *virtus* among the Gallic tribes.

Caesar's text, from the outset, makes note of the relation between *virtus* and geographical distance from Rome: "for they [the Belgae] are furthest removed from the civilization and refinement of the province, [and] traders very rarely visit them with wares which tend to produce moral enervation" (*BG* 1.1). This assertion is further qualified by two specific variables: first, distance from the enervating effects of Roman luxuries and their inherently detrimental consequences on Gallic martial prowess,³⁶⁰ and second, proximity to those in possession of (assumed) superior *virtus* and consistent martial engagement with said peoples – here the German tribes northeast of the Rhine.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Gruen (2011), pp. 148, 151- 153. See n. 351.

³⁵⁸ McDonnell (2006), pp. 300-319.

³⁵⁹ See Gruen (2011), Jervis (2001), and Riggsby (2006).

³⁶⁰ "the Belgae are the bravest, because they are furthest from civilization and refinement of the provinces, traders rarely visit them with the wares which tend to produce moral enervation," *horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt, minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent important*, (*BG* 1.1. 3).

³⁶¹ "they [the Belgae] are nearest to the Germans, who dwell on the far side of the Rhine, and with whom they are constantly at war," *proximique sunt Germanis, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, quibuscum continenter bellum gerunt*, (*BG* 1.1.4).

In keeping with the pattern of division, this proclamation of *virtus* in the exterior is defined as being more preeminent among tribal divisions in the most extreme northeast – although the Belgae *en masse* are spoken of as preeminent in *virtus*, among them the Helvetii are singled out.³⁶² Although tribal remoteness is often the cause of such isolation from the Roman center, and thus its enervating effects, in other cases it is the specific will of a tribe which conscientiously avoids the luxury incumbent with Roman culture. Whatever the cause – either by natural distance or deliberate choice – Roman culture, as stated by Jervis (2001), is inversely proportional to the degree of perceived *virtus*.³⁶³

Such Caesarian moralizing is typified by his treatment of the Nervii. The Nervii resided on the exterior of the periphery, beyond known borders. Because of this Caesar states he must learn of their manners by informants and turncoats.³⁶⁴ Although part of the Belgae, this distance from Rome is not responsible for the Nervii's *virtus*; they are depicted as active agents in the resistance of Roman culture and trade through explicit prohibition of Roman goods.³⁶⁵ Furthermore the Nervii, on account of *virtus*, are depicted as more resolute in their liberty and in their aversion towards surrender (against Roman

³⁶² “For the same reason [distance from Rome and proximity to the Germans] the Helvetii are braver than the other Gauls,” *qua de causa Helvetii quoque reliquos Gallos virtute praecedunt*, (BG 1.1.4).

³⁶³ Jervis (2001), p. 75. Jervis raises the question of the realistic effect Roman cultural imports would have had upon Gallic martial fortitude, and whether Caesar's proclamation of Gallic prohibition of Roman goods exists as a literary schema. As I will examine below, northern Gallic strength was, by Caesar's account, extremely overestimated, and the archaeological record has struggled to support Caesar's claims (particularly that Belgians settled in southern England). As such, and taking the view of Woolf (1998), Jervis posits that such acculturation would have likely resulted in a hierarchization of local elites in the controlling of prestige goods, as is attested in more southern instances of early Gallic interactions with Rome. For further reading see Woolf (1998).

³⁶⁴ BG 2.15.3. For further reading see Jervis (2001), p. 65.

³⁶⁵ Jervis (2001), p. 65-66.

and German neighbor alike).³⁶⁶ That being said, we must not be quick to assume, as others have,³⁶⁷ that Caesar's construction of the principles dictating the geography of *virtus* are inherently laudatory towards the Gallic tribes. *Virtus* – either as a martial, social, or existential quality – appears in his Gallic ethnography only in absolutes; that is, only in its capacity to be degraded. Gallic *virtus* can be lost to excessive contact with, or with the advent of, civilization; and furthermore, *virtus* can only be heightened by proximity to, and martial engagement with, those with superior manifestations of it (i.e., the Germans). Nevertheless, the principles dictating Caesar's attribution of *virtus* in terms of geography is inherently paradoxical when we consider factors of moralism. For instance, one would assume, given Caesar's assertion that those upon the periphery – the Belgae and by association the Helvetii and Nervii – would present the greatest martial difficulties to Caesar's army, this is simply not the case. For example, the Nervii – as stated above, possessors of the greatest Gallic *virtus* – when engaged by Caesar's legions, (although tenaciously besieging Q. Cicero's encampment) fled, and gave hostages, cattle, and willing slaves to the victorious Romans.³⁶⁸ How can such discrepancy be rectified given Caesar's earlier proclamations? Paradoxically, Roman culture is continuously described as the great enervator of Gallic martial prowess; consequently, resistance to it

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Both Gruen (2011) p. 149, and Isaac (2004), pp. 414-415 take Caesar's insinuations at face value and fail to assess the issues of both, the impermanency of the definition of *virtus* according to geography, and Caesar's inconsistent account of northern Gallic *virtus* and actual martial efficacy.

³⁶⁸ Jervis (2001), pp. 83-85. This is not to say Caesar is wholly hypocritical in his recitation of the Nervii's *virtus*. Indeed, in 2.27.3-5, Caesar praises the heroic defeat of the Nervii and the capacity to which they endured the Roman assault: "the enemy [the Helvetii], even in their defeat, displayed such heroic valour that, when their foremost ranks had fallen, the next mounted upon their fallen comrades and fought standing on their bodies." Nevertheless, this does not negate the inconsistency of *virtus* which Caesar paradoxically revises throughout his work.

is directly proportional to a specific tribe's (positive) degree of *virtus*. Nevertheless Roman *virtus* – born of Roman soldiers, and product of Rome's (supposedly) enervating culture – wins out. Furthermore, the recurrent theme of division – here the bifurcation of the northern and southern tribes, and further binary division of the Belgae into those who possess superior *virtus* and those enervated by trade- serves only to reinforce insinuations of Caesarian literary construction rather than ethnographic 'innovation.'

IV. Conclusions

It is not my intention to conclusively locate, analyze, and define a Caesarian reading of moral revision parallel to my previous Tacitean analysis, but rather to simply ask whether we can analyze Caesar's text in a similar fashion; and furthermore, define the parameters within which one may analyze such an instance. Is Caesar's commentary revisionist? In answer, I would state, without question: Caesar breaks from the Hellenic tradition of Gallic convention within his opening paragraph, and his successive divisions of Gaul are geographically and ethnographically innovative. Furthermore, Caesar strives – against ethnographic tradition – to maintain his rigidly defined divisions in the creation of the Gallic 'other.' Can the *BG* be considered a moral text? To a degree: as both Riggsby and Jervis posit, a strong thread of inherently pro-Roman moral incidence guides Caesar's text. This is especially apparent if, as Riggsby suggests, we consider the division and ordering of Gallic society and geography as precipitating a moral preoccupation, which works to familiarize the Gallic sociopolitical landscape to a Roman audience, only to make the inevitable Gallic defamation all the more damning. Furthermore, Caesar strives, against even his own admission later in the text, to establish the enervating effects

of Roman culture and its intrinsic qualifying of *virtus* by geographic proximity. But can we position Caesar's text as a precursor to Tacitus' later work? Simply, no: as Gruen's interpretation makes palpably clear, incidence of pro-Gallic moral superiority is relegated to the historiographical tradition of individuals, rather than in a broad ethnographic assessment of the Gallic people. Although Riggsby and Jervis both posit that Caesar's landscape is a literary construction (in which I concur), there is lack of consistency, and even an abundance of contradiction, within Caesar's text concerning *virtus* and Gallic moral fortitude. Ultimately, the tenets predicative of a morally revisionist text, although seemingly applicable, simply are not present: there is no need for moral allusion, nor is there a discernable philosophical slant to the work; furthermore, while there is clearly discernable ethnographic innovation and a pliable concept of genre,³⁶⁹ they serve only to provide an opportunistic position for Roman moral superiority. As stated above, moral revision, as a means of interpretation, is textually idiosyncratic; in that rather than wide-ranging summations of the ethnographic corpus, each proposed incidence must be assessed individually by the tenets outlined above. Although future scholarship may reveal the contrary, Caesar's account of Gallic ethnography does not appear comparable to the Tacitean instance of moral revision.

³⁶⁹ As assessed in chapter 2, pp. 34-35, n. 139, Caesar has the tendency to manipulate the established ethnographic subgenres in interesting ways. For instance, his assessment of Gaul begins on a note of geographic examination, and continues to seemingly maintain this level of highbrow scientific interest. However, in his ethnography of the Germans, the Hercynian wood occupies a place of romantic ethnographic opportunism in which Caesar can craft an idealized and mythical landscape. Furthermore, Gallic social *mores* (or rather social oddities) are dispensed throughout the text to highlight Gallic perversion of Roman custom. For further reading see chapter 2, pp. 34-36, n. 139.

Chapter IV: Conclusions

In summation: instances of Latin ethnography which fail to conform to the conventional ethnographic tradition, or eschew analysis by established methods of evaluation are often assumed to be, or treated as, literary oddities (and in the case of *Germania*, considered lesser works). Nevertheless, such works continue to be used and cited positivistically, yet denied the same level of analytical focus afforded to more prestigious works of Latin historiography. Misinterpretation and misappropriation of these seemingly innocuous texts (specifically the *Germania*) has had a resounding effect upon the modern sociopolitical landscape, as such, we must afford them the due amount of academic inquiry. More specifically, the construction of foreign identity, by Latin authors, is incalculable in its importance to the study of Roman self-perception: the portrait of the ‘other,’ in this case of those inhabiting Rome’s northern frontiers, was a symbolic construction against which Romans could define not only themselves and their *mores*, but galvanize the perception of their moral superiority. Thus, those instances of ethnography which function contrary to such literary conventions must be approached critically and in a novel fashion. To which I posit, the theory of moral revision.

The *Germania* represents our greatest extant instance of flagrant antagonism to the established ethnographic forms. That being said, deducing and extracting authorial intent convincingly on the part of Tacitus is no simple task. The text is neither prefaced, nor is authorial direction made clear with a didactic statement of intent; the fact Tacitus’ later works (the *Histories* and *Annales*) provide such statements should arouse our suspicions. Neither does the work ascribe to any particular definition of ethnographic subgenres: scientific and romantic approaches are used in tandem, but only superficially

and never fully realized. Previous interpretations of the text are simply no longer valid: that the work is either a jingoistic call to arms over a perceived German threat, a historiographical digression which outgrew the confines of an excursus, or a sincere ethnographic portrait of pre-historic Germany, can be discounted with even the most cursory application of analysis. The habitual inconsistency and anachronism of the text with not only the Tacitean corpus, but the observable archaeological record demands reevaluation.

If the work cannot be defended as sincere ethnographic portraiture, rationalized as military incentive, or written off as a philologically oddity, where does that leave the interpretation of the text? Tacitus, through continuous reference and allusive citation of Stoic doctrine (particularly Seneca), implicitly invites the reader towards a reevaluation of perceived Roman moral ignominy. The Germans, far enough away to be idealized but sufficiently corporeal to not be written off as fantasy, provided a canvas upon which Tacitus could impart the early republican ideals cherished by the Stoics (in the form of hard-primitivism) and sorely lacking in Tacitus' Rome. Nevertheless, Tacitus' execution is not philosophically impenetrable but in actuality pragmatic: through a linear succession of an idealized 'moral life,' epitomized by 'German' moral fortitude, there is an observable schema of the 'lifecycle' from birth to death. Though the text can be read philosophically, I hesitate to claim, as others (specifically Wenghofer) have, that philosophy is the works' *animus*. To assume the text is a philosophical exercise is to indulge the notion that Silver Latin was inherently engendered towards empty rhetoric; even to specify the work as a rumination on lost morals is to consider the work panderingly nostalgic, and more damagingly, it disregards the unique sociopolitical

climate which produced the text. As Syme states, the rule of Domitian, more than any other aspect, informed Tacitus' literary and moral proclivities.³⁷⁰ Yes the *Germania* is inarguably didactic (when taken with the *Agricola*), informing those who live under oppression that virtuous life can still be maintained, but this does not account for the choice of the Germans as literary subjects. Both Isaac (2004) and Wenghofer (1994) assume the work, beyond its didactic intent, is to highlight the lingering threat that Germany posed as a free nation (or rather tribal collective) – a reduction which is inadmissible: not only is such an interpretation inextractable from the theory that the *Germania* is a jingoistic call to arms, but it decidedly negates the idealized sequence of moralism (ie. the lifecycle) so carefully crafted by Tacitus. Rather it is my belief that the work exists as a historical monument (along with the *Agricola*) against Domitian's overestimated and hyperbolic 'submission' of the German frontier. Although written under the principate of Trajan, Domitian, under whose rule literary dissidents were summarily executed, was dead only two years; and Trajan showed no signs of breaking with the status-quo, in that the ruse of German submission was to be continued officially. Ultimately Tacitus' revision was a reaction to the historical inaccuracy, moral turpitude and imperial hyperbole which came to define the end of the Flavian dynasty.

Although I believe we may argue with a degree of conclusiveness concerning the morally revisionist tendencies of the *Germania*, in order to establish 'moral revision' as a viable approach to applicable instances of seemingly innovative ethnography, another instance must be located and assessed according to its tenets. The Gallic ethnography of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, appears as such a candidate. When briefly considering the

³⁷⁰ Syme (1958), pp. 24, 67.

text, important aspects for the consideration of a morally revisionist reading are evident: an innovative ethnographic assessment (breaking with previous tradition), a seemingly deliberate focus on the moral proclivities of its subject and a loose conception of the established ethnographic subgenres. Although I did not intend conclusiveness in the Caesarian analysis, even a brief examination of *BG*, within the parameters outlined above, places a reading of the text as morally revisionist in doubt.

The innovative ethnography of Caesar's Gauls appears sociologically motivated: providing then unknown insight into Gallic social *mores*, customs, rule, and tradition; however, such instances of 'sociological' examination are prefaced by a clearly discernable and deliberate partitioning of the Gallic geographic and social landscape. This calculated tripartite division of Gaul itself, and a succession of binary divisions within Gallic social hierarchy serve a two-fold purpose: first, by such divisions, Gaul and its peoples may be 'ordered' and be made manageable by the author; second (and moralistically preoccupied), these divisions and orderings give the Gauls the semblance of social structure and social institutions which would be familiar to Caesar's readership. This familiarizing of the Gauls serves only to make their eventual deprecation all the more damning, and throw Roman moral superiority into sharp relief.

Virtus and the degree of importance which it serves as a thematic cornerstone of the text has been well-attested in scholarship. Furthermore, *virtus* – and its recurring incidence as a positive Gallic attribute – has lent credence to the notion that Caesar may himself be engaging in a moralistic critique of Roman values. However, those who attempt to further this reading often ignore the calculated geographic element which dictates this attribution: the farther from Rome proper, the more inherently virtuous the

subject; the closer in proximity to those in possession of superior *virtus* (the Germans), the more efficacious in warfare. By all accounts such morally righteous subjects, themselves fighting against Romans who are the product of an enervating culture, should present the greatest challenge to Caesar; paradoxically this is not the case. Furthermore, *virtus*, as something beyond its usual military connotations, and as an attribute which highlights Gallic moral superiority, appears infrequently (the Critognatus episode being the only example). In all estimations, the argument that Caesar writes in favour of Roman moral superiority appears a forgone conclusion. Though the text begins innovatively, geographic and social division, familiarization of Gallic *mores*, the subsequent defamation of those *mores*, all of which are qualified by a willful (and paradoxical) attribution of *virtus*, serves in the creation of the Gallic ‘other,’ and renders the text intrinsically at odds with our Tacitean analysis.

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