

REWRITING CAESAR: CASSIUS DIO AND AN ALTERNATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NORTH*

Abstract: It has gone generally unnoticed in scholarship that Cassius Dio is unique among the Greek writers of the imperial period in not using the ethnic term *Γερμανοί* to refer to the peoples dwelling east of the Rhine. This paper argues that this absence is a polemical response to the innovative geography of Caesar's *commentarii*, and part of a larger project undertaken by Dio to critically rewrite the history of Caesar and reinterpret Roman imperialism in the north. The removal of the *Γερμανοί* from the map ultimately supports Dio's attitudes, based on his experience as a senatorial governor, towards contemporary frontier policy.

Keywords: Cassius Dio, Julius Caesar, *commentarii*, ethnography, geography, Germani

Introduction

In the works of the earliest Greek geographical writers, northern Europe was conceptualised as a vast and unbounded landscape with little internal differentiation, divided between two vaguely defined ethnic groups: the Scythians (*Σκύθαι*) and the Celts (*Κελτοί*). Herodotus, probably following the description given by his predecessor Hecataeus of Miletus, situated these peoples relative to the river Ister (the Danube), a natural feature which offered a modicum of structure in an otherwise amorphous space (Hdt. 4.49):

ῥέει γὰρ δὴ διὰ πάσης τῆς Εὐρώπης ὁ Ἴστρος, ἀρξάμενος ἐκ Κελτῶν, οὐ ἔσχατοι πρὸς ἡλίου δυσμέων μετὰ Κύνητας οἰκέουσι τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ· ῥέων δὲ διὰ πάσης τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐς τὰ πλάγια τῆς Σκυθικῆς ἐσβάλλει.

The Ister flows through all of Europe, from its source among the Celts, who are the westernmost inhabitants of Europe (except the *Kunetai*), and flowing through all of Europe it washes the borders of the country of the Scythians.¹

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¹ All translations are my own.

This bipartite ethnographic division of the north—the Celts in the northwest, in a land called *Κελτική*, the Scythians in the northeast, in *Σκυθία*—long persisted in Greek thought. It is discernible in the fourth century in the works of Ephorus and Aristotle, and in later Hellenistic historiography, as the rise of Rome gave new importance to the peoples beyond the Alps and in the hinterlands of Phocaean colonies. Although the character, customs, and internal complexity of the *Κελτοί* were gradually sketched in greater detail in the histories written by Polybius, Timagenes, and Posidonius, the basic shape of northern Europe remained fundamentally unchanged. The ethnography of Posidonius, in particular, based in large part on first-hand observation during a lengthy sojourn among the peoples of southern Gaul, exerted a significant influence on the development of Roman conceptions of the north on the eve of the campaigns of the 50s BCE.²

Caesar, however, beginning with those first iconic words of the *Bellum Gallicum*, introduced a revolution in viewing the north, a fundamental reconceptualisation and reorganisation of the space across the Alps.³ The proconsul deployed his profound power of representation to reimagine Gallia as an overviewed, unified ‘whole’ bounded and bordered on all sides, mastered intellectually, if not yet militarily. In the early phases of Caesar’s campaigns, Cicero already recognised this potent interrelationship between *imperium* and ethnography. Confronted with the map of the edge of the world that Caesar was daily redrawing with his reports to the Senate and People, Cicero’s reluctance to support the prolongation of that dangerous provincial command broke down (*Prov.* 33):

itaque cum acerrimis Germanorum et Helvetiorum nationibus et maximis proeliis felicissime decertavit, ceteras conterruit, compulit, domuit, imperio populi Romani parere adsuefecit et, quas regiones quasque gentes nullas nobis antea litterae, nulla vox, nulla fama notas fecerat, has noster imperator nosterque exercitus et populi Romani arma peragrarunt.

He has fought with great success in great battles against the fiercest tribes of the Germani and Helvetii, and the rest he has terrified, penned in, subdued, and accustomed to obey the *imperium* of the Roman people, and regions and peoples that previously no writings, no report, no

² On the Celtic ethnography of Posidonius, see Norden (1920) 42–170 and Tierney (1959), with Nash (1976), a salutary corrective to older ‘Pan-Posidonian’ readings, which tended to overstate the debts owed by subsequent ancient authors to Posidonius. For the development of Roman conceptions of the Gauls of Italy in the course of their conquest and incorporation of the peninsula, from the Gallic sack to Caesar’s enfranchisement of the Transpadani, see Williams (2001), esp. 68–99.

³ As Christopher Krebs has demonstrated: Krebs (2006) 113–19; cf. Riggsby (2006) 28–32.

rumour had made known, through these our commander and our army and the arms of the Roman people have travelled.

Of primary interest is the appearance at this point of a new people in the mental cartography of the Romans. In his active revision of the traditional Greek ethnography and geography of the north, a project most fully elaborated in his *commentarii* but clearly already emergent in the letters and reports mentioned by Cicero, Caesar for the first time made the river Rhine the dividing line between the old Κελτοί—whom Caesar calls *Galli* in Latin—to the west and the so-called *Germani* to the east.⁴ This name was previously almost unheard of; the *Germani* are, in essence, a Caesarian invention.⁵ In the propaganda of the *commentarii*, the *Germani* were a necessary ‘other’, an unconquerable people occupying a vast, boundless space, where Caesar’s campaigns ultimately ground to a halt. As the foil of the Gauls, their ‘otherness’ was qualitatively different: the disorder of the Gauls served as the justification and explanation of their conquest by Caesar, while the emptiness of the *Germani* served as the justification and explanation of their non-conquest. The sharp boundary—ethnic, cultural, and spatial—drawn between the *Galli* and *Germani*, the *orbis Romanus* and the *orbis alter*, is, upon closer inspection, an illusory one, a tendentious and convenient fiction of empire.⁶ But the rhetorical naturalisation of the Rhine as the limit of *imperium* and the population of the space beyond with the fictive *Germani* were powerful and enduring ideas.⁷

As the invention of the *Germani* must be understood as a Roman intellectual response to their own imperial experience, so the subsequent manipulation of this imaginary geography is inextricably entangled with various historical developments of the late Republic and, especially, of the imperial period. In remapping the north, Caesar’s campaigns and *commentarii* redefined the parameters and terms of the discourse, within which all later writers were compelled to negotiate a position with respect to the *Germani*. It has gone previously unnoticed in scholarship that the third-century historian Cassius Dio is unique among the Greek writers of the imperial period in his complete abstention from usage of the ethnic appellation Γερμανοί and of the place

⁴ Caes. *BG* 1.1: *Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quarum unam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur.*

⁵ Cf. Roymans (2004) 2–3; Lund (1996) and (1998). On the pre-Caesarian Greek ethnographic thought on the question of the *Germani*, a name that may have been vaguely known already to Posidonius, see Rives (1999) 21–4; Tierney (1959) 198–201.

⁶ On this point, see most recently Johnston (2018) 87–9.

⁷ For the Rhine—and rivers generally—as imperial frontiers in Roman ‘environmental psychology’, see Braund (1996).

name *Γερμανία*.⁸ He goes so far as to completely invert the prevailing geographic and ethnographic norms, calling—almost jarringly—the space across the Rhine not *Γερμανία* but *Κελτική*, and designating the people living there *Κελτοί*. Caesar’s *Germani* are expunged from the map, written out of history. This article investigates this remarkable feature of Dio’s work, beginning by situating Dio’s ethnography within the post-Caesarian Greek tradition and then examining the historian’s treatment of the figure of Caesar in Gaul, before turning to the question of space and peoples in his narrative of the Gallic wars (Books 38–40 of his *Roman History*). More generally it explores the dynamic interplay of ethnography, history, and authority in the text, and the rhetorical ends to which the late Republican past was put in the third century. Dio actively subverts and unwrites the carefully constructed self-image of Caesar as part of his own reinterpretation of the north and his creation of an alternative, anti-Caesarian ethnography—an ethnography that is, ultimately, very much interested in contemporary frontier policy.

Finding Space for the *Γερμανοί* in Imperial Greek Geography

As is discernable already in the speeches of Cicero from the period contemporaneous with the Gallic wars, Roman authors working in Latin quickly—and universally—adopted the Caesarian creation of the *Germani*. Greek writers, rather more constrained by a well-established and conservative tradition, were slower to accommodate Caesar’s apologetic ethnography and integrate this *ἔθνος* into their understandings of the north. Diodorus of Sicily, who was compiling the material for his universal history immediately after the wars in Gaul and published the finished project within a decade of Caesar’s assassination, rejects—at least implicitly—the *Germani* as a valid new *ἔθνος*.⁹ While he acknowledges the significance of the campaigns of *divus Iulius* across the Rhine (even exaggerating their success), he does not differentiate between the peoples of *Κελτική* encountered by the Romans on the western and eastern

⁸ Bertrand (2016b), the most recent work on Dio’s geography, does remark (717) that ‘il peut être intéressant de souligner que Dion ne différencie guère les Gaulois des Germains’, and she notes (719) that ‘Dion fait des Germains des Celtes, et les appelle ainsi non seulement tout au long du récit de la guerre des Gaules, mais encore pour son époque. Il se démarque ainsi de César ...’, but her general impression (718–19) is of an ethnography devoid of originality (‘l’impression générale est celle d’une ethnographie dépourvue d’originalité’), and she does not examine this feature of Dio’s ethnography and his differentiation from Caesar in any further detail. Cf. Rives (1999) 23, who only briefly notes that ‘Cassius Dio consistently uses the term “Celts” to describe Germanic tribes’.

⁹ On the date of Diodorus’ research and publication, and his attitude towards his Roman contemporaries—especially his great admiration for Caesar—see Sacks (1990) 160–203.

banks of the river, who are all grouped together as Γαλάται (Gauls) (Diod. 5.25.4–5):

τῶν δ' εἰς τὸν ὠκεανὸν ῥεόντων μέγιστοι δοκοῦσιν ὑπάρχειν ὃ τε Δανούβιος καὶ ὁ Ῥήνος, ὃν ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς χρόνοις Καῖσαρ ὁ κληθεὶς θεὸς ἔξευξε παραδόξως, καὶ περαιώσας πεζῇ τὴν δύναμιν ἐχειρώσατο τοὺς πέραν κατοικοῦντας αὐτοῦ Γαλάτας. πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πλωτοὶ ποταμοὶ κατὰ τὴν Κελτικὴν εἰσι, περὶ ὧν μακρὸν ἂν εἴη γράφειν.

Of the rivers flowing into the Ocean, the greatest seem to be the Danube and the Rhine, the latter of which in our lifetime the Caesar who has been called a god bridged in a remarkable fashion, and having brought across his army on foot he subdued the Gauls dwelling on the other side. There are many other navigable rivers throughout Κελτικῆ, about which it would be tedious to write.

But Diodorus is the last Greek writer of historiography or geography in whose representation of the north the Γερμανοί (as I will generally refer to them) do not appear. With Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who belongs to the next generation, we begin to see the repercussions of Caesar's spatial revolution.¹⁰ Dionysius' structuring of northern space represents a crucial intermediate stage, at which Greek writers were trying to reconcile Caesar's invented Γερμανία with traditional, centuries-old views of Κελτικῆ and the Κελτοί. His north is still roughly apportioned into the two classic Herodotean halves—the Κελτοί and the Σκύθαι—but his Κελτικῆ is now further subdivided by the river Rhine, on the western bank of which is the country called Γαλατία, while to the east lies Γερμανία (*A.R.* 14.1):

ἡ δὲ Κελτικὴ κεῖται μὲν ἐν τῷ πρὸς τὴν ἐσπέραν καθήκοντι τῆς Εὐρώπης μέρει μεταξὺ τοῦ τε βορείου πόλου καὶ τῆς ἰσημερινῆς δύσεως ... καλεῖται δ' ἡ μὲν ἐπὶ τάδε τοῦ Ῥήνου Σκύθαις καὶ Θραξίν ὁμοροῦσα Γερμανία, μέχρι δρυμοῦ Ἐρκυνίου καὶ τῶν Ῥιπαίων ὄρων καθήκουσα, ἡ δ' ἐπὶ θάτερα τὰ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν βλέποντα μέχρι Πυρρήνης ὄρους, ἡ τὸν Γαλατικὸν κόλπον περιλαμβάνουσα, Γαλατία τῆς θαλάττης ἐπώνυμος. κοινῶ δ' ὀνόματι ἡ σύμπασα πρὸς Ἑλλήνων καλεῖται Κελτικῆ, ὡς μὲν τινές φασιν, ἀπὸ τινος γίγαντος Κελτοῦ αὐτόθι δυναστεύσαντος, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐξ Ἡρακλέους καὶ Ἀστερόπης τῆς Ἀτλαντίδος δύο γενέσθαι μυθολογοῦσι

¹⁰ Dionysius states that he came to Rome around the beginning of the principate of Augustus (ca. 29–28 BCE: *AR* 1.7.2), and indicates that at least the first part of the work was published in the consulship of Claudius Nero and Calpurnius Piso (7 BCE: *AR* 1.3.4). For Dionysius in the context of Augustan Rome, see the essays in Hunter and de Jonge (2018).

παῖδας, Ἰβηρον καὶ Κελτόν, οὓς θέσθαι ταῖς χώραις, ὧν ἦρξαν ἀμφοτέρω, τὰς ὀνομασίας ἀφ' αὐτῶν.

Κελτική lies in the part of Europe extending to the West, between the North pole and the equinoctial setting sun ... the region on the far side of the Rhine bordering upon the Scythians and Thracians is called *Γερμανία*, stretching to the Hercynian forest and the Rhipaeian mountains, while the region on the other side facing the South as far as the Pyrenees mountains and encompassing the Gallic gulf is called Gaul, after the sea. By the Greeks the whole country is called by the common name *Κελτική*, taking its name, as some say, from a certain giant called Keltos who ruled there, while others relate a legend that two sons were born to Herakles and Asterope the daughter of Atlas, Iberos and Keltos, who called the countries that they ruled after themselves.

In his usage of both of these names, however, Dionysius maintains a certain cultural distance, indicating that *Γαλατία* and *Γερμανία* are to some extent by-products of Roman imperial expansion. In the end, he hedges his geography by acknowledging that the Greeks, for their part, ignore more recent developments and call the whole region *Κελτική*, and by reverting to the trite mythical etymologising characteristic of the Greek tradition.¹¹

In the work of Strabo, writing shortly after Dionysius in the later Augustan age, the distinction between *Κελτοί* and *Γερμανοί* is more fully elaborated. We can see more clearly the adoption of Caesar's imaginary geography: the *Κελτοί* inhabit the country west of the Rhine, which is called *Κελτική*, and the *Γερμανοί* dwell east of the Rhine, in *Γερμανία* (7.1.1–2):

εἰρηκόσι δ' ἡμῖν περὶ τῆς Ἰβηρίας καὶ τῶν Κελτικῶν ἔθνων καὶ τῶν Ἰταλικῶν σὺν ταῖς πλησίον νήσοις ἐφεξῆς ἂν εἴη λέγειν τὰ λειπόμενα τῆς Εὐρώπης μέρη, διελοῦσι τὸν ἐνδεχόμενον τρόπον ... εὐθὺς τοίνυν τὰ πέραν τοῦ Ῥήνου μετὰ τοὺς Κελτοὺς πρὸς τὴν ἕω κεκλιμένα Γερμανοὶ νέμονται, μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττοντες τοῦ Κελτικοῦ φύλου τῷ τε πλεονασμῷ τῆς ἀγριότητος καὶ τοῦ μεγέθους καὶ τῆς ξανθότητος.

As I have discussed Iberia and the Celtic and Italic peoples together with the adjacent islands, next is to speak of the remaining parts of Europe, dividing them in the accepted way ... the regions immediately beyond the Rhine after the *Κελτοί* and sloping to the east are inhabited by *Γερμανοί*, who differ a little from the Celtic race in being wilder and bigger and fairer-haired.

¹¹ On this 'irksome attitude of Greek scholarship', see Bickerman (1952).

The Caesarian view of the north has become hegemonic (τὸν ἐνδεχόμενον τρόπον), even in Greek discourse. Strabo mentions Caesar's campaigns against not only the Γερμανοί, whom he claims have been put on the map by their wars against the Romans, but also individual ἔθνη Γερμανικά—although he is one of the more circumspect of the Greek writers of the imperial period on the identity question of these peoples (Str. 4.3.2–4). The geographer admits that the differentiation between the Κελτοί and the Γερμανοί is somewhat arbitrary, and even asserts, with the aid of a spurious etymology, the consanguinity of the two peoples (7.1.2):

τὰλλα δὲ παραπλήσιοι καὶ μορφαῖς καὶ ἥθεσι καὶ βίοις ὄντες, οἷους εἰρήκαμεν τοὺς Κελτούς. διὸ δὴ καὶ μοι δοκοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι τοῦτο αὐτοῖς θέσθαι τοῦνομα ὡς ἂν γνησίους Γαλάτας φράζειν βουλόμενοι· γνήσιοι γὰρ οἱ Γερμανοὶ κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων διάλεκτον.

But otherwise [the Γερμανοί] are about the same, being in appearance and customs and lifestyle just as I have described the Κελτοί. And it seems to me, in fact, that the Romans gave this name to them, as if to explain that they were really Γαλάται; for *Germani* in the Roman language means 'belonging to the same stock, genuine'.¹²

For Strabo, the Γερμανοί are distinguished from other ἔθνη, namely the Κελτοί, not necessarily by the essential ethnic traits that Caesar wished to assign to them through his elaborate rhetoric of negation or by the traditional litmus tests of ethnography, but rather by their historicised identity and meaning within the Roman imperial framework and the Latin language. It is a similar recognition of the artificiality of the Roman construction of the *Germani*—and the agenda of the original artificer—that later becomes an important motif in the history of Dio.

The geographic and ethnographic view as found in Strabo became the generally accepted structure of the north in imperial Greek literature. In their accounts of Caesar's *bellum Gallicum*, the second-century authors Plutarch and Appian both place the Γερμανοί east of the Rhine, and the Κελτοί to the west. Appian calls Ariovistus, the transrhene foe of the proconsul, 'king of the Γερμανοί', and mentions distinct ἔθνη Γερμανικά; in his biography of Caesar, Plutarch says that the second campaign in Gaul was 'in defence of the Κελτοί against the Γερμανοί'.¹³ A little more than a century after Dio, the emperor Julian, in his satirical dialogue *The Caesars*, has his caricature of Julius Caesar

¹² This etymological interpretation of *Germani* is, to my knowledge, unique to Strabo.

¹³ App. *Gall.* FF 16–18; Plut. *Caes.* 19.

boast of his campaigns against the *Γερμανοί*.¹⁴ From the evidence of these writers it is clear that Greek narratives of Caesar's campaigns both before and after Cassius Dio speak consistently of the division between *Κελτοί* and *Γερμανοί*. But what of the general usage of these ethnics, outside the context of accounts of the Gallic wars? The historian Herodian, a contemporary of Dio, categorically uses the term *Γερμανοί* to refer to the various peoples across the Rhine with whom Marcus Aurelius and his successors were often at war, and Lucian speaks of the campaigns of the deified Marcus against the barbarians in *Γερμανία*.¹⁵ Josephus numbers *Γερμανοί* among Roman captives, while later geographers, notably Ptolemy and Marcianus, generally follow Strabo's division between *Κελτική* and *Γερμανία*.¹⁶ The second-century philosopher Favorinus, from Arelate (Arles) in Gallia Narbonensis but writing in Greek, identifies himself as a *Κελτός*, and calls Arelate a city of the *Κελτοί*.¹⁷ Julian in his account of his own sojourn in the provinces of Gaul and his wars across the Rhine, invariably preserves the distinction between the Gauls (whom he calls either *Κελτοί* or *Γαλάται*), and the *Γερμανοί* across the Rhine.¹⁸

The picture that emerges from this cursory survey is a reasonably clear one: Greek writers in the imperial period—Dio's predecessors, contemporaries, and successors—working in a wide variety of genres (historiography, geography, oratory, satire, epistolography) all adhere to a more or less Caesarian construction of the north, with the peoples of the *Γερμανοί* inhabiting the lands east of the Rhine and the *Κελτοί* in the provinces to the west.¹⁹ Thus, the consistent and complete absence of the *Γερμανοί* from Dio's history, especially from his narrative of Caesar's Gallic campaigns, is of great importance, as it must be a conscious and programmatic choice on the part of the historian to break with the generally accepted practice. If Caesar's invention of the *Germani* marked a revolution in viewing northern space, then Dio's thorough excision of the *Γερμανοί* as a people from his history may plausibly be seen as an intellectual counter-revolution: it represents a significant reinterpretation of Caesar, and radically alternative way of understanding the north and its place in Roman imperialism.

¹⁴ Jul. *Caes.* 324a.

¹⁵ Hdn. 4.7.3; Luc. *Alex.* 48.

¹⁶ Jos. *AJ* 195; Ptol. *Geog.* 2.11.1; Marcian. *Peripl.* 2.28–31.

¹⁷ Favorin. *Corinthian Oration* 25–7 (= D. Chr. 37); *De Ex.* 10.1–2.

¹⁸ Jul. *ad Ath.* 279A; cf. *Or.* 2.56B and 2.74B.

¹⁹ One interesting exception to this general rule is the anonymous Greek encomiast of the emperor Philip the Arab (Ps.-Aristides, *Eis Basileia*), writing shortly after Dio (ca. 244–9 CE); we will return to this text and its relation to Dio's imperial geography below, n. 55.

Caesar and ‘Anti-Caesar’ in Dio’s Gaul

After holding a deeply contentious consulship plagued by accusations of corruption, violence, and sacrilege in 59 BCE, and waging a pair of illegitimate wars outside his province against Orgetorix and the Helvetii and Ariovistus and the Germani during the first year of his proconsulship, Caesar faced a crisis of self-representation as he sat encamped in his winter quarters at the end of 58. His response to this daunting challenge—the first instalment of his propagandistic masterwork, the *commentarii* on his wars in Gaul—was a stroke of political and literary genius. Year by year, the man carefully crafted his own legend, a legend so powerful and convincing that Cicero, Hirtius, and other contemporaries had neither the will nor the ability to deconstruct it.²⁰

Three centuries later, Cassius Dio, the senator and historian, took up the project of unwriting the Caesarian fiction. The textual ‘anti-Caesar’ fashioned by Dio is, as a character, a kind of hermeneutic tool with which to disassemble the narrative and the geography of the original *commentarii*. To a far greater degree than with any other figure from the Roman past, the historian seeks to investigate and understand the mind of Caesar; to probe his internal thought processes, perceptions, dissimulations, emotions, and motivations; and, ultimately, to expose the contradictions between appearance and reality, word and deed, the republican and the tyrant. Understanding the psychology of Caesar becomes the key to a new and subversive historical analysis.²¹ A full account of how Dio achieves this is well beyond the scope of the present paper, but one particularly rich example from the narrative of the beginning of Caesar’s consulship at the opening of Book 38 will suffice as an illustration of the technique (38.1):

τῷ δὲ ἐξῆς ἔτει ὁ Καῖσαρ τὸ σύμπαν θεραπεῦσαι πλῆθος ἠθέλησεν, ὅπως σφᾶς ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον σφετερίσῃται. βουλευθεὶς δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν δυνατῶν δοκεῖν, ἵνα μὴ καὶ δι’ ἀπεχθείας αὐτῷ ὦσι, πράττειν, εἰπέ σφίσι πολλάκις ὅτι οὔτε γράφοι τι ὃ μὴ καὶ ἐκείνοις συνοίσει· καὶ δὴ γνώμην τινὰ περὶ τῆς χώρας, ἣν παντὶ τῷ ὀμίλῳ κατένειμεν, οὕτω συνέγραψε ὥστε μηδὲ μικρόν τι αὐτῆς αἰτιαθῆναι· καὶ οὐδὲ ταύτην μέντοι ἐσοίσειν, εἰ μὴ βουλομένοις σφίσιν εἴη, ἐπλάττετο ... πάνυ γάρ τι τοῦτο προδιωμολογήσατο, ὅπως μὴ δι’ ἑαυτὸν τι γράφειν νομισθεῖη· αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ τῇ τε

²⁰ On the serial publication of the *commentarii* at Rome, see the discussion of Wiseman (1998). On their contemporary reception, see Cic. *Brut.* 261–2; Hirt. *BG* 8 *praef.*

²¹ On psychological conjecture and Dio’s historical analysis, see Pelling (2011) 226 n. 8, with further bibliography. Kemezis (2016) 239 rightly observes that ‘there remains much to be said about [Dio’s] portrait of Caesar, including Caesar as orator’. For Dio’s narrative of the late Republic, see Lintott (1997).

εὐρήσει καὶ τῇ ἐσηγήσει τοῦ πράγματος ἠρκεῖτο, ὡς γε ἔλεγε, τῷ δὲ δὴ Πομπηίῳ καὶ τῷ Κράσσῳ τοῖς τε ἄλλοις φανερώς ἐχαρίζετο.

In the following year [59 BCE], Caesar wished to conciliate the whole plebs so that he might make them his own creatures to an even greater degree. Desiring to seem to be pursuing the agenda of the Optimates, so that they would not turn into his enemies, he often said to them that he would not propose any law that was not advantageous to them. He drafted a certain bill concerning land, which he planned to distribute to the people, in such a way as to not incur the least censure for it; still he maintained the fiction that he would not propose even this measure, unless it had their support ... he strenuously insisted from the outset on [his own ineligibility for participation in the land commission], so that he would not be thought to have introduced a bill in his own interest; while he was content with the conception and proposal of the bill, at least so he said, in reality he was clearly courting the favour of Pompey and Crassus and others.

Here Dio pulls back the curtain and reveals the animating forces behind the political acts, the distance between rhetoric (*ὡς γε ἔλεγε*) and intent. Anti-Caesar's emotions and desires are laid bare (*ἠθέλησεν, βουληθείς, ἠρκεῖτο*), along with the falseness of his public façade (*δοκεῖν, ἐπλάττετο*). As he does several times here, the historian frequently couches his hostile arguments in purpose clauses, through which he critically re-evaluates anti-Caesar's actions and their justifications (*ὅπως ... σφετερίζηται, ἵνα μὴ ... ὧσι, ὥστε μηδὲ ... αἰτιαθῆναι, ὅπως μὴ ... νομισθείη*). But the full effect of Dio's incisive analysis becomes clear when compared to one of the abiding concerns of the *commentariū*, in which 'the thinking Caesar' is an omnipresent image. Caesar insists throughout his writings upon bringing the reader into his counsel, making us privy to his decision-making process, amply defending every choice with an assortment of calculations, reports, precedents, fears, and obligations. This profuse self-disclosure is, of course, the subtlest form of concealment, pre-empting the dangerous question with the expedient answer. With his subversive mimesis of Caesar's narrative strategies, Dio effectively unmask the deception-artist, and opens the possibility of alternative interpretations.

The work of deconstruction begun in Rome continues in Gaul. Dio drops anti-Caesar onto the northern landscape with a powerfully anticlimactic sentence (38.31.1):

Καίσαρ δὲ εὖρε μὲν οὐδὲν ἐν τῇ Γαλατίᾳ πολέμιον, ἀλλὰ ἀκριβῶς πάντα ἠσύχαζεν.

Caesar found nothing to suggest war in Gaul, but rather *all* was absolutely quiet.

It is tempting to see *πάντα* here in this opening sentence as a cleverly pointed response to the pervasive Caesarian *omnis*, especially the famous—and intellectually polemical—phrase with which he began his *commentarii* (*Gallia ... omnis*); the intertext draws attention to the differences between the two images of Gaul.²² Caesar's own narrative is artfully constructed so that the threatening disorder of the Helvetii has already reached a crescendo before he himself steps onto the stage; he becomes the *deus ex machina* who effects the resolution of the drama.²³ Here in Dio, however, the theatre is closed and quiet; there is no real role for anti-Caesar to play, except that of belligerent improviser. Thus, while in Caesar's version of events it is the malignant barbarian emotionality (*cupiditas*) of Orgetorix that serves as the catalyst for the outbreak of hostilities, Dio intimates that anti-Caesar's own intense lust for war and conquest is responsible.²⁴ As McDougall, Gabba, and others have noted, Dio seems to follow a historiographical tradition critical of the legitimacy of Caesar's war, which emphasised his ambition.²⁵ This accords well with what Libourel has demonstrated for earlier events in Dio's work, that the historian is not afraid to diverge from the prevailing dominant narrative in his treatment of fundamental events in Roman republican history.²⁶

In Rome and Gaul, the historian primes the reader to distrust anti-Caesar and to doubt his motivations: in the intermezzo between the campaign against the Helvetii and that against Ariovistus, Dio at several points represents anti-Caesar as actively searching for a pretext (*πρόφασις*) for a new and still more distant war.²⁷ Blinded by his ambition, anti-Caesar is blatantly manipulated

²² On this aspect of Caesar's construction of Caesar, the totalisation of the narrative, see Batstone (2018), esp. 53–6, who calls this 'mythic discourse', which is 'not about Caesar, but about an inflection of Caesar', *Césarité*. On the significance of the first *omnis* of the *Bellum Gallicum*, see Johnston (2018) 87, with further bibliography. This phrase—*Gallia omnis*—was prominent in the intellectual reception of Caesar's text, and its innovative geography of the north: in his response, Tacitus countered by opening his monograph with *Germania omnis* (*Ger.* 1.1), an obvious intertext that sets up the comparison between Tacitus' *Germania* and Caesar's *Gallia*; on this see Krebs (2011) 203–4.

²³ See Johnston (2018) 82–4.

²⁴ For Caesar's interpretation of Orgetorix's motives, see *BG* 1.2.

²⁵ McDougall (1991) 619–23; Gabba (1955) 302; cf. e.g. Cic. *Prov.* 32–3.

²⁶ Libourel (1974) 383–93.

²⁷ See, e.g., Dio 38.34.3: *πρὸς δὲ δὴ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου δόξαν καὶ τὴν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἰσχὺν οὐδὲν τούτων ἐφρόντισε, πλὴν καθ' ὅσον παρὰ τοῦ βαρβάρου πρόφασιν τῆς διαφορᾶς, μὴ καὶ προῦπάρχειν τι ἐς αὐτὸν νομισθῆ, λαβεῖν ἠθέλησε.* Cf. 38.34.6. On Caesar and Ariovistus, see Christ (1974).

by local peoples of Gaul like the Sequani and Aedui, who have quickly gained insight into the character of the proconsul. They recognise his transparent ἐπιθυμία, and perceive that ‘his actions align with his hopes’ (τὰ ἔργα ὁμολογούντα ταῖς ἐλπίσιν αἰσθόμενοι), rather than his words (38.34.1). An inverted image of anti-Caesar continues to develop: transgressive warlord, unwitting pawn, ineffectual propagandist. Dio now turns to dismantle two remaining facets of the Caesarian *persona*: the orator and the geographer.

On the eve of the war against Ariovistus, mutinous whispers began to be heard among the Roman troops, which the commander could no longer ignore. At this crucial point in his own narrative, Caesar had inserted a brief hortatory address to his men in *oratio obliqua*, which quieted the nascent unrest; Dio seized upon this opportunity to rework and expand his source material into an elaborate rhetorical set-piece for his anti-Caesar.²⁸ Although scholars since Gabba have often understood the speaker here as a mouthpiece of the historian, collaboratively espousing Dio’s own opinions, a more contextualised reading demonstrates the contrary: that Dio has deliberately constructed a weak speech, riddled with errors and commonplaces, articulating interpretations of the Roman past and predictions for the Roman future that are contradicted by the larger historical narrative, and to which anti-Caesar is oblivious.²⁹ The point of view of the historian is actually expressed by the disgruntled soldiers, whose increasingly vociferous objections occasion the speech of anti-Caesar (38.35.2):

καὶ ἐθύλουν ὅτι πόλεμον οὔτε προσήκοντα οὔτε ἐψηφισμένον διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν τοῦ Καίσαρος φιλοτιμίαν ἀναιροῦντο.

²⁸ Caes. *BG* 1.40; see Millar (1964) 78–83, for Dio’s use of speeches. There is a very cursory summary of this speech in Plutarch’s *Caesar*, and a hint in the fragments of Appian’s *Celtica* that this historian at least discussed the episode, if not himself giving a version of the speech (Plut. *Caes.* 19.2; App. *Gall.* F 17). On Plutarch’s version and its relationship to Dio’s, see Pelling (2011) 226–34.

²⁹ Millar (1964) 82 is overly dismissive in his treatment of this speech, reducing it to ‘an extrapolation in commonplace philosophical terms (with some examples from Republican history thrown in) of a speech in which a general urged his soldiers to fight’, and missing its subtlety and complexity in his conclusion that ‘what we have here is evidence not for Dio’s views but for his acquaintance with a certain range of political thought, that is Greek philosophical justifications of empire’. Kemezis (2016) is a far subtler reading of this speech and its ‘rhetoric of lies’, which does much to rehabilitate Dio’s sophistication as a historian. He highlights the fact that ‘Dio’s speeches ... have complicated relationships with the surrounding narrative’, and emphasises that ‘Dio’s version of Julius Caesar ... is a cynically self-interested figure who contrives the Gallic campaign as a means to gain glory, wealth and power’. Gabba (1955) 301–11 offers another full treatment of this speech, although many of his conclusions, as Millar (1964) 82 has shown, seem to be weak in light of a more contextualised reading; for another correction of the views of Gabba, see Fechner (1986) 216–46.

The common talk was that they were going to take up a war that was none of their concern and had not been voted upon, solely on account of the personal ambition of Caesar.

The speech can be roughly divided into two halves. The first (chs. 36–40) is a general philosophic discussion of the origins and exigencies of empire, the rhetoric of which constructs a particularly tendentious version of the Roman past; in the second part (chs. 41–6), the focus is narrowed onto the conflict at hand with Ariovistus. The main influence on the political thought of anti-Caesar seems to be Thucydides, and we find numerous allusions, both reflective and integrative, to Thucydidean speeches interwoven throughout. From the final oration of Pericles to the beleaguered and war-weary citizens of Athens, anti-Caesar disingenuously cribs ill-suited arguments about the necessity of subordinating private interests to the public good and the dangers of abandoning imperial possessions once acquired; his reflection on Roman expansion and the conquests of the ancestors serves a similar function to the shared cultural memory of Athenian history that Pericles employs in the beginning of the funeral oration.³⁰ In other respects, such as advocating for the punishment of formerly favoured allies or the deterrent value of imperial violence or the suppression of debate and dissent, he aligns himself—to his own discredit—with Cleon in the Mytilenian debate.³¹

Dio carefully crafts this speech as a battle of interpretation and representation, an intersection of anti-Caesarian narrative with anti-Caesarian ethnography. Anti-Caesar asserts that he has done nothing unjust nor unreasonable nor dishonourable with regard to Ariovistus, and that the outrageous behaviour (*ὑβρις*) has been on the part of the barbarian king. The preceding narrative, however, has already anticipatorily contradicted the commander's claim: stripping away another Caesarian pretext and exposing another act of dissembling, Dio makes clear the deliberate nature of Caesar's provocation.³² The increasingly indignant—and self-incriminatory—anti-

³⁰ Compare Dio 38.36 to Thuc. 2.60, 63 (Pericles' final oration); Dio 38.37–8 to Thuc. 2.36 (funeral oration).

³¹ Compare Dio 38.40–1 to Thuc. 3.37, and Dio 38.44 to Thuc. 3.39 (Mytilenian debate). Kemezis (2016) 248 also points to these parallels, arguing that, like Thucydides' speeches, 'The Vesontio speech similarly needs to be considered in its dramatic setting, and in that setting it can only be read as a series of lies that the external audience is surely not expected to miss. This is most evident in the second part of the speech, the answers to legalistic objections. Nearly everything Caesar says is contradicted by Dio's explicit narratorial statements.'

³² For the claim of Caesar in his speech, see Dio 38.42.3: *καίτοι τί μὲν ἐγὼ ἄδικον ἢ ἀνεπιεικὲς ἢ φορτικὸν ἐποίησα μεταπεμφάμενος αὐτὸν ὡς φίλον καὶ σύμμαχον· τί δὲ ἐκεῖνος ὑβρεως καὶ ἀσελγείας, οὐκ ἐβελήσας ἐλθεῖν, ἐκλέλοιπεν*. Compare this with Dio's analysis of Caesar's provocation of Ariovistus 38.34.3: *πρὸς δὲ δὴ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου δόξαν καὶ τὴν ἀπ'*

Caesar, working himself up into an empty display of self-righteousness, exclaims, in reference to Ariovistus, ‘Somebody, one of the *Allobroges* no less, summons the proconsul of the Romans! Do not think it a small and trifling matter that he did not obey me, Caesar, nor that he summoned me, Caesar!’³³ This is a significant ethnographic ‘error’ committed by anti-Caesar. Ariovistus was the king of the *Germani* across the Rhine, not a member of the Gallic *Allobroges*, who dwelled in the central Rhone valley. Scholars who have noted the problem have dismissed it as merely a mistake on the part of Dio, who must, it is assumed, have incompetently confused the peoples north of the Alps.³⁴ But Dio had already discussed the *Allobroges* at some length in the previous book as well as earlier in book 38, and it is improbable that the historian would carelessly number Ariovistus among a people long incorporated within the Roman province of the south. Moreover, immediately before this speech the historian explicitly introduces Ariovistus as ruler of the transrhine *Κελτοί*.³⁵ With the misidentification of Ariovistus as *Ἀλλόβριξ*, anti-Caesar himself hopelessly confuses the ethnography of the north, undermining key elements in Caesar’s own story of the *bellum Sequanicum*, a conflict which hereafter devolves into indiscriminate expansionism for the glorification of one man, and to the jeopardy of Rome. Elsewhere in the speech, anti-Caesar erodes the belaboured distinction between the peoples on either side of the Rhine constructed in Caesar’s *commentarii*, claiming that often in their history the Romans have vanquished members of this same ethnic group (*τῶν ὁμοφύλων*),³⁶ and that the Romans have little to fear from the transrhine peoples, since the *Κελτοί* and the *Γαλάται* are hardly distinguishable (*ὅμοιοι*) from each other.³⁷

αὐτῆς ἰσχὺν οὐδὲν τούτων ἐφρόντισε, πλὴν καθ’ ὅσον παρὰ τοῦ βαρβάρου πρόφασιν τῆς διαφορᾶς, μὴ καὶ προϋπάρχειν τι ἐς αὐτὸν νομισθῆ, λαβεῖν ἠθέλησε.

³³ Dio 38.43.3: μεταπέμπεται τις τὸν ἀνθύπατον τὸν Ῥωμαίων Ἀλλόβριξ ὄν. μὴ γὰρ ὅτι ἐμοῦ τοῦ Καίσαρος οὐκ ἐπέισθη, μηδ’ ὅτι ἐμὲ τὸν Καίσαρα ἐκάλεσε, σμικρὸν τι τοῦτο καὶ φαῦλον εἶναι νομίσητε.

³⁴ See e.g. Cary (1914) 293 n. 1: ‘Possibly an error on the part of Dio himself’. For further evidence of Dio’s presentation of anti-Caesar’s geographical ignorance, cf. 39.2.1 (*ἀγνοία τῶν χωρίων*).

³⁵ For earlier discussions of the *Allobroges* in the work, see Dio 37.34.1, 37.47–8, and 38.32.1; for the introduction of Ariovistus by Dio, see 38.34.3: ἦρχε μὲν γὰρ Ἀριόουιστος τῶν Κελτῶν ἐκείνων.

³⁶ Dio 38.45.1: ὅτι δὲ οὔτε ἄμαχος οὔτε δυσπολέμητός ἐστιν, ὁρᾶτε μὲν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ὁμοφύλων αὐτῶ, οὓς πολλάκις μὲν καὶ πρότερον, ῥᾶστα δὲ καὶ νῦν ἐνίκησαμεν. Caesar (*BG* 1.40) in his speech does mention the campaigns of Marius against the *Cimbri* and the *Teutones*, and seems to be the first to retrospectively identify these peoples as *Germani*.

³⁷ Dio 38.46.2: καὶ μέντοι καὶ τῶν Γαλατῶν αὐτῶν τῶν ὁμοίων σφίσι συχνοὶ ἡμῖν συμμαχήσουσιν. This of course differs markedly from Caesar’s ethnography: in the *commentarii*, just before this speech, the Gauls allied with the Romans talk at length about

In the flawed rhetoric of anti-Caesar and the broader narrative of the Gallic wars as waged by anti-Caesar, Dio makes an argument that had not only implications for the understanding of the Republican past, but important consequences for the imperial present. Dio's Caesar, with his unbridled ambition for conquest and his expansion into untenable parts of *Κελτική* that ought to have remained off the edge of the Roman map, is the root cause of the persistent and imminent threat in the north that the empire has faced ever since. The rewriting of the history of Caesar is thus intimately bound up with the rewriting of the apologetic—and perilous—fictions of Caesarian geography, and, most importantly, with the erasure of the Germani.

Κέλτοι and Γαλάται in the Ethnography of Dio

The extreme artificiality of Dio's translation of the *Germani* into *Κελτοί* is encapsulated in a passage later in the work, from the narrative of the principate of Tiberius (57.18.1):

Γερμανικὸς δὲ τῇ ἐπὶ τοὺς Κελτοὺς στρατεία φερόμενος εὖ μέχρι τε τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ προεχώρησε.

Germanicus, enjoying general success in his campaign against the *Κελτοί*, proceeded as far as the shores of Ocean'.

It was Germanicus' father's victories against these very peoples that had earned him the sobriquet, and yet the historian refuses to use the name *Γερμανοί* here, or in his earlier account of Drusus' campaigns in 10 BCE, where he calls the tribes that the commander drove back across the Rhine and subjugated in further expeditions *Κελτοί*, an almost paradoxical ethnic label in this context.³⁸ These kinds of ethnonymical non-sequiturs vexed the Byzantine epitomator Xiphilinus, who was forced to insert translations in parenthetical comments at certain points in his summaries of the later books in order to render Dio's meaning intelligible: '[Marcus], having defeated them, received the title *Germanicus* (for we use the name *Γερμανοί* for those who dwell

how much more formidable the Germans are than themselves, with their mighty frames, incredible courage, and ferocious appearance (*BG* 1.39).

³⁸ See Dio 54.32.1: καὶ τοὺς Κελτοὺς τηρήσας τὸν Ῥῆνον διαβαίνοντας ἀνέκοψε; 54.36.3: τὰ δὲ δὴ τῶν Κελτῶν τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ τῶν Χάπτων ... ὁ Δρούσος τὰ μὲν ἐκάκωσε τὰ δὲ ἐχειρώσατο. Cf. 55.2.3 for the posthumous bestowal of the title *Γερμανικός* upon Drusus, together with his sons who survived him.

in the northern regions)'.³⁹ Xiphilinus' generalising first-person plural highlights the idiosyncrasy of Dio's usage.⁴⁰ As other fragments of the later books of the history make clear, Dio *never* used this name, even for the peoples who troubled the northern frontiers in his own lifetime: the transrhene peoples who had crossed into Italy and were defeated by the future emperor Pertinax during the rule of Marcus Aurelius, as well as the Cenni and Alamanni against whom Caracalla campaigned, are all designated *Κελτικὰ ἔθνη* or *οἱ ὑπὲρ τὸν Ῥῆνον Κελτοί*.⁴¹

In forgetting the *Γερμανοί* and rejecting a Caesarian representation of northern space, Dio does not, however, revert simply to a pre-Caesarian Greek ethnography, in which there exist only *Σκύθαι* and *Κελτοί*. He instead creates something new out of the Greek tradition within which he was working.⁴² The clearest statement of Dio's interpretation of the north comes towards the end of book 39, as anti-Caesar prepares to cross the Rhine for the first time (39.49):

ὁ δὲ δὴ Ῥῆνος ἀναδίδωσι μὲν ἐκ τῶν Ἄλπεων τῶν Κελτικῶν, ὀλίγον ἔξω τῆς Ραιτίας, προχωρῶν δὲ ἐπὶ δυσμῶν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ μὲν τὴν τε Γαλατίαν καὶ τοὺς ἐποικούντας αὐτήν, ἐν δεξιᾷ δὲ τοὺς Κελτοὺς ἀποτέμνεται, καὶ τελευτῶν ἐς τὸν ὠκεανὸν ἐμβάλλει. οὗτος γὰρ ὁ ὄρος, ἀφ' οὗ γε καὶ ἐς τὸ διάφορον τῶν ἐπικλήσεων ἀφίκοντο, δεῦρο αἰεὶ νομίζεται, ἐπεὶ τό γε πάνυ ἀρχαῖον Κελτοὶ ἐκότεροι οἱ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα τοῦ ποταμοῦ οἰκούντες ὠνομάζοντο. ὁ οὖν Καῖσαρ τὸν τε Ῥῆνον πρῶτος τότε Ῥωμαίων διέβη.

The Rhine arises from the Celtic Alps, just outside of Raetia, and heading in a westerly direction it divides *Γαλατία* and its inhabitants on the left bank from the *Κελτοί* on the right bank, and in the end, it flows into the Ocean. This has always been considered the boundary, at least since the names of these peoples came to be differentiated; for in the very remote past, both peoples dwelling on either side of the river were

³⁹ Dio 72[71].3.5 (Xiph.): *κρατήσας δὲ αὐτῶν Γερμανικὸς ὠνομάσθη· Γερμανοὺς γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χωρίοις οἰκούντας ὠνομάζομεν*. For citations of the fragmentary books of Dio, I follow the conventions set out by Kemezis (2014) x.

⁴⁰ On the style and method of Xiphilinus' epitome of the history of Dio, see Mallan (2013).

⁴¹ See Dio 72[71].3.2 (Xiph.); 78[77].13.3 (EV); 78[77].14.1 (Xiph.).

⁴² But the influence of the traditional bipartite conception of the north is clear in certain casual ethnographic asides. For example, when describing the various events staged at the dedicatory celebration for the temple of *Divus Iulius*, he identifies the gladiators drawn from the Dacians and Suebi (a Germanic people) with the broad claim that 'the latter are *Κελτοί*, the former are, in fact, *Σκύθαι* of some sort' (51.22.6: *καὶ ἀθροοὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους Δακοὶ τε καὶ Σουῆβοι ἐμαχέσαντο. εἰσὶ δὲ οὗτοι μὲν Κελτοί, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ δὴ Σκύθαι τρόπον τινά*).

called *Κελτοί*. It was at this point in time, then, that Caesar became the first of the Romans to cross the Rhine.

Dio argues that the distinction between the peoples on either side of the Rhine is arbitrary, and a Roman construct. It is clear that the reader is to understand the historical events that he is in the midst of narrating as the point after which ‘the names of these peoples came to be differentiated’; indeed, the first appearance of the *Κελτοί* in Dio’s history is when Caesar arrives in Gaul in Book 38, analogous to the historiographical debut of the *Germani* in Caesar’s *commentarii*. Thus, while Caesar’s arrival in Gaul does mark an ethnographic watershed within the text, Dio’s claim that formerly these people were *all* called *Κελτοί* is of fundamental importance: as we have seen, this is how the Greek tradition had for centuries represented the homogenised north before Caesar. There is simultaneously a recognition of the influence of the Caesarian fiction and a subtle but significant inversion of that fiction: in Dio’s north, the *Γαλάται*, the group on this side of the Rhine, are the *ἔθνος* who are invented and historicised by the Roman imperial experience, rather than the peoples across the Rhine. From the earliest fragments of his history, Dio consistently refers to the northern people with whom the Romans successively come into contact—beginning with those who crossed the Alps and overran the city of Rome in 386 BCE—as *Γαλάται*.⁴³ Dio’s Romans, in creating their provinces—from Cisalpine Gaul to Narbonensis to Gallia Comata—and expanding the limits of the known world, push the primordial *Κελτοί* farther north and east, leaving a trail of newly defined peoples in their wake. *Γαλατία* is merely the invented name used for the conquered territory carved out of the otherwise amorphous space of *Κελτική*. In certain contexts, however, the historian, privileging the intellectual tradition over imperial power, dispenses with the newer Roman label and ‘reabsorbs’ the provinces of Gaul back into the older Greek geography: immediately before the aforementioned passage on the river Rhine, for example, in introducing the campaigns of Crassus near the Pyrenees, Dio states that Aquitania borders directly on *Κελτική*, where one might have expected him to use instead the name of the province (*Γαλατία*).⁴⁴ Moreover, in this ethnography, the nominal distinction between *Κελτοί* and *Γαλάται* is quickly blurred: they are ultimately characterised by the same—conventionally Greek—tropes and traits.⁴⁵

⁴³ See Dio 7.25–6 (EM).

⁴⁴ Dio 39.46: [οἱ Ἀκυιτανοί] τῇ τε Κελτικῇ προσοικουσι καὶ παρ’ αὐτὸ τὸ Πυρηναίων ἐς τὸν ὠκεανὸν καθήκουσιν.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Dio 39.45, on the emotionality of the *Γαλάται*, with Johnston (2018) 83. On this point, cf. Bertrand (2016b) 717.

This argument about Dio's historicisation of the meanings of imperial geography is further reinforced by the context of his only mention of the *Γερμανοί*, made through the mouthpiece of the emperor Augustus in one of the better-known parts of the work, a speech to the senate on the division of the provinces of the empire. In this highly schematic overview of Roman space, Augustus explains that, 'some of the *Κελτοί*, whom we [Romans] call *Γερμανοί*, having occupied all of Belgica on the Rhine, caused it to be called *Γερμανία*'.⁴⁶ Here the suggestive device of translation (*καλοῦμεν*) factors prominently into the differentiation between Greek and Roman geographies: Dio acknowledges the ramifications of the Caesarian view of the north, but distances himself from it and diminishes its importance by relegating the *Γερμανοί* to a parenthetical aside and circumscribing their historical impact to merely the name of a province. His Augustus does not disguise the fact that the *Γερμανοί* are a Roman invention: in the context of this passage, Dio suggests that *Γερμανία* is as artificial as any of the provinces of the empire, meaningful only as a Roman device for structuring and ordering the world.⁴⁷ His rejection of this structure and of the reality of the *Γερμανοί* is accordingly all the more significant.

Conclusion: Κέλτοι, Germani, and Dio's Roman Empire

We are left to wonder why Dio should have gone to such lengths to rewrite Caesar. A comparison with another text in which we find a significant departure from Caesar's imaginary geography of the north might prove instructive: the *Germania* of Tacitus, who seems to have discerned the nature and the objective of Caesar's invention of the Germani. It has been persuasively suggested that one of the intentions of Tacitus' ethnographic treatise, in which

⁴⁶ Dio 53.12.6: *Κελτῶν γάρ τινες, οὓς δὴ Γερμανοὺς καλοῦμεν, πᾶσαν τὴν πρὸς τῷ Ῥήνῳ Βελγικὴν κατασχόντες Γερμανίαν ὀνομάζεσθαι ἐποίησαν*. Writing on the imperial period, Dio does use the name *Γερμανία* in this sense to refer specifically to the two Roman provinces of Germania Superior and Germania Inferior, but never as a general geographical designation.

⁴⁷ It is especially instructive to compare Augustus' speech with the immediately surrounding narrative in this respect. For example, around 20 BCE, Agrippa was appointed with proconsular *imperium* to oversee the provinces of Gaul, which 'were being harassed by the *Κελτοί*' (54.11.1–2: *Ἀγρίππας ... ταῖς Γαλατίας προσετάχθη ἔν τε γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἐστασίαζον καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Κελτῶν ἐκακοῦντο*). In 16–15 BCE, Augustus himself set out for war in Gaul to check the rising threat of the *Κελτοί*, who had crossed the Rhine and raided *Γερμανία* and *Γαλατία* (54.20.4: *ὁ δὲ δὴ μέγιστος τῶν τότε συμβάντων τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις πολέμων, ὅσπερ που καὶ τὸν Αὐγουστον ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἐξήγαγε, πρὸς τοὺς Κελτοὺς ἐγένετο ... ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ῥήνον διαβάντες τὴν τε Γερμανίαν καὶ τὴν Γαλατίαν ἐλεηλάτησαν*).

he blurs Caesarian distinctions between Gallia and Germania, was to encourage Trajan, positioned on the Rhine with his legions, to finish the conquest of the Germani that had been left incomplete by Caesar a century and a half before. Germania, argued Tacitus, could be grasped intellectually, as well as militarily.⁴⁸ I propose that behind Dio's ethnographic revisionism lies a similar interest in imperial policy, although to dramatically different ends.⁴⁹ In his own lifetime, Dio had witnessed firsthand the destructive incursions by peoples from across the Rhine into Italy itself; he had governed provinces on the increasingly untenable northern frontier, and attempted to reform the discipline of an overextended imperial army.⁵⁰ By the end of his career, he may have feared that this was a lost cause. His history, finished in retirement in his native Bithynia, closes with a melancholic reflection on the historian's own circumstances, couched in two verses from the eleventh book of the *Iliad* (80[80].5.2–3 [Xiph.]):

ἀπῆρα οὔκαδε παρέμενος ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ποδῶν ἀρρωστία, ὥστε πάντα τὸν
λοιπὸν τοῦ βίου χρόνον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ζῆσαι, ὥσπερ που καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον
ἐν τῇ Βιθυνία ἤδη μοι ὄντι σαφέστατα ἐδήλωσεν. ὄναρ γάρ ποτε ἔδοξα
προστάσσεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ προσγράψασθαι τῷ ἀκροτελευτίῳ τὰ ἔπη τάδε,
Ἔκτορα δ' ἐκ βελέων ὕπαγε Ζεὺς ἔκ τε κονίης
ἔκ τ' ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ' αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ.

I set out for home, with the intention of spending the rest of my life in my native land, as, indeed, the divine revealed to me very clearly when

⁴⁸ See Krebs (2011) 210: 'The specificity of Tacitus's political motivation can be gleaned only from his selection and rearrangement of the traditional material. His Germania is assimilated to Caesar's Gallia; for him, the two peoples are not as different as Caesar had proclaimed. He noticeably weakens the Germani ... He suggests how ... [they] could be beaten and within his presentation inserts an unveiled complaint that Romans had been happy to triumph over the Germani rather than win a decisive victory. When Tacitus wrote this, Trajan was at the Rhine.' On the purpose of the *Germania*, see also Rives (1999) 48–56; Timpe (1989).

⁴⁹ For Dio's perspective on Roman imperialism in general, see Bertrand (2016a).

⁵⁰ Dio himself is our best source of information for his career: he was proconsular governor in Africa (ca. 222) and Dalmatia (Dio 80[80].1.2–3 [Xiph.]), before being appointed by Severus Alexander (ca. 225) to the province of Upper Pannonia (Dio 49.36.4), where his strictness and severity made him particularly unpopular with the Praetorians (Dio 80[80].4–5 [Xiph.]). In the epigraphic record, apart from several instances of his name in consular dating formulae for the year 229 CE (when he was *cos. II*), his proconsular governorship of Africa may be mentioned in a dedication to Jupiter from Thabraca (*CIL* VIII.17329, although this may be his descendant of the same name, the consul of 291). On Dio's career in its historical context, and its impact on his writing of history, see Swain (1998) 401–8; Kemezis (2014) 90–149.

I was already in Bithynia. For once in a dream I thought I was commanded by it to write at the close of my work these verses:

‘And Zeus led Hector out of the range of missiles, out of the dust, and blood, and confusion, and the slaughter of men.’⁵¹

The empire was beset by ills. Dio, with the twofold expertise of the Greek historian and the senatorial governor, had diagnosed Caesar as the origin of the northern problem: it was Caesar who, in his vain quest to fulfil his selfish ambition, had ventured too far into *Κελτική* and created the perpetual instability to which Germanicus, Trajan, Marcus, Commodus, and Caracalla, for all their campaigns, had been unable to find a lasting remedy. As is clear especially from the straw-man version of the arguments that he puts in the mouth of his anti-Caesar, the historian disdained the philosophy of preemptive warfare and was dubious of the efficacy of defensive imperialism as it had hitherto been practised on the northern *limes*, where Roman policies had failed so miserably and disastrously within recent memory.⁵² Throughout his work, Dio’s interpretation of historical geography reiterates the artificial nature of Roman imperial space. His narrative of the rule of Caesar’s heir is framed by two programmatic speeches that argue that the emperor had the power to set the limits of empire, and the obligation to define these limits as narrowly as possible: upon his consolidation of power, the *princeps* is advised by Maecenas not to expand the empire any further, and upon his death, he is praised by Tiberius for adhering to this principle and restricting himself only to the defence of those imperial possessions that, once acquired, he had been obliged to retain. The Rhine frontier—to which Tiberius, the mouthpiece of the historian, here makes veiled reference—had already proven to be a deeply

⁵¹ For another, not incompatible, interpretation of the point of Dio’s Homeric quotation, see Gowing (2016) 133–5.

⁵² Dio, as omniscient narrator, gives anti-Caesar a weak and flawed argument (38.40.7) that foreshadows the escalating conflicts on the Rhine frontier in the historian’s own day: *καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι, μέχρι μὲν ἐντὸς τῶν Ἄλπεων ἐμένομεν, πολλάκις αὐτὰς ὑπερέβησαν καὶ πολλὰ τῆς Ἰταλίας ἐπόρθησαν· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐτολμήσαμεν ποτε ἔξω τε τῶν ὄρων ἐκστρατεῦσαι καὶ τὸν πόλεμόν σφισι περιστῆσαι, καὶ τινα καὶ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν ἀπετεμόμεθα, οὐκέτ’ οὐδένα πόλεμον ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ, πλὴν ἅπαξ, εἶδομεν.* (‘[The *Κελτοί*], while we remained south of the Alps, often crossed the mountains and ravaged wide swaths of Italy, but after we ventured to campaign beyond our own borders and bring the war to them and seized a part of their territory, we no longer saw them make any war upon Italy, except once’.) But under Marcus, *οἱ ὑπὲρ τὸν Ῥῆνον Κελτοί* had again crossed the mountains and advanced into Italy (72[71].3.2 [Xiph.]). I thus disagree with the way in which Bertrand (2016a) 691–2 reads the theory of ‘impérialisme défensif’ articulated in this speech. For Dio’s narrative of the German campaign of Caracalla, which is also anticipated in many ways by anti-Caesar’s speech, see Simons (2014).

problematic inheritance.⁵³ Dio's own solution to the problem of the Germani was to so radically reinterpret the north as to render old Roman frontier policies obsolete. Until the historian's own time, the Romans had allowed the Caesarian fiction to take on a life of its own; the Schumpeterian Roman war machine created not just the wars it required, but also the 'others' that its wars required as fuel. But by removing Caesar's Germani from the map and writing them out of history, Dio attempts to disrupt this cycle, artfully assuaging the reader's fears about the disorder of northern space: he convinces us that there are no scary bogeymen across the river, that there really is no such thing as the *Γερμανοί*.

Like his attitudes towards empire more broadly, this ethnographic erasure appears all the more meaningful in light of Dio's career and his own firsthand experience of the frontier, which in his text he translated into authoritative knowledge of the peoples of Pannonia in particular, where he had served as governor. In a brief but polemical digression from his narrative of Augustus' subjugation of the country, he adduced his own autopsy in support of his map of its various ethnic groups, against the ideas of other Greek writers (49.36.6):

τῶν δὲ δὴ Ἑλλήνων τινὲς ἀληθῆς ἀγνοήσαντες Παίονας σφας προσεῖπον, ἀρχαίου μὲν ποῦ τοῦ προσρήματος τούτου ὄντος, οὐ μὲντοι καὶ ἐκεῖ, ἀλλ' ἐν τε τῇ Ῥοδόπῃ καὶ πρὸς αὐτῇ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ τῇ νῦν μέχρι τῆς θαλάσσης. ὑφ' οὗπερ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐκείνους μὲν Παίονας τούτους δὲ Παννονίους, ὡσπερ ποῦ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ Ῥωμαῖοί σφας καλοῦσι, προσαγορεύσω.

But some of the Greeks, ignorant of the truth, label them as *Παίονες*, this being, I suppose, an ancient name, but one which nevertheless does not refer to this country. Rather, it belongs to the inhabitants of Rhodope bordering on the modern province of Macedonia as far as the seacoast. Therefore, I shall refer to these people just mentioned as *Παίονες* and the others as *Παννόνιοι*, just as they call themselves and the Romans call them.⁵⁴

The historian's methodology in this passage is illuminating, for the inconsistencies in his treatment of the *Παίονες* and *Παννόνιοι* in comparison to the

⁵³ For Maecenas' advice, see Dio 52.37.1: *τῇ μὲν οὖν γνώμῃ καὶ τῷ μηδενὸς πλείονος τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἐπιθυμῆν εἰρηνικώτατον εἶναί σε χρή, ταῖς δὲ παρασκευαῖς πολεμικώτατον.* For Tiberius' eulogy, see 56.41.7: *τὸ τοῖς ἅπαξ ἀναγκαίως κτηθεῖσιν ἀρκεσθῆναι αὐτὸν καὶ μηδὲν ἕτερον προσκατεργάσασθαι ἐθελῆσαι, ἐξ οὗ πλείονων ἂν δόξαντες ἄρχειν καὶ τὰ ὄντα ἀπωλέσασμεν.* This part of the speech elides, somewhat disingenuously but conveniently for the historian's purposes, the difficult realities of the Roman attempt to conquer Germania between 12 BCE and 9 CE.

⁵⁴ Dio 49.36.6:

Κελτοί and Γερμανοί cast into even sharper relief the significance of his ethnographic choices elsewhere. This type of criticism of the conservatism of his fellow Greeks, who persisted in using anachronistic and misplaced names for contemporary peoples, and such deliberate adherence both to the patterns of local self-identification and the terms of Roman imperial administration are techniques not only conspicuously absent from his representation of the Κελτοί, but are, in fact, the very antithesis of his approach to Κελτική, which ignores—and indeed unwrites—the prevailing norms. Through the development of a radically different unhistorical ethnography of Κελτική, the people of the Germani are un-discovered, and the past three centuries of conflict on the Rhine frontier are recast as a fruitless, unnecessary, and ill-conceived battle with the Κελτοί. Primordial, timeless, and unchanging, the Κελτοί had long ago found a stable equilibrium in Greek ethnographic thought. They are not a problem to be solved, not an ἔθνος to be conquered.⁵⁵ The Romans, in their northward expansion from central Italy, had progressively left their representational imprint on the people in their wake, the Γαλάται; the point beyond which they could no longer transform Κελτοί into Γαλάται was, for Dio, the ethnographic limit of empire.

This alternative ethnography of the north was part of the historian's intellectual answer to the imperial crisis. It underpinned his opinions on

⁵⁵ A fruitful point of comparison for Dio's Κελτοί may be found in the only other imperial Greek author (to my knowledge) to use that ethnonym to denote broadly the Germanic peoples: the anonymous speaker of a panegyric of Philip the Arab, probably delivered ca. 248 CE. In a section praising the emperor's conduct in war (arguably the campaigns against the Carpi and Germanic tribes along the Danube in 246–8), the speaker turns from the emperor's strategic prudence and wisdom to his valour in battle, claiming that the Κελτοί, having suffered a crushing defeat after recent invasions, now everywhere kneel before the emperor (Ps.-Aristides, *Eis Basileia* 35):

ὅπου γὰρ Κελτοὶ μὲν οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ φονικώτατοι τῶν ὑφ' ἡλίῳ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ παντοῖα
τολήσαντες νῦν προσκυνοῦσι τὸν δεσπότην, γνόντες τὸ τὴν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν ὡς ἄμεινον
ἦν καὶ ποιεῖν τὸ προσταττόμενον τοῦ πολεμεῖν, τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ὄνομα λείπεται μόνον τοῦ
γένους.

The adoption of an anachronistically Greek ethnographic perspective on the north—as populated by giant and ferocious Κελτοί—might be interpreted in light of the many appeals to Hellenism and classical Greek history in the speech (cf. Swift (1966) 271). But the flattering emphasis on the complete elimination of the northern threat—only the name of the Κελτοί remains, and the Γερμανοί are nowhere to be found—seems to align somewhat with Dio's project of radically altering the representation of the north so as to support a more restrained frontier policy. In both works, the removal of the Γερμανοί from the map serves the purpose of neutralising the problem, although on Dio's willingness to exercise freedom of speech (*παρρησία*) in criticising (rather than panegyrising) the propaganda and policies of contemporary emperors, see Mallan (2016) 272–4. Swift's (1966) identification of the context and addressee of the speech, although challenged by Jones (1981), has become generally accepted; see, e.g., de Blois (1986).

contemporary frontier policy, with regard to which he urged restraint and caution, and warned against the futility of military expeditions and further expansion. The Pandora's box opened by Caesar could not be closed, but through reimagining its contents—remaking the Γερμανοί invented by the Romans as the Κελτοί long known to the Greeks—and fundamentally changing the terms of the discourse, its attendant threats might be contained.⁵⁶

Yale University

ANDREW C. JOHNSTON
andrew.johnston@yale.edu

⁵⁶ Although he bases his argument on a narrower analysis of Dio's presentation of the later German campaigns of Caracalla, Simons (2014) 281–3 reaches similar conclusions about Dio's attitude towards Roman policy on the northern frontier and the objectives of his history: 'So mahnt Cassius Dio ... die Notwendigkeit defensiveren und verhaltenen Vorgehens an den Nordgrenzen des Imperium Romanum.'

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