

Reverse Ethnography in Caesar's *DBC*: 1.35.3-4 as Intratext to *DBG* 1.1.1

Why would Caesar in his *DBC* (*De bello civili*) present a non-Roman people as turning the science of ethnography back on Rome and Caesar himself? This is especially puzzling given Caesar's authorial goal to establish the basis for his preeminence in Rome in the *DBC* and Roman rule over non-Romans in the *DBG* (*De bello Gallico*). He tries to demonstrate this on the grounds of both his and the Romans' theoretical, practical, and moral superiority. Ethnography bridges these three domains by its theoretical identification and classification of ways of life, its practical application to warfare, and its explicit or implicit claim to pass ethical judgments on the differences between peoples' customs. My question arises from Caesar's exchange with the Massilians at *DBC* 1.35.3-4 in its relation to *DBG* 1.1.1.

Fifteen Massilian elders answer Caesar's summons upon his arrival at their city (1.35.1). In response to Caesar's appeal for their support, they give a speech professing neutrality in the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (1.35.3-5), though their subsequent admission of Domitius into the city soon shows this claim to be dishonest (1.36.1). As part of their speech, they describe their perception of the status of Roman politics: "*intelligere se divisum esse populum <Romanum> in partes duas*" (1.35.3 "[the Massilians] understood that the Roman people was divided into two groups," my trans.). In dividing Rome into two groups or parts, the Gallic Massilians' language is strikingly reminiscent of Caesar's division of Gaul into three parts (*DBG* 1.1.1). I argue the Massilians' speech at *DBC* 1.35.3-4 represents an intratext (cf. Sharrock 2000, 7) to the *DBG* proem and that Caesar makes a Gallic people perform an ethnographic analysis of Rome while speaking to the famous Roman ethnographer of Gaul. In this way, he creates an example of "reverse ethnography" within the *DBC* (for this term see Riggsby 2006, 124). Now that civil war has broken out in Rome between Caesar and Pompey, Gauls describe internal

Roman strife, as Caesar did for the Gauls in the *DBG* proem. Caesar thereby presents a vision of the loss of Roman scientific hegemony which would occur should civil strife continue and cause Rome to lose its position of political superiority. Rome would be reduced to just another barbarian *ethnos* or *gens* in need of analysis, rather than the conquerors, civilizers, and ethnographers of others. Through this reverse ethnography Caesar argues that Rome needs to choose him as their leader rather than Pompey (or anyone else) to prevent this from happening.

In his discussion of Caesar's representation of non-Romans in the *DBG*, Andrew Riggsby speaks of "passages where Gallic or German leaders analyze Caesar's position within Roman politics, performing a kind of reverse ethnography ([*DBG*] 1.44.12, 4.16.6, 7.1.2)" (ibid.). In all three of these passages the speakers not only describe Caesar's political position, but also more or less openly describe discord between factions at Rome. Although the Massilians' speech at 1.35.3-4 contains both of these elements of reverse ethnography from the *DBG* and although ethnography within Caesar's *DBG* has received extensive scholarly analysis (e.g. Klotz 1934; Schadee 2018), instances of reverse ethnography in Caesar's *DBC* remain understudied. Hence, I aim both to indicate the importance of *DBC* 1.35.3-4 as an unrecognized intratext to the *DBG* proem and suggest ways scholars may begin to apply the concept of reverse ethnography to such moments in the *DBC*. This argument will contribute to the developing scholarly understanding that appreciating Caesar's literary subtlety is key to grasping his presentation of the civil war (Batstone and Damon 2006; Grillo 2012; Peer 2016; Westall 2017).

### Bibliography

Batstone, William W. and Cynthia Damon. 2006. *Caesar's Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Grillo, Luca. 2012. *The Art of Caesar's Bellum Civile: Literature, Ideology, and Community*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klotz, Alfred. 1934. "Geographie und Ethnographie in Caesars *Bellum Gallicum*." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 83: 66-96.
- Peer, Ayelet. 2016. *Julius Caesar's Bellum Civile and the Composition of a New Reality*.  
London: Routledge.
- Riggsby, Andrew M. 2006. *Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words*. Austin: University of  
Texas Press.
- Schadee, Hester. 2018. "Caesar the Ethnographer." In *The Landmark Caesar: Web Essays for  
the Complete Works*, edited by Kurt A. Raaflaub and Robert B. Strassler, 223-228. New  
York: Pantheon Books.
- Sharrock, Alison. 2000. "Intratextuality: Parts and (W)holes in Theory." In *Intratextuality:  
Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, edited by Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales, 1-39.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Westall, Richard W. 2017. *Caesar's Civil War: Historical Reality and Fabrication*. Leiden:  
Brill.