

# **CAESAR'S TRIUMPHS OVER GAUL AND ROME**

**Sarah Midford  
Rhiannon Evans**





**LA TROBE UNIVERSITY EBUREAU**

La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC 3086, Australia  
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Enquiries: [library@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:library@latrobe.edu.au)

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## About the authors

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Dr Sarah Midford is a Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. She teaches Classics, Australian Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies and in 2016 received an Australian Award for University Teaching for online curriculum design. Her research focuses on the cultural impact of war in history, literature and commemorative processes throughout history, and draws connections between the ancient and modern worlds. She is particularly interested in how Australian national identity has been constructed using classical ideas, texts and aesthetics. Sarah's PhD, from the

University of Melbourne, examined ways in which classical narratives were drawn upon when composing the Australian Anzac narrative. Her MA explored the political exploitation of the Roman triumphal procession during the Republican and early Imperial periods.



Dr Rhiannon Evans is a Senior Lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. Her research interests focus on Ancient Rome's literature, culture and empire in the first centuries BCE and CE, most recently the works of Julius Caesar. She has published several articles on ancient ethnicity, as well as a book on Roman culture and utopianism, and is the academic consultant and contributor to the podcast '[Emperors of Rome](#)'.

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# Introduction

*Posterity will be staggered to hear and read of the military commands you have held and the provinces you have ruled ... battles without number, fabulous victories, monuments and shows and triumphs.*

Cicero, *Pro Marcello* 28

Gaius Julius Caesar was born on the 12th **Quintilis** 100 BCE (Before the Common Era). After his death, that month was named 'July' in his honour and the Rome into which he was born was transformed forever.

During his lifetime, Julius Caesar changed his world. When he was born, Rome was ruled by a senate composed of the **patrician** elite.<sup>1</sup> By the time he died, Rome was ruled by Caesar and he had started a chain reaction that led to the demise of the Roman Republic and the instigation of imperial rulership.

Throughout his life, Caesar did not simply seize opportunities that presented themselves; he also created his own opportunities and forged his own path to power and glory. Caesar was an intelligent, ambitious and charismatic man. He was clever enough to ensure he was popular with the people and fortunate enough to be born a member of the Roman elite. This winning combination allowed him to craft a position for himself that changed his world and the world around him, and established an enduring legacy which lasted for millennia.

In the years after his death, Caesar's great-nephew (and later adopted son) Octavian ensured that his uncle's name would live forever by quashing the last of Caesar's opponents to become the first emperor of Rome. In 27 BCE, Octavian was declared **princeps** and used his adoptive father's name as a title to become *Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus* (Emperor Augustus, son of the divine Caesar). Every subsequent emperor of Rome followed his lead and took the name Caesar, whether or not they were his descendant.

Even after the Roman Empire fell, Caesar's name lived on in the titles of new rulers spread throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Asian continent. Whether pronounced Kaiser, Qaysar or Tsar, Caesar's name has endured for more than two thousand years, and with it his legacy of power and conquest live on.

In order to become the man we remember today, Caesar spent eight years exploring the outer limits of the known world and conquering Gaul. This book examines Julius Caesar's Gallic conquests and their role in his campaign for political power in Rome after his triumphant return. Part 1 looks exclusively at Caesar's own presentation of his conquests in his published reports, titled *The Gallic War*. Part 2 looks at his presentation of those conquests in the ephemeral spectacle of the triumphal procession.

1. Traditionally, and until the early first century, the Senate was a body of around 300 men. During Sulla's dictatorship, the numbers were increased to between 500 and 600 and included 300 previously **equites** (Appian, *Civil Wars*, 1.11.100; Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1.14.5). In 45 BCE, the Senate had 900 members after Caesar rewarded his supporters with admission (Cassius Dio, 43.47.2; Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 41.1).

Because Caesar visited numerous lands in his travels, conquering many of them, his journey is part of the history of many modern European nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Germany. To ensure that people long after his death would continue to admire his achievements, Caesar recorded his journeys and conquests in his *Gallic War*.<sup>2</sup>

*The Gallic War* provides a record of Caesar's conquests for his contemporary Romans and their descendants. This text testifies to Caesar's great military prowess and also provides the world's first written document about the Gauls, Germani and Britanni. Caesar documented the complex interactions between these peoples and the ethnographic differences he perceived between the Roman people and those who lived on the edge of, and beyond, Rome's borders. The text also provides us with an insight into the author himself. The structure and content of *The Gallic War* reveal Caesar's interests and priorities and are a record of exactly what the commander wanted preserved for posterity.

*The Gallic War* is not the only record of Caesar's conquests in Gaul. Written accounts of Caesar's triumphal processions to celebrate his victories provide important information about the way Caesar wanted his conquests to be remembered. Although we know many details about Caesar's triumphal processions, existing records are inconsistent and incomplete. Hence, we have filled knowledge gaps about Caesar's triumphs with information from triumphal processions celebrated earlier in the republican period. These two knowledge sources let us construct a rich and detailed representation of his triumph.

Both Caesar's written and processional accounts of his successful campaigning in Gaul were designed to promote the prowess of the military commander and lend him enough popular favour to win political office. Central to this book are Caesar's own account of Gaul and the Gauls, as well as the way Gaul was 'displayed' in the aftermath of his campaigns. The themes of people, mapping and boundaries run throughout and highlight the significant aspects of conquest for the Roman people.

2. *The Gallic War* is divided into eight books (one per year, with Book 8 covering two years); each book is further subdivided into short chapters, and each chapter into short subchapters, usually a sentence or two long. As a result, Latin scholars can be very precise about which sentence they mean! So *The Gallic War* 1.1.1–2 refers to *The Gallic War* Book 1, Chapter 1, sentences 1 and 2. Note that a lot of translations give only book and chapter number; in hard copy editions, this is usually at the top of the page.

# Who was Julius Caesar?

## Early life



Listen to the podcast:

Early years of Caesar

Read: Podcast transcription page 61

Unfortunately we know almost nothing of Caesar's early life. History has preserved two biographies, one by Suetonius and the other by Plutarch, but both of these are missing the first few chapters and start with Caesar's early adult life. We do know that Caesar was born into the patrician Julian clan (the *gens Iulia*) and that his aunt Julia was married to the extremely successful military commander Gaius *Marius*. We also know that Caesar grew up in the poor district of *Subura* located very close to the Roman forum, which was the home of prostitutes, foreigners, poor labourers and tradesmen. Throughout his life, Caesar used this humble home and his relationships with the ordinary Roman people who lived as his neighbours to increase his popularity. The *gens Iulia* claimed ancestry from Venus through the Trojan prince *Aeneas*' son Iulus (also known as Ascanius). It is interesting to note that, despite their pedigree, Caesar's family were not politically inclined. This, of course, changed when Caesar made politics and power his life's ambition.

## Marriage and politics

In 85 BCE, Caesar's father died and Caesar became *paterfamilias* at sixteen years of age. A year later, Caesar entered political life as the *Flamen Dialis* (the High Priest of Jupiter). In the same year he married his first wife, Cornelia, daughter of the Marian supporter Lucius Cornelius Cinna. He remained married to Cornelia for sixteen years until she died in childbirth in 69 BCE. Cornelia was the mother of Caesar's daughter and only surviving legitimate child, Julia Caesaris, born in 76 BCE. Julia later married Caesar's then political ally, and later political enemy, *Pompey the Great*, before dying in childbirth in 54 BCE (while Pompey and Caesar were still allied).

Caesar's marriage to Cornelia cemented his ties to the Marian faction, which was at war with *Cornelius Sulla* in the late 80s BCE. After defeating *Marius*, *Sulla* marched on Rome and installed himself as dictator, a political manoeuvre that Caesar later emulated. *Sulla* wanted to restore the Roman republic after a period of elite competition had dismantled many of its checks and balances.

Caesar's political alignment forced him into exile during *Sulla's dictatorship*, but his allies in Rome petitioned for Caesar's pardon. *Sulla* eventually conceded to these pleas but warned his supporters of the ambition he recognised in the young Caesar, asking them to remember their efforts to save this man when he obliterated the aristocracy that they had worked so

hard to preserve, for ‘they were stupid if they could not see that this boy contained many *Mariuses*’ (Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 1.4). Caesar fulfilled *Sulla’s* prophecy when he became Rome’s perpetual dictator in 44 BCE, and the Roman Senate was forever relegated to the second most powerful institution in Rome.

Caesar married twice more. In 68 BCE, he married Pompeia, the daughter of Quintus Pompeius Rufus and Cornelia (*Sulla’s* daughter). The marriage ended in divorce when Pompeia was caught up in a scandal at the Bona Dea festival in 62 BCE. This women-only festival was gate-crashed by Publius Clodius Pulcher (dressed in women’s clothing), who attempted to seduce Pompeia. Whether or not Clodius was successful, Caesar divorced Pompeia under the premise that the wife of Caesar could never be under suspicion. In 59 BCE, Caesar married for the third and final time. Calpurnia, the daughter of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, outlived Caesar and did not remarry after his death. Neither Pompeia nor Calpurnia bore a child to Caesar.

## Climbing the political ladder

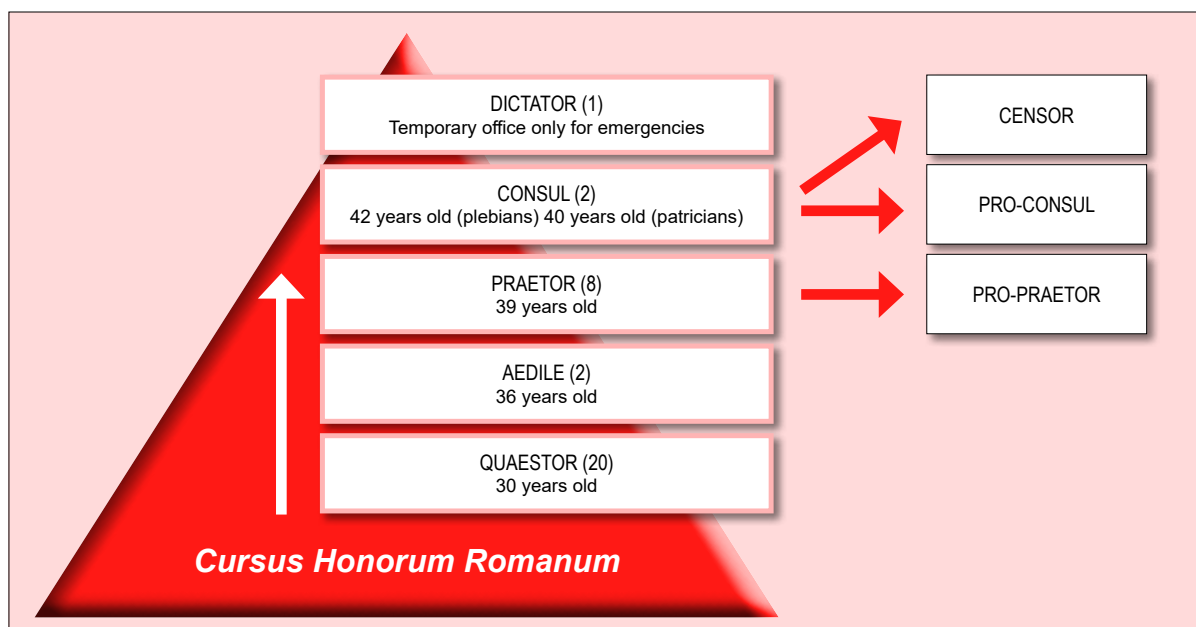


Listen to the podcast:

Caesar the politician

Read: Podcast transcription page 65

In his early political career, Caesar followed a fairly traditional career path. After serving in the military, he progressed up Rome’s political ladder, the *cursus honorum*.



The Cursus Honorum - The sequential order of public offices held by aspiring politicians.

He was elected **quaestor** in 69 BCE and **aedile** in 65 BCE, the earliest he could legally hold either position. In 63 BCE, Caesar was elected *Pontifex Maximus* (Chief Priest). This honour was usually awarded to someone much older and further up the political ladder than Caesar, and the position gave him great symbolic authority. In 62 BCE, Caesar was elected **praetor**, and the following year he was awarded command of his first army and the governorship of Further Spain.

Upon his return to Rome, Caesar formed the First Triumvirate with **Pompey the Great** and **Marcus Licinius Crassus**. The triumvirate was an unofficial political alliance between the three most powerful men in Rome at the time. Its existence was unconstitutional, and it was kept secret for many years as the three men manipulated Roman politics to suit their personal agendas. One perk of the Triumvirate was Caesar's election to the consulship in 59 BCE.

After his first consulship, Caesar was given command of his second army and the provincial governorship of Cisalpine Gaul, Illyricum and Transalpine Gaul. Suetonius tells us that the Senate awarded Caesar only Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum, but that the pressure of the common people forced them to add Transalpine Gaul as well (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 22.1). These provinces came with four **legions**, and it was with these men that Caesar spent the next eight years conquering Gaul and exploring the outer limits of the known world.



Listen to the podcast:

Caesar and Gaul

Read: Podcast transcription page 70

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## PART 1

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# Caesar in Gaul

As Caesar writes about his exploits in Gaul, he sets up a clear map of the area. In fact, Caesar creates a new version of ‘Gaul’ – it both *expands* Gaul’s geographical boundaries and *excludes* some areas which traditionally might have been ascribed to it. Caesar also defines an ethnic group which he labels ‘the Gauls’, both through formal ethnography and the descriptions of their behaviour in his narrative.

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Map of Gallia tribes and towns in 1st century BCE.

MAP GALLIA TRIBES TOWNS BY FEITSCHERG FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY-SA 3.0

## Where was Gaul?

While we might think of Gaul as the ‘ancient version’ of modern France, the Romans included modern Belgium, parts of the Netherlands and northern Italy in Gaul. Gallia Transalpina meant ‘Gaul beyond the Alps’, while Gallia Cisalpina meant ‘Gaul this side of the Alps’. Until Caesar altered the map in 48 BCE, Gallia Cisalpina was technically outside Italy, but it was still far more familiar to Romans than the region ‘beyond’. This terminology reflects how Romans thought of Gaul and how they conceptualised geographical regions according to proximity to Rome, which was at the geographical centre.

However, Caesar was not proconsul (governor) of all of ‘Gaul beyond the Alps’. He was officially proconsul of Gallia Transalpina and Illyricum<sup>3</sup>, and his governorship extended only to the Roman Province (Provincia Romana, equivalent to modern Provence). Caesar’s remit did not take him north or west of the Province, but he opens *The Gallic War* by ignoring his own province and drawing a map of everything that lay beyond:

*All of Gaul is divided into three parts: the Belgae live in one part, the Aquitani the second and in the third a group called ‘Celts’ in their own language and ‘Gauls’ in ours. They all differ from one another in language, institutions and laws.*

Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1.1–2



RRC 448/2, Obverse (48 BCE): Bearded male bust right, draped; behind, Gallic shield. Border of dots.

‘GALLIC MALE’ RRC 448/2 OBTAINED FROM GALE COLLECTION, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR ANCIENT NUMISMATIC STUDIES (ACANS). USED WITH PERMISSION FROM ACANS.

For there was a further division of Gaul here, between the Province, often known as Gallia Togata (‘Gaul which wears the toga’), and Gallia Comata (‘Long-haired Gaul’) to the north. In other words, there was a distinction between Romanised Gaul and unconquered Gaul, which could be represented visually through personal appearance.

The people ethnically defined as Gauls lived in the area mapped out between three major boundaries: the Roman Province, the Rhine, and Ocean. The first was protected by Rome, and its protection was Caesar’s pretext for taking action in Gaul. The second and third, a river and a sea, were features of the landscape and seemed to form a natural boundary. In fact, they were less than ideal boundaries for both could also operate as just the opposite – a conductor – and they could be bridged or sailed. They were also possible conduits to Germania and Britannia, which was exactly how Caesar used them.

## The people: Gauls, Germani and Britanni

*The Gallic War*, Caesar’s book on his campaign in Gaul, is our earliest detailed description of northern Europeans: the first description of druids, of Gallic human sacrifice and of the great strength, but brutish lifestyles, of the northern barbarians.<sup>4</sup>

3. This was approximately modern Croatia. It rarely features in *The Gallic War* – only at 2.35, 3.7 and 5.1 with reference to winter quarters.

4. *Barbari* (singular *barbarus*) in Latin, taken from a Greek word (*βάρβαροι*). For the ancient Greeks, this could indicate anyone who was non-Greek (including the Romans) and does not seem to have been a term of denigration originally. In general, it is used in Latin to mean those who are neither Greek nor Roman, and by this point it *does* indicate a lower level of civilisation.

In the course of the Gallic War, Caesar came into contact with three groups of barbarians: the Gauls themselves, the Germani and the Britanni.<sup>5</sup> According to Caesar, the Germani live on the other side of the Rhine from the Gauls, while the Britanni are found ‘over Ocean’. To us, what the Romans called ‘Ocean’ is the English Channel, but to the Greco–Romans it was part of the sea that bounded the far ends of the earth. Caesar defines these people as quite distinct from one another by their behaviour, customs and way of life. For example, he claims that the Gauls are devoted to religious ritual, which is led by their educated priestly class, the druids.

## The gods of the Gauls

Caesar writes that, like the Romans, the Gauls worship *anthropomorphic gods*. He even uses the names of Roman gods to identify them – Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.17.1–2) – thereby conflating Gallic and Roman religion. Like so many ethnographers, Caesar positions the peoples he writes about in relation to his own culture, and he seems to do so quite unselfconsciously. The Gauls did not call their gods by these ancient Italian names, of course, but, to the Roman observer, they were gods who carried out similar functions to those of the Roman gods. Caesar states that ‘Apollo’ is the god of medicine, ‘Mars’ is god of war, ‘Minerva’ is god of crafts and ‘Jupiter’ is the chief god who holds up the heavens.

To historians attempting to collect information about the ancient Gauls, Caesar can be a frustrating source. Historians might well ask how the Gallic gods differed from Roman gods (as they must have done), what myths the Gauls told about their gods and what powers these gods possessed, but unfortunately Caesar does not even tell us their Gallic names!

## Caesar’s ‘Roman interpretation’

Caesar is interpreting Gaul through his own culture’s eyes, a practice later called *interpretatio Romana* (Roman ‘interpretation’ or ‘translation’).<sup>6</sup> It is important to remember that *The Gallic War* is a Roman account of another people and that, as well as writing about the Gauls themselves, Caesar uses the Gauls to comment on Roman qualities from a different perspective.

In general, Caesar’s descriptions of the Gauls reveal the superiority of the Roman forces under his command; the Gauls are frequently amazed by the Romans’ speed and ingenuity. In Book 1, Caesar’s first Gallic enemy, the Helvetii, are surprised that the Romans have built a bridge and crossed a river in just one day – it had taken the Helvetii twenty days and a lot of effort to ford the river. They immediately send deputies to attempt to make a peace treaty with Caesar because they are so impressed with the way that he dominates the landscape.<sup>7</sup>

5. Although some scholars do use ‘Germans’ and ‘Britons’ for these two peoples, they are not exact equivalents since Caesar’s borders, particularly for the Germani, are not the same as modern ones – and Europe’s borders have not been consistent over time anyway. Arguably, the Britanni are the same – as they live in Britannia (the island we now call Great Britain) – but Caesar’s contact is solely with those of south-east England.

6. The term *interpretatio Romana* is only ever used in antiquity by Tacitus (*Germania* 43.3), a century and a half after the life of Caesar, in a work about the society and culture of the Germani.

7. *The Gallic War*, 1.13. There are similar examples throughout the work: e.g. 3.31, 4.14, 5.40.

Showing superiority is a way of intimidating the enemy into capitulation, but it is also a type of cultural one-upmanship.

## Comparative ethnography

When he uses the Gauls in this way, Caesar practises what we now call comparative ethnography. However, he not only compares Gauls with Romans but also Gauls with Germani. While the differences between Gauls and Romans are implied – that is, they come out in the different ways that each group behaves – the differences between Gauls and Germani are made quite explicit. A formal ethnography in Book 6 (Chapters 11–28) follows Caesar's narrative of the war, detailing the preparations of the Gauls and Germani for war against Caesar in the first ten chapters.

At this point in the book, some of the Gauls and Germani are joining together, although their alliance is hardly one based on shared beliefs – the Gauls tempt the Germani over the Rhine with bribes (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.2.1). Caesar begins his campaign early and builds a bridge over the Rhine. In fact, this is his second bridge, as he had built and crossed another bridge two years previously, in 55 BCE.<sup>8</sup> Each of these bridges shows the pre-eminence of Roman technology – the engineering and practical skills needed to achieve such a feat asserts Rome's cultural dominance. Crossing the Rhine will demonstrate who is in charge and, effectively, who has the right to cross this major waterway: the message is that it should not be the Germani mercenaries but the Romans!

It is in this context that Caesar chooses to break the narrative with a 18-chapter excursus (about eight pages in the Penguin translation) on the ethnography of the Gauls and Germani. As he describes it: '[a]s this point has been reached, it seems not inappropriate to discuss the customs (*mores*) of Gaul and Germania and how their peoples differ from one another' (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.11.1).

## The Gauls' culture and religion

For Caesar, the ethnography of the Gauls covers political structures, religion, origins and family. He works down from the macro to the micro, and a major thread running through the description is that of control: apart from the ruling elite (*principes*) and the priest class (*druides* or druids), the rest of Gallic society is made up of the plebs (*plebes*), who are 'practically slaves' (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.13.1). Such a phrase would have been shocking to the Roman reader, for whom the difference between free and slave was the most significant social distinction, and one referred to in the oldest known Roman law code.<sup>9</sup>

The Gauls did have a slave class, although Caesar does not discuss them, but he does add that Gauls who are oppressed by debt might go into voluntary slavery. Debt slavery was not unknown in Rome's history, but had been outlawed in the fourth century BCE, so this custom

8. *The Gallic War*, 4.16–18. As Caesar brags here, it took only ten days in total to cut the trees, build the bridge and cross the river, an echo of the astoundingly fast bridge-building in Book 1.

9. Known as the 'Twelve Tables', which were written in 450 BCE.

was archaic to Roman ears and made Gallic society look primitive by comparison. It also cast the Gauls as defeatist: to give in to slavery and voluntarily lose the most important attribute of a freeborn citizen would have seemed unimaginable in Rome.

It is in Caesar's ethnographic section that we find the two most famous pieces of information that Caesar transmits about the Gauls: the description of human sacrifice and the brief account of the ever-elusive druids. Caesar claims that Gauls promise to sacrifice human victims in order either to save someone who is very unwell or to placate the gods during a battle. They also have the custom of filling a huge wicker figure with living victims and burning them alive.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Romans had tales of human sacrifice in their own past, notably by burying victims alive when it seemed that they might lose their city through warfare,<sup>11</sup> such a practice was seen at best as extreme, at worst as the behaviour of *barbari*. However, the picture painted by Caesar is not entirely one of savagery, for the druids, who are responsible for all types of sacrifice (which must include human sacrifice), are tremendously learned and spend up to twenty years training for their post. This involves learning their sacred texts by heart, as the Gauls believe it is sacrilege to write them down, although they are able to write in Greek letters (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.13–14). The druids are also priests, judges and teachers with enormous authority.

Despite the account of human sacrifice, Caesar does not consider the Gauls to be barbarians because they clearly have a sophisticated religious culture with complex rituals and doctrine. In fact, Caesar's information about Gallic religion is telling – the druidic institution connects the Gauls to the Britanni but separates them from the Germani. For the learning (*disciplina*) of the druids originated in Britannia and was later transferred to Gaul, and the Gallic people who want to learn the discipline well go to Britannia to learn from the source (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.13.11–12).

## The less civilised Germani

The Germani, on the other hand, had no druids and only the most primitive religion. Caesar deals with the Germani second in his formal ethnography, and more briefly, taking up only four chapters (21–24) compared to the Gauls' ten chapters (11–20). The comparative nature of the exercise is absolutely clear, as Caesar begins with a series of negatives: the Germani have *no* druids, *no* enthusiasm for sacrificial ritual and *no anthropomorphic gods*. They recognise only what they can see as divine – the Sun, the Moon, fire – and have not even heard of the other gods (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.21). Such comparison clearly links the Romans and Gauls (and presumably the Britanni too), for they *do* have gods in human form. The presence of a divine *pantheon* of this kind raises the Romans and Gauls above

10. **Cicero** also mentions the custom (**Cicero**, *Against Fonteius*, 14.31). See also **Tacitus**' *Germania* (39.1) for a similar practice attributed to Germani.

11. This is recorded after the huge defeat to Hannibal at Cannae in 216 BCE (the second war against Carthage) and had possibly been repeated as recently as 113 BCE (**Livy**, 22.55–57).

the Germani in Caesar's eyes: Romans and Gauls are clearly more civilised peoples than the Germani.

As if to compound this view, Caesar further comments that the Germani have very little agriculture and that their food consists mostly of milk and cheese. He is thereby claiming that they are pastoralists: they keep flocks but do not work the earth or make the long-term plans which are involved in waiting for the harvest and storing up grain for the winter.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps as a result of this, Caesar implies that the Germani do not have strong links with the land and have no private property; they appear to be semi-nomadic (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.22). Caesar's account does not entirely add up, for he tells us elsewhere that the Suebi, a dominant Germanic people, alternate between battle and agriculture (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 4.1.5–6).

However, this claim that the Germani do not own land was entirely antithetical to Roman thought, for all status and authority in Roman society was based on the ownership of property. This is perhaps why Caesar feels the need to explain why the Germani refuse private ownership. He gives four reasons, three of which deal with Roman concerns about property and morality, namely:

- that the attachment to the land might make the Germani replace their love of war with agriculture. This idea seemed rather strange as the ideal Roman was often seen rather nostalgically as a soldier–farmer; however, it does mark the Germani out as overly warlike
- that the Germani might start to want more property and drive the poor off their own land. This had actually happened in Italy, where the rich had amassed huge estates, leaving the landless poor to congregate in the cities
- that building with greater care would lead the Germani to avoid heat and cold, which at the moment they can bear easily. This refers to the Greco–Roman stereotype of northern barbarians as phenomenally tough, particularly in cold conditions as they live hardy, outdoor lives
- that greed for money would lead to cliques and conflict. This is arguably exactly what was happening back in Rome as Caesar wrote; perhaps more accurately the desire for political supremacy would lead to the civil war, which Caesar fought against **Pompey the Great** after he left Gaul.

## Four-way cultural critique

While the Germani are being positioned as both strange and savage, we should note that Caesar uses their strangeness to reflect on the problems which might afflict more developed societies. This habit of using ethnography as a way of critiquing one's own society became increasingly common in Roman literature, most notably in the work of Tacitus. Although Caesar is very far from representing the Germani as 'noble savages', he does use them to hint at the causes of Rome's own problems.

12. Note that the Britanni also lack agricultural knowledge in Caesar's account because they eat only meat and milk, and their clothes are made from animal skins (5.14.2). Despite their position as the font of druidic knowledge, they are therefore less civilised than the Gauls in this significant way.

So, rather than giving us a neutral ‘presentation of facts’ about other peoples, Caesar is performing a four-way ethnography. Although he concentrates on the Gauls and Germani, he positions them in a framework alongside the Britanni and the Romans: each is compared to the Gauls, and arguably all four are placed on a continuum of civilisation, from sophisticated Romans down to the distinctly unrefined Germani. The Gauls are the most similar to the Romans – and this is precisely what makes them so suitable for conquest.

### Gaul as a ‘developing nation’?

Caesar does not represent the Gauls as a static group in terms of culture and civilisation. In fact, he claims that they were once braver than the Germani and that they used to send colonies over the Rhine. But, in Caesar’s eyes, they are now a pale reflection of the warriors they once were because they have given way to luxury and easy living. This is largely because they have adopted a new lifestyle from the Romans in Provincia (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.24). The Gauls who did cross into Germania and set up home there, a group called the Volcae Tectosages, have managed to maintain the toughness which most Gauls have lost:

*The Volcae Tectosages hold the land and live there [over the Rhine] ... they are known for their very great justice and the most glory in war. These days they remain in the same poverty, need and adversity as the Germani, and they eat the same food and wear the same clothes as them.*

**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.24.3–4

Caesar implies that, since they adopt the hard Germanic lifestyle, their fame in warfare continues. However, they also retain more civilised Gallic traditions, such as ‘their very great justice’. In this way they seem to combine the best of both worlds.

### Evolving society versus environmental determinism

So, in Caesar’s eyes, an ethnic group can change and develop through proximity to another culture or through changed physical circumstances, in a particular location. This is quite different from the view expressed by many ancient writers for whom there was a much simpler model: that location and living conditions absolutely predetermined character.

The most extreme Roman expression of this comes down to us from Vitruvius, who claimed that warmer climates drained moisture from the skin, which not only determined the appearance of southern peoples but also gives them ‘thin blood’, which is directly linked to cowardice in battle. Northerners, according to Vitruvius, are unable to endure heat, but their ‘full blood’ means that they ‘resist the sword without fear’ (**Vitruvius**, *On Architecture*, 6.1.3–4). This is a clear expression of what was later termed ‘environmental determinism’, a nineteenth-century concept which was later discredited because of its potential links to ideas of racial superiority.

Caesar's reading of Gauls, Britanni and Germani does not entirely break from this concept, as all of these northerners have the potential to be intimidating warriors – a fact that Caesar is keen to promote in order to make his victories over them appear all the greater. However, there is the potential for change in Caesar's model of ethnicity, and perhaps there is an indication that the Gauls evolve throughout the seven-year period of Caesar's *Gallic War*.

Caesar does not often use the word *barbarus* to refer to Gauls in the work – much more commonly it indicates Germani or Britanni – but there are a scattering of references to Gallic *barbari* in Books 1–6. However, the word does not occur at all in Book 7 (written around 52 BCE), a book entirely taken up with the last great rebellion of a Gallic alliance under Vercingetorix. This is in some ways surprising, for it is in this book alone, at the siege of Alesia, that Caesar reports that a Gaul, Critognatus, contemplates an act of cannibalism in order to survive the siege (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.77–78). He never clarifies whether they do resort to this extremity, and it is possible that Caesar is actually attempting to show the low point to which Vercingetorix's rebellion has brought the Gauls and how much better it would have been for them to have simply accepted the inevitable and surrendered to Caesar from the outset.

## VERCINGETORIX

Vercingetorix is arguably the most significant Gallic leader Caesar faced during the war in Gaul. His uprising in 52 BCE was the last viable attempt by the Gauls to overthrow Roman power during Caesar's lifetime, and is presented by Caesar as a rare instance of Gallic unity. Most of what we know about Vercingetorix comes from Book 7 of *The Gallic War*.

Caesar tells us that Vercingetorix was an influential young man from Arvernia in Central Gaul, and the son of Celtillus, a powerful leader who had 'sought the kingship' of Gaul and had been executed for that very reason. Vercingetorix succeeded in binding many other Gauls into a pact against Rome, but Caesar stresses that he did this partly through extreme cruelty – mutilating, torturing and burning to death any waverers or traitors – and also by demanding that the Gauls call him 'king' (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.4).

Caesar thus depicts Vercingetorix as a tyrant, but also as a charismatic leader and a clever strategist, who temporarily undermines Caesar's campaign by effectively managing to block the Romans' food supply. But this success comes at great cost to Vercingetorix's own people, as it involves destroying the crops and cities of the Gauls. Vercingetorix is also depicted as inconsistent, a flaw which Romans regularly attribute to Gauls.

In the end, Vercingetorix is holed up in the town of Alesia waiting for Gallic reinforcements. When starvation finally drives him out to face Caesar, the result is 'enormous slaughter' of the Gallic side (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.88) forcing Vercingetorix to an ignominious surrender. Six years later he was marched in Caesar's triumphal parade and then executed in Rome.

## Mapping Gaul

Caesar famously begins his work by constructing and then immediately dividing Gaul. It is worth noting that he initially divides Gaul not by the land itself, but by the people who inhabit it. He then reinforces these divisions, by artfully repeating them, this time on the basis of geography, with rivers as boundaries:

*The River Garumna (Garonne) divides the Gauls from the Aquitani and the Matrona (Marne) and Sequana (Seine) divide them from the Belgae.*

Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1.2

Soon after, he reconstitutes Gaul with an account of its internal and external boundaries:

*The part which the Gauls occupy begins at the River Rhodanus (Rhône); it is enclosed by the River Garumna, by Ocean, by the borders of the Belgae; the part occupied by the Sequani and Helvetii also goes to the River Rhenus (Rhine); it faces north. The Belgae rise up from the furthest borders of Gallia and extend to the lower section of the River Rhenus; they face towards the north and east. Aquitania stretches from the River Garumna to the Pyrenees; it faces west and north.*

Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1.5–7

Because ancient texts were copied and recopied by hand, and the most recent manuscripts we have are from centuries later (in Caesar's case, the oldest manuscript dates to 1469), modern classical scholars often decide that manuscripts contain mistakes, or that scribes have inserted passages; perhaps, carried away by their own brilliance, they decide that they can improve on Caesar! So some editors of Caesar's text have removed this section from his first chapter; presumably they found it too repetitive, as it rewrites a lot of the information quoted above from *The Gallic War* (1.1.2). But we should think about what this remapping of Gaul adds to the text: the extract not only subdivides Gaul, but it also clarifies that Gaul has nothing to do with Gallia Cisalpina or with the Province, but is equal in size to the area north-west of this.<sup>13</sup>

The shock to the Roman reader might have been that Gaul ends at the Rhine. Caesar is the first person we know of to divide the Gauls off from the Germani – he may have invented Germania – he is certainly the one who made concrete the strong ethnic difference between the Gauls and the Germani. The conquerable area that Caesar is left with is 'Gallia' – this is the area he *did* conquer – between the already long-conquered Provincia and the previously uncharted Germania, an area which Caesar implies is not worth conquering.<sup>14</sup>

13. See Andrew Riggsby, *Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006): 30.

14. The coastal areas of Provincia had been colonised by Greeks in 600 BCE, so the area had a long connection with the Greco-Roman world.

The fact that Caesar starts out by drawing us a ‘textual map’ of the territory that became the new Roman Province also has implications for the debate on when Caesar wrote his text. Some scholars argue that *The Gallic War* was published sequentially – one book at the end of each year of combat – as a kind of annual report and reminder to the Roman people that he was still active on their behalf. This would have been important in his propaganda war with Pompey, his future opponent in the civil wars of 49–45 BCE. But the map of the Province in Book 1 might point to the whole work having been published together, as it marks out the boundaries of Caesar’s imperial conquest up-front.

## Crossing boundaries in Caesar’s *Gallic War*

Mapping is much more than the geographical background to the action in this work. It also *explains* the action. Caesar’s first intervention beyond his province is caused by the Helvetii (in eastern Gaul or modern Switzerland), who step outside their boundaries because they are restricted by their landscape:

*... on every side the Helvetii are constrained by the limits of their location: on one side the Rhine, which is extremely broad and deep, separates Helvetian from Germanic land; on the second side they are hemmed in by the Jura Mountains, which is between the Sequani and the Helvetii; and on the third, Lake Lemanus (Lake Geneva) and the River Rhodanus (the Rhône), which separates our province from the Helvetiis.*

Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.2.2–3

In Book 1, Caesar establishes the sphere of Roman control, which increases as the book goes on. The Helvetii might march through the Roman Province, so Caesar is compelled to restrain them before they have an opportunity to do so.

After defeating the Helvetii, and literally putting them back in their place (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.2–30), the next challenge comes from across the Rhine. Waves of Germani have crossed to the more fertile land of Gaul, led by their king, the tyrant Ariovistus, whom Caesar warns off. This leads to an angry exchange, in which, again, geography plays a part. Ariovistus maintains that he is in ‘his own Gaul’, while the Germani have not touched ‘the part which Caesar possesses’ – that is, the Province (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.34.3–4). Ariovistus limits Caesar to the Province, much as Caesar’s own official remit does; but Caesar tells Ariovistus that the Germani belong beyond the Rhine (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.35.3). By extension, he claims that *all* of Gaul is Caesar’s business now.

Pushing the Germani back across the Rhine, which takes the rest of Book 1, is a strong statement of Caesar's authority over the textual map he had crafted at the beginning of the book: this is now the space he occupies, the new limit of Roman power. Caesar's ability to cross both the Rhine and 'Ocean' at will marks him out as someone who can dominate geography: he is not constrained by the boundaries that he himself sets up.

## The Rhine: the Gaul–Germani border

Caesar establishes early on that the Rhine is *the* boundary marker between the Gauls and the Germani: in the very first paragraph, when he is laying out the territory occupied by each of the Gallic subgroups, the Germani are described as 'those who live on the other side of the Rhine'. The word here translated as 'on the other side of' is *trans*, the same word that is contained in Gallia *Transalpina* to indicate 'Gaul the other side of the Alps' (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1.4). So *trans* is a word common to boundary definition in Latin, although the Alps are a more imposing barrier than the Rhine is, and the Romans saw them as such: for example, *Cato the Elder* had called them 'the wall of Italy'.<sup>15</sup>

## The Germani threat

Caesar manages to bridge the Rhine twice, once in 55 BCE (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.16–18) and again in 53 BCE (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.9–10, 6.29), both times to deal with a perceived threat from the Germani. This text is punctuated by that threat – the Germani appear in Books 1, 4 and 6. In Book 1 (58 BCE), Caesar does not cross the river – instead the Germani under Ariovistus come into Gaul. In Books 4 and 6, Caesar himself makes the crossing. Thus, the level of Roman incursion into Germania is ramped up as the war (and the text) progresses, and each time we find out a little more about the Germani.

In Book 1, the Germani are more or less summed up in the person of their king, Ariovistus. Early in Book 4, we find a brief Suebian ethnography, which defines them as warmongering, semi-nomadic, tough and isolationist (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.1–3). In Book 6, Caesar gives us the full, formal ethnography (discussed in the previous chapter) right in the middle of the Rhine narrative. This last example is probably the least significant of Caesar's encounters with the Germani. The particular Germanic tribe, the Suebi, are not attacking Gaul on their own behalf. Instead they have sent over auxiliaries to help the *Treveri* against Caesar, who fears that the Treveri's leader will escape to Germania.

Caesar has a bridge built close to the location of the first (now destroyed) bridge, emphasising how easy it is to conquer the Rhine a second time (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.9.4). As a result, the Suebi withdraw to remote woodland at the furthest edge of their territory and wait for the Romans to arrive (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.10.5). Again, Roman engineering intimidates the enemy, but the Germani choose seclusion over diplomacy, which fits with the general picture Caesar creates of them.

15. Servius *On the Aeneid* 10.13 (he also claims that the historian Livy later used this phrase).

At this point, as if to build up tension, Caesar inserts his ethnography of the Gauls and Germani (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.11–28). Yet, when he returns to the narrative, it is over rather quickly because the Suebi have retreated to the forest. Because the all-important grain supply is low, Caesar decides not to pursue the Suebi but to return to the Gallic side of the river. He destroys two hundred feet of the bridge on the Gallic side, leaving the relic of the broken-off bridge as a reminder to the Germani that he might come back, in his own words, ‘so that the fear of his return would remain’ (**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.29).

This exercise is a good example of what crossing a major feature of the landscape like the Rhine really means. Caesar does not cross over to Germania to defeat the Germani on ‘home ground’. Rather, he simply proves that he *can* cross the Rhine, which should frighten off the Germani because it is a major feat of courage, ingenuity and technical success. Crossing the river defines the Romans as a people of superior intellect and fortitude, and Caesar leaves a reminder of this virtual conquest in the remnant of the Rhine bridge.

It is, however, arguable that Caesar is also *conquered* by the landscape of Germania in this episode, for the forest in which the Suebi hide also forms a type of boundary, one which potentially prevents the Romans’ progress. But Caesar cleverly obscures the fact that he himself might be hindered by the landscape; instead he states that it acts as a defensive barrier between the Suebi and a neighbouring tribe:

*... there is a forest there of enormous size, which is called ‘Bacenis’.<sup>16</sup> This stretches far into the land and stands in the way as a natural wall which keeps safe the Cherusci from the raids and attacks of the Suebi and the Suebi from the Cherusci.*

**Caesar**, *The Gallic War*, 6.10.5

The ethnography of the Gauls and Germani conveniently follows this, so that when Caesar resumes his narrative and relates the withdrawal of Roman troops, the forest itself is not mentioned as the insurmountable barrier which it probably formed.

Although not all Gauls and Germani strictly observe the Rhine as their ethnic boundary, those who do not are very much painted as the exceptions. However, the presence of Germani in Gaul, and of Gauls in Germania, shows that Caesar’s boundaries are porous – in fact, the Germani cross the river quite frequently. Some Germani have come over to live in Gaul, attracted by the richer lifestyle there:

*The Germani were summoned by the Arverni and the Sequani (two Gallic peoples) for a price. At first around 15,000 of them crossed the Rhine; then, when those wild and savage men had become enamoured of the farmland, the civilisation and the*

16. Bacenis is probably the western section of the Thuringian Forest, in central Germany, which is mountainous and known to be difficult to access.

*wealth of the Gauls, more were brought over, and at present time there are about 120,000 of them in Gaul.*

Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.31

The Germani do not lose their ferocity once in Gaul, and their usurpation of Gallic land causes havoc, making Caesar's presence in Gaul necessary (or so he claims!). The easy life does not tame the Germani – another interesting case study in what makes ethnic characteristics. In this particular case, landscape does not alter ethnic make-up and the Germani are still 'wild and savage'. One striking feature of this passage is that it is voiced by Diviciacus the Aeduan. Thus, the words 'wild and savage' are actually put into the mouth of a Gallic chief, though ironically he is himself a barbarian in Roman eyes. Caesar's ventriloquism could be interpreted as providing a spectrum of barbarianism, with the Gauls above the Germani; or it could be seen as a projection of Roman value systems onto other peoples. The latter interpretation would deconstruct the notion of the barbarian – it is all a matter of perspective – the word disappearing in a series of reflections.

## Ocean: crossing to Britannia

Just as Caesar crosses the Rhine into Germania twice, he also crosses the English Channel to the island of Britannia on two occasions, in 55 and 54 BCE (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.20–36 and 5.8–23). The passages narrating these crossings are much longer than those that tell of crossing the Rhine, reflecting the relative distance and magnitude of the respective journeys. For the Romans, the English Channel was part of 'Ocean' (*Oceanus*), which encircled the earth and represented the furthest extent of exploration and conquest.



Oceanus as depicted on the Trevi Fountain

TREVI FOUNTAIN JUSTIN ENNIS FROM FLICKR USED UNDER CC BY 2.0

The island of Britannia (modern Great Britain) was therefore over Ocean and understood to be the furthest known land. Caesar's contemporary, the poet Catullus, called it *ultima Britannia* – 'Britannia right at the furthest edge' (Catullus, *Poems*, 29.4). This poem lacerates one of Caesar's officers, the chief engineer Mamurra, who may have designed the bridges across the Rhine. Catullus accuses Mamurra of extorting vast amounts of money from Gaul and Britannia (Catullus, *Poems*, 29.2–3) as well as of perverse sexual practices (elsewhere the poet gives him the nickname *Mentula*, slang for penis; Catullus, *Poems*, 94).

In fact, the accusation of corruption in Britannia is clearly exaggeration: Mamurra had scant opportunity for this, as both of Caesar's incursions into Britannia were short-lived and did not expand Rome's empire over Ocean. The first trip, in particular, was beset with difficulties as it was begun late in the summer. It included a disastrous crossing, in which several ships were

destroyed (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.29), and a failed attempt to land near Dover, where the Britanni drove off the Roman invaders by throwing missiles from the white cliffs (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.24).

### Symbolic conquest

Nevertheless, Caesar presents his expedition to Britannia as a success, and writes that the Roman Senate recognised his achievement with a *supplicatio* of twenty days (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38). Such acclamation only makes sense in context – it is not Caesar's success as a military leader or empire builder that is being commemorated here (as they were after other military campaigns), but the symbolic conquest of a near mythical natural barrier: Ocean.

While Caesar does not conquer territory on either trip to Britannia, he does acquire information about the Britanni and about Britannia (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.33 and especially 5.12–14). He claims this information is difficult to obtain as the few Gauls who make the crossing are traders who know nothing of the interior (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.20). Thus, Caesar depicts Britannia as a mysterious land that is opened up by his investigation.

The problems with the crossing, rather than representing failure, might have impressed Caesar's audience back in Rome because the danger involved highlighted the great fortitude and determination Caesar and his troops exhibited in undertaking such a daring mission. Activity in Britannia continued to mark out generals and emperors throughout the imperial period. The emperor Caligula is said to have planned a campaign to Britannia, although the

shambles which resulted indicates to Roman historians the emperor's lack of discipline, and possibly sanity (**Suetonius**, *Caligula*, 46). The conquest of southern Britannia and the creation of a province in 43 CE (Common Era) was considered the main imperial achievement of the much-maligned reign of the emperor Claudius – one he commemorated by calling his son Britannicus (**Suetonius**, *Claudius*, 17, 27).

The historian Tacitus casts his father-in-law, Agricola, as a rare hero in an age of cowardice when he confirms that Britannia is an island by sending out a ship to circumnavigate it in 83 CE (**Tacitus**, *Agricola* 38). But Caesar holds the claim of being the first Roman to cross into Britannia, and it is a victory over nature, rather than an enemy, which he claims.

In Roman terms, he has transcended the final, geographical frontier.

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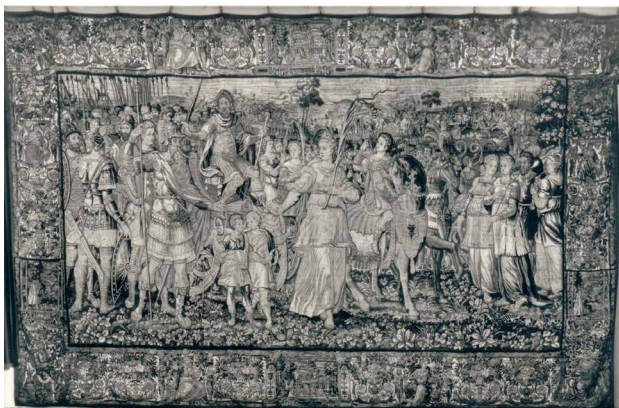
## PART 2:

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# Caesar's triumphs at Rome

By 50 BCE the Gallic War was over, but when Caesar returned to Rome he embarked upon an entirely different type of campaign – for wealth, power and fame – and it was the triumphal procession that allowed him to claim victory as the most powerful man Rome had ever known.

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Flemish Tapestry Triumph of the Roman Emperor c. 1600

'TRIUMPH OF THE ROMAN EMPEROR' FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

# Triumphal processions



Listen to the podcast:

Caesar's triumph

Read: Podcast transcription page 75

In 46 BCE, Julius Caesar staged four triumphal processions over Gaul, Egypt, Asia Minor and Africa in a single month, followed a few months later by a fifth triumph over Spain. Like all Roman triumphs, Caesar's were a visual manifestation of victory and demonstrated the process of imperialism while celebrating the virtues of the **triumphator**. Caesar is one of only three men ever to have held a triumph that lasted more than one day, and he was the first man in Rome's history to hold four consecutive triumphal processions.

*When the campaigns were finished, Caesar celebrated five triumphs, four times in the same month with a few days' interval between them ... [t]hese triumphs were the Gallic – the first and most magnificent – the Alexandrian, the Pontic, the African, and lastly the Spanish.*

Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 37.1.

Caesar had spent more time in Gaul than the other regions, and it was in Gaul that he had had the most time to collect spoils. Therefore, the most spectacular of the four processions was that held to celebrate Caesar's Gallic conquests.

## HOW TO WIN A TRIUMPH

The triumph was a ritual ceremonial procession awarded to Roman military commanders by the Senate. Spoils of war, including arms, money, precious metals and jewels, statuary and paintings, trees and people (including kings and queens), were brought to Rome for the procession, which traditionally lasted one day. During the Roman republic, military achievement was the key to political success, and the triumph allowed this achievement to be acted out for the viewing pleasure of the Roman people.

The **triumphator** represented Roman imperial success and showcased the glory of Rome. However, the procession also promoted the **triumphator's** personal **virtus** and **felicitas**. This meant that the triumph represented an opportunity to promote the virtues of the state at the same time as promoting the virtues of an individual. The triumphal honour did not bestow any tangible power on the **triumphator**, rather it afforded him an opportunity to be visually associated with tremendous levels of **gloria** and **felicitas**.

Triumphal spoils were primarily payment to the greatest and most powerful Roman god Jupiter Optimus Maximus, in gratitude for his fulfilment of the vows made by the commander before embarking on a war to protect Rome. The display of wealth also demonstrated the

lucrative nature of war and acted as an assurance to the people of Rome that the war had been undertaken for the benefit of the commonwealth (Livy, 45.39). Great wealth also demonstrated that, although the defeated enemy was mighty and had great assets and cultural prestige, Rome was the more formidable opponent.

It was the Senate's responsibility to balance the needs of the state and the expansion of empire with the ambition of individual commanders keen to make a name for themselves. In republican Rome, the triumphal procession was the most spectacular acceptable arena for an individual to promote his achievements. As time progressed, this resulted in an increasing desire among Roman elite men to celebrate their own military triumph.

**Triumphatores** represented superhuman power – when wearing the triumphal robes the **triumphator** was both **deus** and **rex**, or divine and royal. The relationship between the **triumphator** and Jupiter Optimus Maximus was the product of iconographic similarities between mortal and god and implied underlying divinity. The notion that the **triumphator** represented **rex** was unpopular during the republican period, because the **res publica** was founded when the tyrannical Etruscan kings were overthrown in 510–509 BCE to make way for the Roman republic. Thus, monarchies were seen with disdain throughout the republican period.

To be awarded a triumph, a Roman military commander on campaign had to:

- hold a magistracy and be in possession of **imperium** (that meant he was either dictator, **consul**, proconsul, **praetor** or **pro-praetor**)
- defeat a foreign enemy of equal status by killing at least 5,000 enemy troops (slave revolts were not considered a suitable foreign enemy)
- be declared imperator by his soldiers
- safely return his army to Rome (this meant that the war had to be completely finished)
- gain senatorial approval based on the above criteria.

Because of the difficulties of achieving these criteria, and then proving that all had been met, the award of a triumph was an extremely rare and prestigious honour during the republican period. Only a small proportion of the elite could attain the higher levels of magistracy, and election as **consul** usually happened only once. Thus, to be a **triumphator**, one had to survive ten years of military service; be wealthy enough to be enrolled in the Senate (Polybius, 6.19.5); be elected to every office on the **cursus honorum Romanorum**<sup>17</sup> to the magistracy of **praetor**; then, be sent to a province with the potential for a convincingly successful war, fight that war successfully delivering the stipulated results, and, finally, after the commander had achieved so much, be granted a triumphal procession by the Senate who may not want to award such an honour to a competitor. These requirements kept the circle of potential **triumphatores** exceptionally small.

Rome was always home to ambitious men, but the **cursus honorum** obliged them to work within the political system to realise their goals – absolute power was difficult to achieve. As

17. The **cursus honorum** was fixed by the *Lex Villia annalis* in 180 BCE, which made it impossible to celebrate a triumph until one was at least 37 years of age. It was essential for a **triumphator** to possess **imperium**, so only consuls and **praetors** could celebrate a triumph. The instance of **praetors** celebrating triumphs was rare in the early republic, but the numbers greatly increased as time progressed.

the Senate had the final say over whether the criteria were met, personal rivalries between politicians could affect a general's petition to the Senate for triumph.

The *res publica* was founded on the premise that no man should stand alone in a powerful position and that any power should be relinquished after a specified period. Yet, republican Rome had no official constitution. Instead, the system was based on traditions and precedents which fundamentally allowed magistrates to act as they believed their power entitled them to act. Thus, although triumphal guidelines existed, there were no immutable rules safe from re-interpretation and adaptation in new circumstances. Each *triumphator* attempted to outdo the last and often used their predecessors as justification for their own extravagance.

After the Punic Wars (264–146 BCE), external political alliances of Roman elite men began to exercise power over the Senate, which was beginning to lose its authority under this pressure. Over time, powerful individuals took the place of the groups, and power began to shift from old *patricians* to new *gentes*. This resulted in triumphs being granted through popular favour despite senatorial opposition. By Caesar's time, the triumphal procession had become a runaway train, or at least one increasing exponentially in speed, steered by ambitious and competitive *triumphatores*.

## THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

Every triumphal procession was arranged in a similar order to uphold the long tradition of the ritual. The procession was led by the senators and Roman magistrates. Musicians followed ahead of the triumphal spoils and the animals for sacrifice upon the altar of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Prisoners of war were paraded in front of the *triumphator's* bodyguards and the triumphant army. A captured commander or any royalty of the defeated people featured just before the triumphant general himself, who rode on a *quadriga* pulled by four horses.

Triumphal processions had to follow a prescribed route through the city. However, slight deviations from this path were possible and each procession visited different monuments as it meandered through the city. It was important that individual *triumphatores* visited particular altars and temples associated with their families as they headed toward the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

The triumph had originally been a procession of broken weapons to demonstrate the defeat of Rome's enemy. Before Marcus Curius Dentatus' triumph over Pyrrhus and the Tarentines in 275 BCE, triumphs were less spectacular: '[u]p to that time the only spoils which you could have seen were the cattle of the Volcinians, the flocks of the Sabines, the wagons of the Gauls, the broken arms of the Samnites.' After the victory over Pyrrhus, triumphal processions are said to have contained 'Molossians, Thessalonians, Macedonians, Bruttians, Apulians and Lucanians ... statues of gold and charming Tarentine painted panels' (*Florus*, 1.13.26–27).

The honour was rare and the sight of the parade was a spectacular treat for the people of Rome, who were given the day off work to celebrate the glory of the growing empire. Triumphal processions were expressions of Roman military prowess and glory, and the more glorious

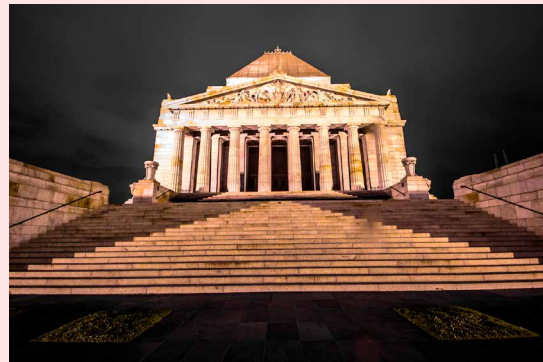
the spoils the more powerful and glorious Rome appeared to be. This projection of power and glory was extended to the **triumphator**.

The triumph occupied a position between traditional practice and ostentatious spectacle, and provided imperial justification for ambitious, and sometimes questionable, wars. Because triumphs were the celebration of victorious war, and there were no ritual processions for failed campaigns, a skewed view of war was created for the people of Rome – heightening their awareness of Rome's strengths and glossing over its weaknesses.

This is a very different practice to commemorative military practice in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which commonly memorialises unsuccessful military campaigns. The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington DC honours those who served in the Vietnam War. This war was highly controversial and could never be considered successful; yet it is still commemorated. In Australia, the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign of the First World War has been mythologised and turned into a story of national origin. The soldiers who died in this war have had shrines raised to them, not for their victories but for the sacrifice of their lives. Both these examples highlight the modern tendency to demonise war and commemorate national loss, which is in stark contrast to the Roman practice of focusing on the glorification of war and the quantification of imperial gains.



THE VIETNAM WOMEN'S MEMORIAL. THE FIRST MEMORIAL PLACED IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL HONORING WOMEN'S MILITARY SERVICE IS ON THE GROUNDS OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C. FROM LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS & PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL M. HIGSMITH USED UNDER CCO



'SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE, MELBOURNE, VIC' BY TIERS OF BRAD FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY-SA 2.0

## The riches of conquest

With conquest came riches. Caesar's first four triumphs were said to have displayed wealth amounting to 600 million **sesterces** (Velleius Paterculus, 2.56.2). Appian wrote about the riches Caesar paraded through the streets of Rome and the money that was distributed to his soldiers and Roman citizens to gain their favour:

*[M]oney to the amount of 60,500 silver **talents** was carried in the procession and 2822 crowns of gold weighing 20,414 pounds Caesar divided up this wealth immediately after the triumph, paying the army all that he had promised and more. Each soldier received 5000 Attic **drachmae**, each centurion double, and each tribune of*

*infantry and prefect of cavalry fourfold that sum. To each plebeian citizen also was given an Attic **mina**.*

Appian, *Civil Wars*, 102.1

The amounts distributed were significant. At the time, one **mina** was equivalent to 100 **drachmae** and one **drachma** can be thought of as very roughly equivalent to a daily wage for a skilled worker. Even though we can never know the exact worth of the money Caesar gave away, it is fair to say that he was very generous in his distribution of wealth. Hundreds of people gathered in Rome to witness Caesar's triumph and catch a glimpse of the conquered riches, captives and kings it displayed:

*... [s]uch huge numbers of visitors flocked to these shows from all directions that many of them had to sleep in tents pitched along the streets or roads, or on roof tops; and often the pressure of the crowd crushed people to death.*

Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 39.4

## Triumphal logistics

Triumphs were massive logistical undertakings. In addition to people, spoils such as animals, weapons, precious metals and gems, paintings, sculptures and even architectural features such as temple columns, had to be transported over continents at the expense of the **triumphator**. There was no guarantee of a triumph when the entourage arrived in Rome, and entire armies with their spoils and captives encamped outside Rome's city walls for months or even years while they waited for their petition to triumph to be granted.<sup>18</sup> Gaius Pomptinus waited outside Rome for at least four years to receive his triumph for ending the revolt of the Allobroges in Gaul in 62–61 BCE, which he eventually celebrated in 54 BCE.<sup>19</sup> The triumphal procession generally only lasted one day so the effort exerted in the quest for a procession gives us a good indication of the importance the Romans placed on the ceremony.



Parthian prisoner in chains, c. 200 CE, Arch of Septimius Severus, Rome.

'PARTHIAN IN CHAINS' FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

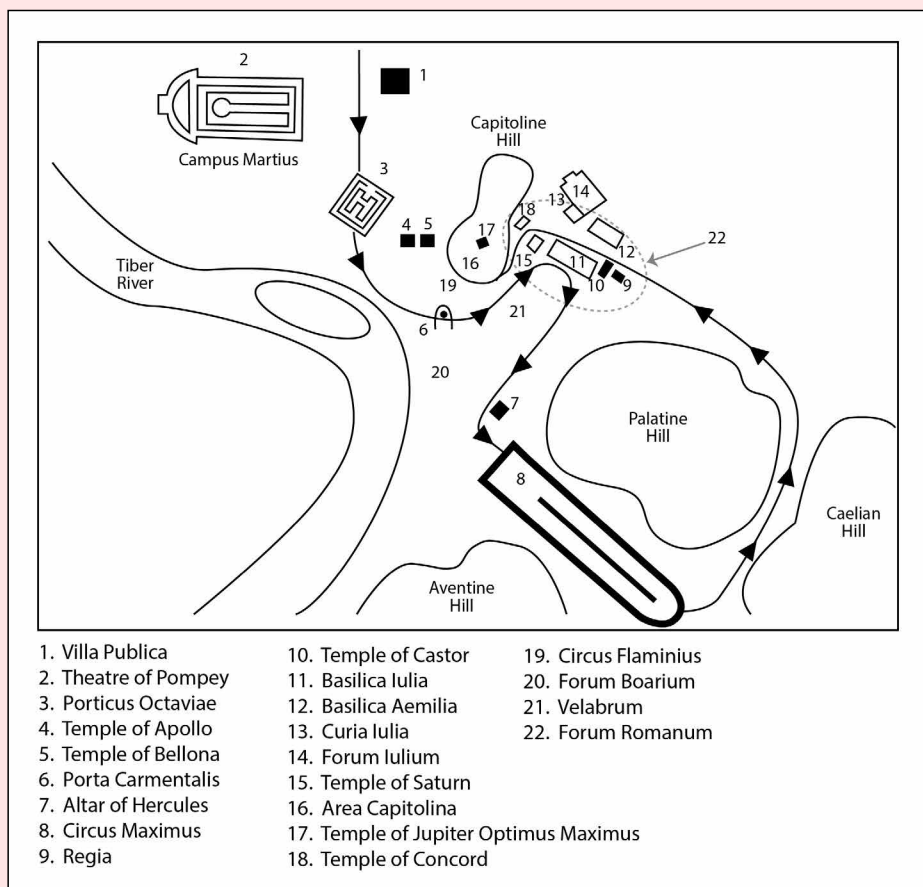
18. Cassius Dio, 39.65.1; 55.8.1; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 13.1; *Lucullus*, 37.2–3

19. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 4.18.4; Cassius Dio, 39.47–8; 39.65.2

## THE TRIUMPHAL ROUTE

Before a triumphal procession was granted, the general and his armies would camp outside the city walls, usually on the **Campus Martius**. After the triumph was granted and a few days before the procession, the spoils that would feature in the procession were displayed on the **Circus Flaminius** outside the city walls.<sup>20</sup> On the day of the triumph, the procession started at the **Villa Publica** on the **Campus Martius** and passed through **Circus Flaminius** on the way to the city. It crossed the **pomerium** into the **Forum Holitorium**, probably either through the **Porta Carmentalis** or the fabled **Porta Triumphalis**.

The literary and archaeological evidence is not sufficient to confidently establish where the triumphal procession actually crossed the **pomerium**. During the Roman republic, the walls of Rome followed the ancient **pomerium**, which traversed the valleys between Rome's hills. The **Porta Triumphalis** is referred to four times in antiquity, but, rather than being a dedicated gate for triumphal processions, it is more likely to be an alternative name given to an existing gate.<sup>21</sup> The gate was probably the **Porta Carmentalis**, which had two openings. One of the openings could have been the **Porta Triumphalis**, which remained blocked off unless a triumph was being celebrated, or both openings could simply have taken their ceremonial name for the duration of the ceremony.



\*THE TRIUMPHAL ROUTE\* BY SARAH MIDFORD AND JOHN HOWELL USED WITH PERMISSION.

20. See **Valerius Maximus**, 1.7.4; **Plutarch**, *Lucullus*, 37.2.

21. See **Cicero**, *Against Piso*, 23.55; **Cassius Dio**, 56.42.1; **Suetonius**, *Augustus*, 100.2; **Tacitus**, *Annals*, 1.8.

The route did not cross straight to the *Forum Boarium* but followed an ancient path, along the *Vicus Iugarius* to the statue of *Vortumnus* in the *Forum Romanum*. This allowed the procession to avoid the *Velabrum*, which was once a swamp and was always liable to flooding. From there it turned to the *Vicus Tuscus*, passing the *Ara Maxima Herculis* and the temple of Hercules Victor on its way to the *Forum Boarium*. The procession probably entered the *Circus Maximus* through its central arch and ran the length of the stadium, perhaps circling the *spina* before exiting. It then followed the valley between the Palatine Hill and the Caelian Hill, around the Palatine – this was part of Rome's first boundary, ploughed by the city's mythical founder Romulus (Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.819, 825–26; Plutarch, *Romulus*, 11.2–3). The procession then followed the *Sacra Via* through the *Forum Romanum*, pausing at the *carcer* to off-load prisoners for execution, and then climbed the *Clivus Capitolinus* on its way to its final destination, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in the *Area Capitolina*.

## Celebrating victory over people and their gods

The triumphal procession allowed Rome to present itself as the natural leader of the world. It was common to display captured prisoners of war in the triumph.<sup>22</sup> This procession of people displayed the misfortune of the defeated to those in the audience who, by comparison, were extremely fortunate. The parade was designed to generate collective pride in Rome's *felicitas* and *gloria*. The parade of newly acquired slaves and prisoners of war heading to the *carcer* for execution presented an 'other' to the spectators in the crowd. It did not matter how lowly the status of an audience member, the captives in the procession were in a worse position, which created a collective feeling of Roman superiority among the audience.

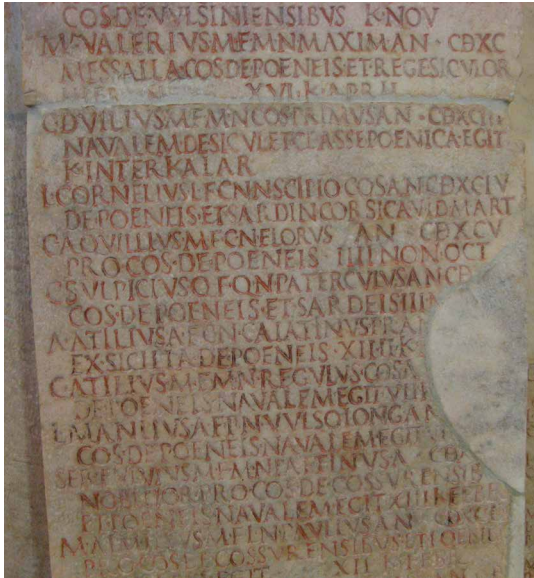
## The conquest of kings

Few triumphs were celebrated over kings because most defeats were over tribes or small regions or territories. The presence of a king was evidence of victory over a large and sophisticated civilisation with a structured government; their defeat heightened a particularly great achievement. The Roman republic was built on the notion that monarchies were inherently corrupt and that kings were enemies ideologically opposed to the republican way of life. Royalty could, therefore, symbolise Roman cultural triumph over the corruption of monarchy as well as their imperialistic triumph over a particular land and its people.

Triumphs celebrated over kings, and triumphs which featured the king in the procession, were therefore the most prestigious and acclaimed because they had the most impact on Roman spectators. The enemy commander was the last of all the spoils in the triumphal procession and featured immediately before the *triumphator* himself as the peak of the day's excitement. In the absence of an enemy commander, images of him fleeing or in his final fatal moments were displayed. In ancient Rome, it was considered honourable to face one's death with dignity. The sight of a fleeing commander conveyed a sense of great cowardice to a

22. See, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 6.17.2; Diodorus Siculus, 31.8.10–12; Livy, 26.21.7–10; 34.52.4–12; 36.40.11–14; 45.43.4–7.

Roman audience and further elevated the virtues of the *triumphator*, who was anything but a coward in comparison. In Caesar's quadruple triumph, the audience 'applauded the death of *Achillas* and *Pothinus* and laughed at the flight of *Pharnaces*' escaping Caesar's assault on his forces near Zela in modern Turkey (Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101).



Fragment XX, Fasti triumphales, Capitoline Museum, Rome.

'FASTI TRIUMPHALES' BY ROSSIGNOL BENOIT FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY-SA 3.0

The procession of defeated kings reinforced the message of Roman dominance and clearly illustrated Rome's military might. The practice of destroying reputations was spectacularly asserted by the reduction of kings to the status of slaves at the hand of Rome. Kings were an effective visual demonstration of ultimate defeat. *Gloria* was obtained by defeating an enemy: the greater the enemy, the more *gloria* a general attained. The Romans held *triumphatores* who had defeated a monarch in high regard. The names of conquered royalty were so important that they were included in the *Fasti Triumphales*. Alongside Julius Caesar's name on the triumphal list were the names of the three monarchs he defeated: 'C. Julius Caesar def. *Arsinoe*, *Juba* and Vercingetorix'.

## VERCINGETORIX – THE FINEST OF SPOILS



Vercingetorix jette ses armes aux pieds de Jules César (Vercingetorix throws down his arms at the feet of Julius Caesar) by French artist Lionel Royer (1899). Held by Musée Crozatier du Puy-en-Velay.

'SIEGE ALESIA VERCINGETORIX JULES CESAR' FROM LE PUY-EN-VELAY, CROZATIER MUSEUM, USED WITH PERMISSION FROM MUSEE CROZATIER

In his quadruple triumph of 46 BCE, Caesar paraded Vercingetorix, the finest of all his spoils, through the streets of Rome in a cage. Vercingetorix was Caesar's fiercest adversary during the Gallic War, the leader of the *Arverni* tribe and the man who united the Gauls to rebel against the Roman Empire. Vercingetorix's forces were overwhelmed at the Battle of Alesia in 52 BCE, and he surrendered to Caesar in the hope of mercy.

Instead, Caesar condemned Vercingetorix to death. Rather than a hasty execution, Vercingetorix endured a long period of imprisonment because Caesar wanted to display his supreme captive in a triumphal procession and show the man he defeated to the whole of Rome.<sup>23</sup> So resolute was Caesar that he imprisoned Vercingetorix for six years simply so that he could ritually execute his captive in front of the people of Rome, and demonstrate his martial superiority to a massive audience. Cassius Dio writes about Caesar's merciless treatment of the mighty Vercingetorix:

*Now Vercingetorix might have escaped, for he had not been captured and was unwounded; but he hoped, since he had once been on friendly terms with Caesar, that he might obtain pardon from him. So he came to him without any announcement by herald, but appeared before him suddenly, as Caesar was seated on the tribunal, and threw some who were present into alarm; for he was very tall to begin with, and in his armour he made an extremely imposing figure. When quiet had been restored, he uttered not a word, but fell upon his knees, with hands clasped in an attitude of supplication. This inspired many with pity at remembrance of his former fortune and at the distressing state in which he now appeared. But Caesar reproached him in this*



(Left) Aimé Millet (1865) 'Vercingetorix', Alesia, France. (Right) Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1903) 'Vercingetorix', Clermont-Ferrand, France

\*THE COLOSSAL STATUE OF VERGINGETORIX, ALESIA\* BY CAROLE RADDATO FROM FLICKR USED UNDER CC BY-SA 2.0  
\*STATUE VERGINGETORIX CLERMONT-FERRAND\* BY MARIE-LAN NGUYEN FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY 2.5

23. Cassius Dio, 43.19.4; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 27.5

*very matter on which he most relied for his safety, and by setting over against his claim of former friendship his recent opposition, showed his offence to have been the more grievous. Therefore he did not pity him even at the time, but immediately confined him in bonds, and later, after sending him to his triumph, put him to death.*

Cassius Dio, 40.41.1–3

## Captive people

The procession of captives was an easily understood image of imperialism that displayed the ownership of new peoples and territories to the people of Rome. Captives were commonly led in chains. The spectators probably hurled insults, and perhaps even objects such as rotten food, at the passing captives, many of whom were walking towards their execution in the **carcer**. In some cases, more creative **triumphatores** dressed captives up as statues or sculptures and included them on floats with captured plunder such as weapons. Even dramatic re-enactments of battles might have been performed for the viewing pleasure of the Roman audience and further humiliation of the captives. The number of captives in the triumphal parade was a good indication of the magnitude of the victory.

Although we do not have the exact number of captives displayed in Caesar's triumph, ancient authors report that huge numbers of captives were brought to Rome as spoils for display in other triumphal processions: there were 4,000 captives in the triumph of Marcus Valerius Corvus in 346 BCE (**Livy**, 7.27.8–9), and Lucius Aemilius slayed 40,000 Gauls and took 10,000 prisoners in 225 BCE (**Polybius**, 2.31.1–4). **Triumphatores** could make up for a lack of riches to display in their triumphal procession with human spoils. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus reportedly captured 80,000 people when he conquered Sardinia in 177 BCE:

*Under the auspices and command of the **consul** Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, the legions of the army of Rome have subjugated Sardinia. In that province there have been 80,000 natives either killed or made prisoners.*

Livy, 41.28.8

These numbers are logistically improbable. In reality, before being paraded in triumph, the captives needed to travel from the defeated region to Rome and then take up residence on the **Campus Martius** with the Roman army until the Senate granted the returning general the right to triumph. Each captive needed to be fed, sheltered and guarded for months and sometimes even years at the expense of the **triumphator**. People were an expensive and burdensome spoil, but one that was obviously worth all the effort and expense.

## CONQUEST OVER FOREIGNERS

Captives illustrated Rome's imperial might but also highlighted the differences in appearance and costume between foreigners in the procession and Romans in the audience. For the processions of captives to be favourably received, those paraded needed to appear suitably foreign. To illustrate this, ancient authors commonly emphasise costume. In 62 BCE, *Pompey the Great* celebrated a triumph for his conquests in the east. Appian notes the many nations represented in this triumph and also the variety of national costumes:

*It occupied two successive days, and many nations were represented in the procession from Pontus, Armenia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, all the peoples of Syria, besides Albanians, Heniochi, Achæans, Scythians, and Eastern Iberians ... The number of wagons carrying arms was infinite, and the number of the beaks of ships. After these came the multitude of captives and pirates, none of them bound, but all arrayed in their native costumes.*

Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, 17.116<sup>24</sup>

Romans were interested in differences between themselves and the people in the procession, with spoils often focusing on clothing, arms and cityscapes. The emphasis on the apparent differences of the enemy was commonly mentioned when describing the beginning of triumphal processions, because by identifying the procession as non-Roman it was possible for those watching to imagine themselves as united.

Clothing embodied national honour and symbolised identity, so parading foreigners in their national costumes made the most of the costumes' symbolic foreignness. It is interesting to note that, when compared with actual Greek and 'barbarian' art, the armour depicted on those peoples in Roman painting is often quite different. In fact, the armour of the foreign peoples was often more similar to Roman armour than they were apparently willing to admit.

In Roman painting, and potentially in triumphal painting, difference was more important than truth. Because of this, a triumph over Roman citizens was considered especially heinous. Caesar committed this faux pas when he celebrated his quadruple triumph in 46 BCE and displayed images of defeated Roman citizens. These paintings prompted groans rather than cheers from the audience because the triumph was supposed to be, first and foremost, a ceremony designed to celebrate foreign conquest:

*The triumph which he held ... displeased the Romans more than anything else had done. For this was not a case of his having conquered foreign generals or kings of native tribes; on this occasion what he had done was to annihilate the children and the family of one who had been the greatest of the Romans, and who had met with*

24. See also *Florus*, *Epitome*, 1.37.5–6; *Plutarch*, *Paulus*, 34.1–4.

*misfortune. It did not seem right for Caesar to celebrate a triumph for the calamities of his country and to pride himself upon actions.*

Plutarch, *Caesar*, 56.4

Caesar did not like the audience's negative reaction. When it came to sending the reports of his conquests to the Senate, he did not include any details about the 1,192,000 people he killed during the civil wars because he knew mass slaughter of Romans was not popular or encouraged (Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.25.92).

### Captured gods

As well as taking people captive, conquering generals often captured the local gods of the people they defeated. In Rome, statues of gods, or *signa*, were thought to be embodiments of the god they depicted, so the parade of a statue of a divinity was understood as the conquest of a foreign god. Livy records the sacking of the Ambraciotes from Greece in 188 BCE:

*... the temples throughout the city had been despoiled of their ornaments; the images of the gods, nay the gods themselves, had been wrenched from their abodes and carried off; bare walls and door-posts were left for the Ambraciotes to worship, to pray to, to supplicate.*

Livy, 38.43.5–6

When Marcus Claudius Marcellus was awarded a triumph for conquering Syracuse in 211 BCE, he displayed 'not only men, but even gods [which] were led about in his triumphal processions like captives' (Plutarch, *Marcellus*, 21.4). Capturing the gods of a city and bringing them to Rome for display in triumphal processions was the ultimate expression of Rome's military might – if subjugating people and presenting them to the audience was a popular display of power, then doing the same to gods could only magnify that projection of power. It is therefore likely that Caesar marched images of the Gauls' gods, which he mentions in the ethnographic section of *The Gallic War* (Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.17), as part of the spectacle of his triumph in 46 BCE.

## Mapping Caesar's conquests

Julius Caesar's famous words *veni vidi vici* – 'I came, I saw, I conquered' – were first displayed on a triumphal inscription to emphasise the clarity of his military objectives and his aptitude for quick and effective conquest. Inscriptions informed those who could read, and paintings and other visual representations were commissioned to demonstrate important events and victories to those who could not read. Caesar's triumph over Gaul was an opportunity to

present his version of the Gauls and their defeat to the Roman people, but it was also a chance to publicly define the boundaries of his conquest. Caesar's procession acted as a newsreel for the spectators who watched the fantastic narrative of imperial expansion as it paraded the newly conquered peoples, territories, riches and exotic spoils before their eyes.

**Ovid** gives us an image of what watching a triumphal procession may have been like:

*... all the people will ... view the triumph, reading the names of captured towns  
and the titles of leaders, beholding the kings with chains upon their captive throats  
marching before the garlanded horses, seeing some countenances turned to earth as  
becomes captives, others grim and forgetful of their lot.*

**Ovid**, *Tristia*, 4.2.19–24

## Representations and personifications

Triumphal processions presented geographical and ethnographical information to spectators so they could gain a better understanding of where the most recent addition to the Roman Empire was located and who lived there. This presentation was a kind of 'mapping'.

Rather than presenting actual maps, in the way that they are understood today, triumphal processions featured paintings, sculptural personifications and three-dimensional models of geographical features representative of the newly conquered territory. Triumphal representations were clear, figurative images designed to be easily recognised. This allowed messages to be delivered to, and understood by, the audience, all in the time it took for them to pass by. The models, paintings and allegorical statues mapped the newest addition to the Roman Empire and served to educate the people of Rome about the defeated territory.

### Models

Triumphal models were made from a variety of materials, including wood, ivory and silver. The more expensive the material, the more wealth the **triumphator** displayed and the more glorious the triumph would have appeared. The first-century CE rhetorician Quintilian compared the materials used in Caesar's triumph with those used in Quintus Fabius Maximus' triumph only a few days later:

*... ivory models of captured towns were carried in Caesar's triumphal procession, and  
a few days later wooden models of the same kind were carried at the triumph of Fabius  
Maximus, Chrysippus remarked that the latter were cases for Caesar's ivory towns.*

**Quintilian**, *Institutio Oratoria*, 6.3.61

**Quintilian** seems to use the comparison to mock Fabius Maximus' triumphal models, which were made of considerably less opulent materials than Caesar's. However, Quintilian is actually

criticising Caesar's indulgent use of rare and expensive materials: although the masses would remember the display for its expense, the Roman elite considered it vulgar extravagance.

Using local resources and materials in the construction of models and other triumphal representations was another way that *triumphatores* could display regional information and 'map' subjugated regions in their triumphal processions. The display of new resources was perhaps also a way to wow the spectators, who may never have seen these materials before. If the resource was particularly valuable, its display announced the financial benefits Rome could expect from the conquest.

Being able to see artefacts from the newly conquered territory brought the reality of a very distant and foreign land closer to the people of Rome. This heightened the emotion of the victory and allowed spectators to assess the similarities and differences between Rome and the conquered places. The act of crafting the models of foreign cities from local resources and then carrying them through the streets of Rome was an act of possession. Making the cities appear smaller automatically made Rome look grander and more powerful, and it reduced the places depicted to assets and spoils in possession of the Roman Empire.

## Personifications

It was common in Roman triumphal processions for *triumphatores* to commission personifications of geographical features. These features represented the regions conquered in war and were often significant because of their associations with certain peoples, myths or frontiers. The allegorical representations and three-dimensional models commissioned specifically for the triumphal procession were known alternatively as *simulacra*, *imagines* or *effigies*.

Marcus Claudius Marcellus commissioned a *simulacrum captarum Syracusarum* (a model of captured Syracuse) for display in his *ovatio* in 211 BCE, and Scipio Africanus included images of captured cities showing the exploits of war in his triumphal procession for the Battle of Zama in 201 BCE: '[t]owers were borne along representing the captured cities' (Appian, *Punic Wars*, 9.66). Lucius Scipio Asiaticus' triumph in 189 BCE even quantified his conquests, showcasing 134 city models, known as *oppidorum simulacra* (Livy, 37.59.3).

As the models were taken deeper into the city centre and viewed by more and more spectators, the final act of conquest was perpetrated and the personified city fell once more to the Romans who could literally claim that they held the world in their hands.

## Caesar's geographical representations

Caesar paraded representations of Gallia, Massilia (modern Marseilles), the Nile, the Ocean, the Rhine and the Rhone in his triumphal procession.<sup>25</sup> Caesar's geographical representations were three-dimensional models which personified cities and rivers. They were large enough for audience members to see them from a distance, and their size added to their impressive-

25. See Cicero, *Philippics*, 8.6.18, *De Officiis*, 2.8.28; Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101.

ness. It took a number of men to carry the models through the streets of Rome, and this in itself was a display of logistical power.

**Cicero** records Caesar's display of a model of Massilia in his Gallic triumph:

*... we have seen a model of Massilia carried in a triumphal procession, to serve as proof to the world that the supremacy of the people had been forfeited.*

**Cicero**, *De Officiis*, 2.8.28

In his triumph, Caesar represented all the symbolic powers of Egypt, Queen **Arsinoe**, the pharaohs and the River Nile, in the same manner. The personified Nile would not have looked out of place among the fallen leaders of Egypt, and was equally representative of Rome's conquest, even though it represented the possession of a geographical space rather than the seizure of governmental control.



The River Nile, 1688/92 Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France (copy, original in Vatican Museum)

'AXE HISTORIQUE' BY YOHAN EUAN 04 FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

Lucan tells us that the paraded personifications of Ocean and the Rhine were enchained (**Lucan**, 3.76–7) and Florus tells us that the statue of Ocean was golden:

*Caesar returned home victorious and celebrated a triumph first over Gaul, in which figured the Rhine and the Rhone and the captive Ocean represented in gold. A second triumph was celebrated for the conquest of Egypt; on this occasion the Nile, **Arsinoe**, and the Pharos lighted with a semblance of flames was displayed on moving platforms.*

**Florus**, 2.13.88

The use of gold for the image of Oceanus may have been a way of emphasising the magnitude of its conquest. Caesar's conquest of Ocean referred to his crossing of the English Channel. It emphasised to the Roman people, who were not traditionally seafarers and were generally fearful of open water, Caesar's achievement of navigating the treacherous stretch of water with his armies.

When Caesar crossed Ocean, he was journeying to a mythical land. In discovering it, Caesar was the first Roman to map the island in any way – allegorically or cartographically. The mythical nature of the island made it the most exotic of all Caesar's conquests, and the danger involved in its discovery demonstrated the military commander's supreme courage and *virtus*. Caesar had conquered a geographical boundary and had gone further from Rome in search of the exotic than any man who had come before him: the representation of conquered Ocean demonstrated these facts to the Roman people.

## Triumphal art

Triumphal art was designed to distinguish Rome from other geographical spaces, and Romans from people of other ethnicities. Triumphal paintings were a useful means of achieving this, although they were less common than models and statues. Unfortunately, not one triumphal painting has survived from antiquity; the only evidence we have of them comes from ancient literary sources. We can draw some conclusions about the images from Caesar's triumphs, as well as those celebrated by other *triumphatores*, by looking at material evidence from a similar time period.

Triumphal images often displayed a significant battle or the defeat of a high-ranking military leader; they were designed to inform the audience about the events of the war, as well as to educate them about the newly conquered territory. Generals commissioned paintings of battles and victories for the procession that summarised the war. This allowed spectators to watch and share its perils and difficulties and to engage with the pride and euphoria that came with victory. These stories were told on large boards or panels known as *tabulae*, which were wheeled on processional floats known as *pegmata*. Ancient sources also refer to triumphal paintings using the words *pictae* and *grafai*.<sup>26</sup>

The paintings primarily represented the war, the conquered people and their regional landscape. There is a general consensus among modern scholars that triumphal paintings were often painted from an elevated perspective to create a 'bird's eye view' of the cities being represented. The objective of this perspective was to impart as much information as possible about the landscape and the man-made structures of the conquered cities. However, battle scenes were probably depicted horizontally with the opposing sides distinguished by their costumes.

26. See *Florus, Epitome*, 1.13.27; 1.28.13; *Pliny, Natural History*, 33.53.149; *Plutarch, Paulus*, 32.2.



Fresco of the Riot in the amphitheatre at Pompeii, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

'POMPEII-BATTLE AT THE AMPHITHEATRE' BY WOLFGANG RIEGER FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

It is possible to look at non-triumphal Roman paintings from the period to get an idea of what triumphal paintings might have looked like. A good example is the representation of the riot between the Nucerians and the Pompeians at the Pompeii amphitheatre in 59 CE. This painting, discovered in the house of Actius Anicetus, is a composite of several different perspectives. In an effort to deliver as much information as possible, the painting simultaneously looks into the arena from above, depicts the amphitheatre from the front and represents the rioters on a much larger scale than the architectural elements.

In the same style as this painting, triumphal images probably also included numerous significant details in order to give the viewer as much detail as possible. The information in Roman triumphal painting may not have always been accurate because its primary concern was presenting Rome as superior to the conquered enemy.

## Exhibitions after the procession

Spectators could not glean much detail from the images as they rolled past, so the *tabulae* were often exhibited around the city after the triumph as a historical record of the victory.<sup>27</sup> Some triumphal paintings were set up in temples for months after the procession had ended so the people of Rome could visit them and get a better look at the image and better understand the *triumphator's* victory. Some *triumphatores* even stood alongside their triumphal paintings to explain the detail to those who wanted to better understand what the painting depicted.

Audience understanding was so important to Lucius Hostilius Mancinus that he expended his personal time and effort to describe his diagram of fallen Carthage to the people of Rome. Pliny the Elder tells us that Mancinus stood by his map 'describing to the public looking on the details of the siege'. This 'secured him the consulship [of 145 BCE] at the ensuing Comitia' against Scipio Aemelianus (Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.7.23). Thus, by investing money and effort in his audience's understanding of the triumphal art, Mancinus gained political office. The map demonstrated Mancinus' military prowess to his audience and his explanation ensured that pride was generated for his service to the *res publica* and capitalised on the *gloria* of his victory.

## Permanent display in temples

The display of triumphal art in temples was traditionally temporary. However, some triumphal paintings were permanently housed in Roman temples. Tiberius Gracchus had a map of Sardinia accompanied by a descriptive inscription permanently set up in the temple of *Mater Matuta*. The description is recounted by Livy in the Augustan period:

*Under the command and auspices of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus the legion and army of the Roman people conquered Sardinia. In this province more than eighty-thousand of the enemy were slain or captured. The state having been most successfully administered and the allies set free, the revenues restored, he brought back home the army safe and secure and enriched with booty; for the second time he entered the city of Rome in triumph. In commemoration of this event he set up this tablet to Jupiter.*

Livy, 41.28.8–10

This inscription was a permanent reminder to the people of Rome of Gracchus' military prowess, and its presence in the temple of *Mater Matuta* let everyone know the location and the scale of Gracchus' victory.

The triumph disseminated an image of victorious conquest to a popular audience, beyond the military and elite classes, to show that the conquest benefited all classes and transcended all boundaries. It was important that the Roman people knew who had been conquered and where they were from. Representations of cities and significant boundaries made sure that

27. Diodorus Siculus, 40.4; Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.26.97

these important details were mapped in a clear and simple way so as to educate the people in Rome of the **triumphator**'s achievements and Rome's military superiority.

Although we do not have direct evidence of what happened to Caesar's triumphal images, models and maps beyond the descriptions in his triumphal procession, it is likely that Caesar set up his triumphal models and maps throughout the city just as Gracchus and Mancinus did.

## Caesar and crossing boundaries in Rome



Listen to the podcast:

Caesar and civil war

Read: Podcast transcription page 81

Julius Caesar crossed many physical boundaries while campaigning in Gaul, Germania and Britannia, but it was the boundaries he crossed after these campaigns that ensured the name Caesar would live forever. When Caesar crossed the Rubicon River in January 49 BCE, he was entering Italy while still in command of an army. This was an act of treason and challenged the Roman republican constitution.

In crossing the Rubicon, Caesar did not simply ford the shallow river, he crossed the political boundary that separated the province of Cisalpine Gaul from Italy.

In the pursuit of ultimate power, the Rubicon was the first of many sacred boundaries that Caesar crossed in the last five years of his life. Many of these boundaries were crossed by reinterpreting aspects of the triumphal ceremony. The triumphal procession was the only acceptable opportunity for the military and civic spheres to collide. The ritual blurred the normally unwavering boundaries enforced by republican traditions and suspended the normal caution for admitting men in possession of **imperium** into Rome's inner sanctum.



Map of the Rubicon and map of Cisalpine Gaul

'LOCATION RUBICON' FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY-SA 3.0

## Crossing the Rubicon

Crossing the Rubicon was an act of revolution, which kicked off two decades of civil war in Rome, and which was not resolved until 31 BCE when Caesar's adopted son, Octavian (later Augustus), brought peace. Caesar did not undertake this crossing lightly.

The night before he marched on Rome, Caesar took a mule-led rig and a few of his trusted staff on a journey to the river. Amusingly, the party got lost in the dark and had to be led by a guide after aimlessly wandering for several hours. After eventually arriving, Caesar was in two minds about the decision he was about to make:

*[W]hen he came to the river which separates Cisalpine Gaul from the rest of Italy (it is called the Rubicon), and began to reflect, now that he drew nearer to the fearful step and was agitated by the magnitude of his ventures, he checked his speed. Then, halting in his course, he communed with himself a long time in silence as his resolution wavered back and forth, and his purpose then suffered change after change.*

Plutarch, *Caesar*, 32.4–5

Caesar eventually stopped talking to himself and started talking to his men. He warned them of the consequences of crossing the river and marching on Rome: '[w]e may still draw back but, once across that little bridge, we shall have to fight it out' (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 31). The decision was made to cross the river. Caesar's famous words 'the die is cast' mark this decision and indicate his knowledge that this undertaking was a bold gamble – one which no-one would know the outcome of until after the die had landed (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 32). Caesar's gamble would either lead to fame or ruin, but, as Sallust tells us, 'no one ever became immortal through cowardice' (Sallust, *Jugurthine War*, 85.49). Caesar was aiming for immortality.

## Rome's sacred boundary

Through a series of rituals recognising the divine favour of the victor, crossing the boundary of the **pomerium** was a rite of passage that separated the **triumphator** from other men as well as from the defeated enemy. The **pomerium** was Rome's sacred boundary; it demarcated the divinely protected area of Rome. The triumphal crossing of this boundary demonstrates it was, in some way, originally an entry ritual. The triumphal procession was inherently linked to Rome because it was the crossing of the **pomerium**, and the return of troops and spoils to the safety of the divine sanctuary, that ended the war. Marc Antony celebrated a triumph in Alexandria in 34 BCE which met with vehement objection in Rome



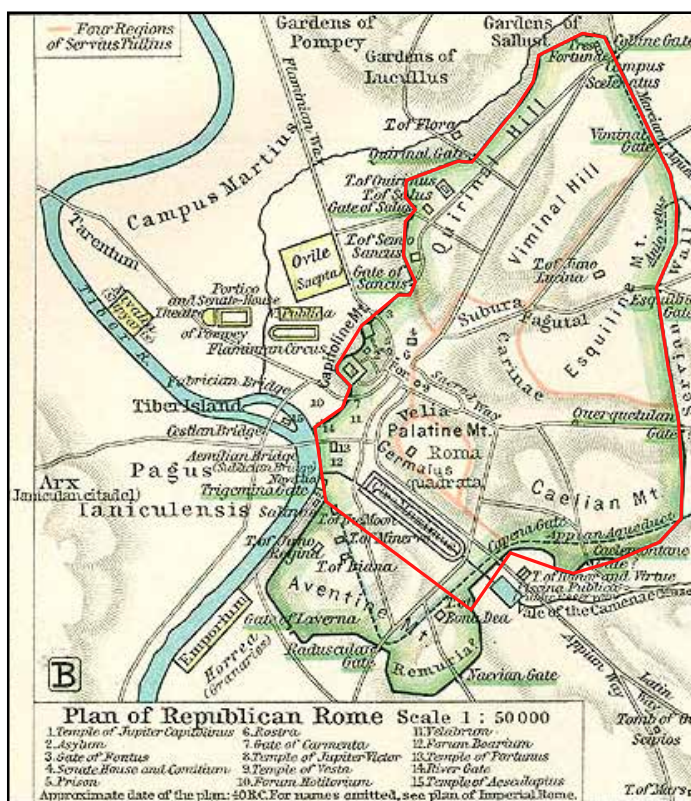
Head of M. Antonius right; behind, Armenian tiara; around ANTONI ARMENIA DEVICTA. Border of dots.(RRC 543/1)

OBVERSE FROM GALE COLLECTION, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR ANCIENT NUMISMATIC STUDIES (ACANS), USED WITH PERMISSION FROM ACANS.

because it was celebrated outside the city, and therefore insulted the gods, the city and the Roman people (**Plutarch**, *Antony*, 50.4).

After the ritual of crossing the city boundary, the triumphal procession headed to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus – the religious heart of Rome. On the day of a triumphal procession, everyday rules were bent so that the military commander could ritually enter the city while still in possession of his *imperium* and while still in command of his army. However, as soon as the procession concluded, the commander's *imperium* expired.

When Caesar had crossed the Rubicon in 49 BCE without relinquishing command of his armies, he was in breach of the Roman constitution; but, when he entered Rome in triumph in 46 BCE, he was still in command of his armies and perfectly within his rights to do so without breaking any Roman laws. This constitutional loophole made the triumph the most coveted honour in ancient Rome.



Historical Atlas by William R. Shepherd  
PLAN OF REPUBLICAN ROME ADAPTED FROM ORIGINAL PUBLIC DOMAIN IMAGE, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

## Triumph or consulship

Over a decade earlier, Caesar had been forced to make a difficult decision on whether to pursue triumphal glory. After returning from Spain in 60 BCE, Caesar petitioned the Senate to triumph for restoring order in the province. However, Caesar also had his eye on the consulship for the following year, and this posed a problem. To have one's name included on the ballot for consulship, the candidate had to submit his name in person inside the city walls. Caesar, however, was located outside the city walls and would lose his *imperium*, and therefore his right to celebrate a triumphal procession, the minute he crossed the *pomerium*:

*The law was that those who desired the honour of a triumph had to wait outside the city, while the candidates for the consulship had to be present in the city in person. Caesar, who arrived at Rome just at the time of the consular elections, was therefore*

*in a dilemma and sent to the senate asking permissions for his name to be put forward for the consulship by his friends, while he himself remained outside the city.*

Plutarch, Caesar, 13.1

Caesar chose the consulship over the triumphal procession and was elected to office for 59 BCE. The prestige of the triumph meant less to the ambitious Caesar than magisterial power at this important stage in his political and military career.

## JUPITER OPTIMUS MAXIMUS

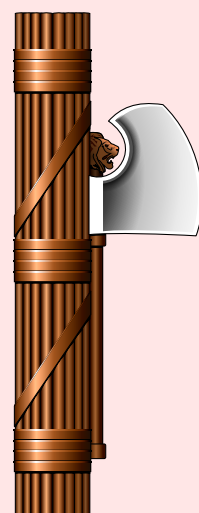
Jupiter Optimus Maximus ('Jupiter the Best and Greatest') was Rome's divine protector. The construction of the god's temple coincided with the formation of the republic in 509 BCE and demonstrated Jupiter's position as sovereign god of the **res publica**. Essentially, the triumphal procession was payment to Jupiter for his assistance with military conquest. Jupiter's divine protection of the city and, by extension its people, was paid for by offerings and sacrifices made to the god each time an army embarked for war.

Jupiter's role in the triumphal procession was closely connected to the **triumphator's imperium**, but, although strong, it was undefined and ambiguous. All magistrates shared a relationship with divinity and, from their election, had to be approved by Jupiter and the auspices. The relationship between the mortal and divine realms, known as the **pax deorum**, was maintained through the regular performance of religious ritual during the magistrate's tenure. It could reach a spectacular conclusion when the victorious pro-magistrate returned from war and was honoured with a triumphal procession for his divine **felicitas**.

**Triumphatores** could not celebrate a triumph without their own auspices being taken. The Senate denied Marcus Helvius a triumph for winning a war in Hispania Citerior as he was leaving his province in Hispania Ulterior in 195 BCE, because the former province was protected under the **auspiciu**m of Marcus Porcius Cato. Eventually, these problems were avoided with the introduction of **imperium maius**.

The **res publica** relied on the maintenance of peace between the divine and mortal realms; the responsibility for this fell to the elected magistrates. This right to communicate with the **pantheon** (that is, every god) demonstrated an individual's high status and the relationship enacted between magistrates and gods. A general victorious in war would be hailed as **imperator** by his troops. After this, he wrapped the **fascis** of his **lictors** in laurel and sent them to the Senate as a request for a triumphal procession and **supplicatio**.

The triumph fulfilled the Roman obligation to pay Jupiter Optimus Maximus for assistance in war, maintaining the **pax deorum** and, therefore, the **res publica**. The procession acknowledged Jupiter's active role in the victory, and mortal–divine cooperation was demonstrated through the exhibition of the collaboratively attained booty. Rome owed a



Fasces Lictoriae

'FASCES LICTORIAE' BY FLANKER FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

debt to the **triumphator** for his conquest, and the **triumphator** owed a debt to Rome and her protective deities for his **felicitas**. This debt was paid in the form of spoils and donations. The more spoils there were, the greater the favour Jupiter appeared to have bestowed upon the commander and the people of the Roman state.

The *deposito lauri* was the fulfilment of the **triumphator's** thank-offering to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The victory laurels used in the triumphal procession were the same as those sent to the Senate in application for triumph (**Silius Italicus**, 15.120). As the triumph reached the Capitol, the **triumphator** returned his garland in *gremio Iovis*, and with it he also returned his clothing, and any divinity with which he was imbued, to the statue of Jupiter. This simplified the issue of Jupiter dedicating his spoils to himself because after the ritual changing of clothes the **triumphator** no longer represented Jupiter.

This argument is supported by **Marius'** costuming *faux pas* when, after his triumph of 104 BCE, he entered the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus wearing triumphal robes. In doing so, he offended the Senate so greatly that he had to change into appropriate attire before the meeting could resume (**Plutarch**, *Marius*, 12.5). **Marius** should have returned his triumphal robes to the statue of Jupiter before his triumph ended and not affront Jupiter by entering the god's house clad in the god's accoutrements.



Titus is descending from the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 'The Triumph of Titus: The Flavians' 1885. Located at the Walters Art Museum.

'THE TRIUMPH OF TITUS: THE FLAVIANS' BY WALTERS ART MUSEUM FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC0

Wearing a costume after the triumphal ceremony was over suggested that the **triumphator's imperium** had not been returned as tradition dictated, which implied that the power of Jupiter remained in the **triumphator** and extended any acceptable divine status beyond tolerable limits. That the **triumphator** had the audacity to attend a meeting of equal men wearing the costume of a god was too overt a projection of individual power for the Senate to ignore. **Marius'** attire was offensive because of the relationship it advertised between himself and Jupiter, and the offence taken by the Senate demonstrated that the costume of the **triumphator** still had symbolic power in the late republican period.

## Military honours, divinity and royalty

The triumphal procession was quite literally the boundary between military and civil power, and was the only opportunity for a military commander (while he retained his *imperium*) to be inside the civic heart of Rome (with or without his army) without committing treason. In addition to the triumphal procession allowing the *triumphator* to possess military power in a civic space, aspects of divinity were conferred on him which blurred the boundaries between mortality and immortality.

For the duration of the triumphal procession, there was an implied relationship between the *triumphator* and Jupiter Optimus Maximus. At the moment that the *triumphator* entered the city, his soldiers called *io triumpe*.<sup>28</sup> This call was not used as a victory cheer in the field – it was a ritual invocation of Jupiter the protector of Rome. The ritual hymn the *Carmen Arvale*, from the *Fratres Arvales*, may help explain the purpose of the call (*Carmen Arvale*, 15–16). The last lines: ‘Help us, Mars/ *Triumpe, triumpe, triumpe, triumpe, triumpe*’ were designed to invoke Mars, and the word ‘*triumpe*’ more generally performed the function of invoking other gods in the same way Mars was evoked in the *Carmen Arvale*. Therefore, the words *io triumpe* could have been used to evoke Jupiter at the moment the *triumphator* crossed Rome’s sacred boundary and entered Jupiter’s consecrated space.

### BLURRING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORTALITY AND DIVINITY

The *triumphator* was so closely associated with divinity for the duration of the procession that a slave accompanied him in his chariot and whispered in his ear: ‘Look behind you; remember you are a man’ (Tertullian, *Apology*, 33.4). The slave’s chant was calling for the *triumphator* to look to the future (in ancient Rome this was thought to be approaching you, unseen, from behind) and to remember his mortality.

The phallus attached to the undercarriage of the *quadriga* was another indication that the *triumphator* was temporarily deified. This was a symbol of protection in ancient Rome and was attached to the triumphal chariot in an effort to ward off envy from the gods. All these measures implied that the *triumphator* was standing on the edge of the mortal and immortal divide.<sup>29</sup>

Romans were concerned that the triumph’s power might corrupt its recipient, so a *triumphator* was constantly reminded of the temporary nature of his fame. The need to bring the *triumphator* back down to earth is supported by the slanderous bellowing of his army, which served to ground the *triumphator* and prevent delusions of grandeur.<sup>30</sup> Some of the soldiers’ belligerence has been recorded from their obscene chants during Caesar’s triumph:

28. Tibullus, 2.5.118; Varro, *Latin Language*, 6.68

29. See Zonarus, 7.21.

30. See Martial, 7.8.9–1.

*Caesar screwed the lands of Gaul, Nicomedes screwed our Caesar,  
Look Caesar now is triumphing, the one who screwed the Gauls  
No Nicomedes triumphs though, the one who screwed our Caesar.*

Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 49

*Romans, watch your wives, see the bald adulterer's back home.  
You fucked away in Gaul the gold you borrowed here in Rome.*

Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 51

Another reminder of the impermanence of the **triumphator's gloria** was his iron ring, worn as a reminder of man's mortality and as a symbol of humility (Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.7.39; 33.4.11–12).

The **triumphator** may not have actually *become* the divine Jupiter, but he did draw on the god's divinity through visual connotations. The ambiguity of the **triumphator's** role lets us know that the distinction between divine and mortal was blurred in the procession. It stands to reason that the suggestion of divinity was a greatly coveted prize, which added to the honour of the triumphal procession.

The **triumphator** was a representation of Jupiter during the triumphal procession, and this meant that, temporarily, the mortal general was associated with the divinity of the god. The fine line between divine and mortal could easily be crossed by an ostentatious alteration to the triumphal ceremony.

### JUPITER'S CHARIOT

Livy records that Marcus Furius Camillus was the first **triumphator** to employ the **quadriga** in his procession of 367–366 BCE. The **quadriga** was a four-horse chariot associated with the gods. Jupiter was commonly depicted riding in the **quadriga**, while Sol used his chariot to pull the sun across the horizon each day.

Camillus' use of a divine symbol in his triumph was not well received, and was thought to be an inappropriate mode of transport for a mortal man:

*[T]he triumph far exceeded the measure of honour usual on that day. He was himself the most conspicuous object in it, as he rode into the City on a chariot drawn by white horses; an act which struck men as being not only undemocratic, but irreverent, for they were troubled at the thought that in respect to his steeds the dictator was made equal to Jupiter and the sun-god; and the triumph, chiefly for this one reason, was more brilliant than popular.*

Livy, 5.23.4–6



Quadriga at Brandenburg Tor, Berlin, Germany

'BRANDENBURG GATE QUADRIGA NIGHT' FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY-SA 3.0

The thought of Camillus adopting divine equipment was outrageous for a mortal and civilised man, but this did not stop the *quadriga* from becoming a permanent part of the triumphal procession. Camillus' action demonstrated that the level of association between the *triumphator* and Jupiter was so strong that further associations could cross the acceptable boundary between mortal and divine. Yet, even though its continued use was considered distasteful when **Livy** recounted the vehicle's introduction almost 300 years later, the state was unable to impose sanctions on *triumphatores* to prevent them from exploiting this connection with Jupiter. Camillus had set a precedent for all future *triumphatores* who wanted to exceed the boundaries of the triumphal procession.

In the same way that Camillus pushed the bounds of accepted practice on the day of triumph, Julius Caesar exploited the lack of rigid rules to perpetrate the same audacity as the earlier *triumphator*. In many ways, Caesar was Camillus' successor. In 387 BCE, the Gauls marched on Rome and Camillus raised a private army to save the city. After he successfully defeated the threat, he was appointed dictator and given the task of rebuilding Rome. This is a story that mirrors Caesar's, and connects the two men in the minds of the Romans during Caesar's time.

### SYMBOL OF ROYALTY

In the same way that the triumphal honours implied divinity, they implied royalty. The slave who whispered in the *triumphator's* ear also held a golden crown above the *triumphator's* head. The crown was never designed to fit the *triumphator's* head, and without coronation the military commander could not be king. However, the crown was tantalisingly close and certainly encouraged the audience to think of the *triumphator* as *nearly* a monarch.

During the republican period, kings were unpopular because the *res publica* had been founded on the removal of the tyrannical Etruscan kings from power in 510–509 BCE. Triumphal costume had potent symbolic power, and wearing the robes was a symbolic representation of the sum of the *triumphator's* achievements. During the republican period, three men were given the right to wear triumphal garb outside the triumphal procession: Lucius Aemilius Paullus, *Pompey the Great* and Gaius Julius Caesar. This privilege extended the triumphal honours beyond the day of the ceremony and exemplified the *triumphator's* ultimate power and distinction to settings beyond the triumphal procession such as festivals.<sup>31</sup>

Caesar exploited the symbolic power of his triumphal garb for its monarchical connotations while sitting on a golden throne at the *Lupercalia* festival in 44 BCE. That day Marc Antony offered Caesar a diadem wrapped in a laurel wreath, which Caesar refused after an unenthusiastic response from the crowd.



The rostra in the Roman Forum

"IMAGEN DE LOS ROSTRA EN EL FORO ROMANO" BY FILIPO FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC BY 3.0

31. See Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1.18.6; Velleius Paterculus, 2.40.4.

*Caesar, sitting on a golden throne above the **rostra** and wearing triumphal robe, was watching this ceremony; and Antony, who was **consul** at the time, was one of those taking part in the sacred running. When he came carrying a diadem with a wreath of laurel tied round it, and he held this out to Caesar. His action was followed by some applause, but it was not much and it was not spontaneous. But when Caesar pushed the diadem away from him, there was a general shout of applause. Antony then offered him the diadem for the second time, and again only a few applauded, though, when Caesar again rejected it, there was applause from everyone.*

Plutarch, *Caesar*, 61.3–5

Plutarch's description of the crown tells us that ancient Romans thought that Caesar's attempts to be a monarchical ruler were only thinly shrouded in a veil of triumphal tradition. The laurel wreath was closely associated with the triumph. It was a mortal symbol of victory and the appropriate fashion accessory for Caesar in his triumphal robes.<sup>32</sup>

However, the crown was never worn in the triumphal procession. Rather, it was held above the recipient's head and its presentation to Caesar outside of the ritualised proceedings crossed the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and was the reason for the crowd's negative reaction. After he refused the crown, Caesar ordered that it be sent to the Capitoline Hill and dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 79.2–3). The crown was much more appropriately housed with the king of the gods, and Caesar's order to have it sent there averted any political upheaval which its acceptance may have caused. However, the whole charade left Caesar one step closer to being thought of as a king.

### Pushing the boundaries of the triumph

Julius Caesar's choice to wear triumphal clothing at this festival was another way for him to play with the boundaries of the triumphal ritual. Whether this was a popular move or not, Caesar was suspected of wanting to be *rex* until the end of his life. He was commonly greeted in the streets with, 'Long live the King!' to which he replied, 'No, I am Caesar, not King' (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 79.2). The definition between what it meant to be Caesar and what it meant to be a king was, however, slowly becoming less apparent.

### OSTENTATIOUS AND ARROGANT BUILDINGS

One triumphal honour that could be exercised beyond the bounds of the triumphal procession was the right to erect buildings in Rome from the triumphal spoils. The Senate was in charge of sanctioning building plans, and, often, commanders were subject to the conservative whims of their peers when constructing anything in Rome. This, however, was not the case for Caesar.

32. See Pliny, *Natural History*, 15.39.133–5.

Caesar's building program was ostentatious, and its scale and audacity was an indication of the power he wielded in Rome and over the Senate. Caesar made overt references to his military prowess, fixing his triumphal chariot on the Capitoline Hill facing the statue of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. This implied a relationship between the man and the god and linked Caesar's triumphal achievements to the king of the gods. Another statue of Caesar was erected on a likeness of the *oikoumene* with an inscription proclaiming that he was a demi-god (Cassius Dio, 43.14.6).

These honours were arrogant and unprecedented. Traditionally, victorious generals could only be depicted wearing a toga or their triumphal robes, and it was prohibited to display an image of oneself wearing military clothing within the *pomerium*. In addition to this, it was forbidden for generals to erect statues of themselves either armed or mounted on a horse because of the visual connections this made to statues of Hellenistic kings.

Statues of Caesar in military dress, including the equestrian statue depicting him riding Bucephalas, Alexander the Great's horse, declared his imperial prowess. The statue was erected in the *Forum Iulium* and referred to the prophecy of the Delphic Oracle, who had claimed that the man who manages to ride the wild Bucephalas would be the man who ruled the world. This prophecy originally referred to Alexander the Great, not Julius Caesar. However, Caesar's statue rewrote the story so that he became Alexander's successor and the world's greatest military commander (Suetonius, *Deified Julius Caesar*, 61).

### CAESAR THE 'IMPERATOR'

In 45 BCE, Caesar took the use of triumphal honours outside the triumphal procession one step further when he adopted the *cognomen* 'imperator'. This was a title that had previously been reserved for the exclusive use of the triumphant general, and which disappeared after the triumphal ceremony had ended (Cassius Dio, 43.44.2–3). The Senate decreed that the title of *imperator* could be inherited by Caesar's descendants. This exceeded the boundaries of the republican *cognomen*, which could only be inherited by the eldest son. Caesar's adoption of triumphal honours within the city of Rome after his triumphal procession had concluded was, therefore, an act of symbolic border crossing, designed to attain supreme power in Rome. It is no different from his crossing of the Rubicon only a few years earlier.

### CAESAR'S FINAL TRIUMPH

All this power had the potential to go to Caesar's head and many would argue that it did. In his final triumph, Caesar crossed the line of appropriate behaviour and went too far. This triumph was not popular with the Senate or people of Rome because of the arrogance it displayed.

After his Spanish campaign against *Pompey's* remaining forces, which were commanded by the deceased general's sons, Caesar returned to celebrate his victory in a triumphal procession. This triumph was, however, celebrating victory over fellow Romans in civil war, and it was both unlawful and unpopular:

*Although he took care not to inscribe any Roman names in his triumph (as it would have been unseemly in his eyes and base and inauspicious in those of the Roman people to triumph over fellow-citizens), yet all these misfortunes were represented in the processions and the men also by various images and pictures ... The people, although restrained by fear, groaned over their domestic ills, especially when they saw the picture of Lucius Scipio, the general-in-chief, wounded in the breast by his own hand, casting himself into the sea, and Petreius committing self-destruction at the banquet, and Cato torn apart by himself like a wild beast. They applauded the death of **Achillas** and **Pothinus**, and laughed at the flight of **Pharnaces**.*

Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101.1

Triumphs were designed to celebrate foreign conquest and Roman superiority – hence the audiences' groans at the death of fellow Romans and applause at the death of foreign leaders. The defeat of Romans should not have been celebrated as a great achievement. Therefore, Caesar's triumph was more a celebration of his own power than it was a testament to the might and majesty of Rome.

## Caesar's death and immortality



Listen to the podcast:

The death of Caesar

Read: Podcast transcription page 85

Caesar's Spanish procession was the last time he crossed the **pomerium** in triumph and was also one of the last times he would exceed the bounds of the republican constitution. In March the following year, Caesar was stabbed by his peers twenty-three times. The die that was cast when Caesar crossed the Rubicon had finally landed, and Caesar's audacity had finally been quashed.

This was the end of Caesar the man, but he had one last boundary to cross before his work was over: the border between mortality and immortality. The potential for an individual to be thought of as divine during the republic was limited to the temporarily divine associations of the **triumphator**. On 1 January 42 BCE Caesar became the first man in Roman history to be deified, and the boundary between mortal and divine in Rome had been forever crossed.

The Divine Julius Caesar was Rome's first immortalised demi-god. Caesar had triumphed over the final boundary known to man: death.



The temple of Julius Caesar on Forum Romanum. It was constructed by Emperor Augustus on the site of Julius Caesar's cremation.

TEMPLE OF CAESAR 3D: A DERIVATIVE WORK OF A 3D MODEL BY LASHA TSKHONDIA FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USED UNDER CC-BY-SA 3.0

## Imperial rule

After the death of Julius Caesar, Rome was never the same again. After yet another civil war, Augustus became Rome's first imperial ruler and the republican system of government, formed to prevent the tyranny of monarchical rulership in 509 BCE, was relegated to a distant memory. The first dynasty of imperial Rome was known as the Julio–Claudian dynasty (Julio for Julius Caesar's *gens* and Claudian for Tiberius, the second emperor's *gens*). The Julio–Claudian dynasty ended after Nero's suicide in 68 CE, but the imperial system, which Caesar had done so much to establish, continued for several centuries. Although the Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in 330 CE, Rome continued to dominate Europe until the city fell to the Ottomans in 1453.

## Caesar mythologised

From the moment of his death, Caesar became the subject of mythology. Ovid wrote of Caesar's apotheosis in his *Metamorphoses*:

*Meanwhile you must rescue his father's soul from his cut-ridden body  
and make him a comet, that deified Julius' image may always  
gaze on my Capitol hill from the height of his shrine in the Forum'.  
Scarcely had Jupiter ended his speech, when life-giving Venus  
Set herself down in the heart of the Senate, though no one could see her,*

*and caught the soul of her Caesar up as it passed from his body.  
She did not allow its component atoms to be dispersed  
into air, but carried it straight as it was to the stars in the heavens.  
During her journey, she felt it glowing and catching fire,  
so she let it escape from out her bosom and fly right upwards.  
Higher far than the moon it soared, displaying a sweeping  
trail of flame in its wake, til finally it took the form of a gleaming star.*

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.840–50

Here, Caesar's divinity is demonstrated to the people of Rome when he is transformed into a comet as his ancestor Venus carries him to heaven. When he arrives, Caesar takes the form of a gleaming star and it is from this vantage point that he will look down upon and protect Rome forevermore.

### Caesar's legend lives on

Caesar may not live on as a star, as Ovid suggests in his *Metamorphoses*, but he does live on in countless other ways. His immortality has taken many forms over the years and Caesar has been immortalised variously in many different nations through poetry, prose, music, film, sculpture, painting and many other ways. Thus, Caesar lives on as a legend, partially self-constructed during his lifetime and partially designed by others after his death.

Perhaps one reason that Caesar's name has lived so long is that he was not simply concerned with the immediately gratifying triumphal honours granted to successful Roman generals but also how he would be remembered after his death. Caesar spent his life cultivating an image of himself which could be consumed by both the Romans of his time and the Romans of the future.

Whether Caesar could imagine a time when Rome ceased to rule the earth or not, he would have been pleased to know that in the twenty-first century his name still resonates; not simply in Rome and Europe but throughout the world and in places that were beyond even the edges of the world that Caesar discovered, explored and conquered.

# Podcast transcriptions

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## The early years of Caesar

Interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans

**M:** *Ave* and welcome to Emperors of Rome, the podcast series in which we look at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host Matt Smith and with me as always is Dr Rhiannon Evans, a lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. This is Episode I. For those unfamiliar with Roman Numerals, that just means Episode 1. Anyway this is Episode I, The early years of Caesar. Rhiannon starts us off by telling us when Julius Caesar was born.

**R:** Caesar was born in 100 BCE – of course they didn't use that numbering system. That came along much, much later. Some people think he was born in 102, actually and this sounds like I'm splitting hairs but the reason for that is, is that he came to some of the Roman political roles, the magistracies, a couple of years earlier than you were technically meant to. And so they think he was actually playing by the rules and he was born in 102 not 100 but there's no ancient evidence for that.

**M:** So he is falsifying his driver's licence so that he could join a bit earlier?

**R:** If he was actually born in 100, then that is true. But then Caesar was living in a time when people started breaking the rules a lot so I think it's more likely that that was the case, special dispensation was given to him. And he was born in Rome which is interesting because we think of many of the ancients that we talk about, especially writers and, as well as being a warrior and a politician he was a writer, as being Roman and they were, they were culturally Roman but in fact pretty much all of the writers we have weren't born in Rome. Caesar was one of the few. But our knowledge about his early life is a little bit cloudy because we have two biographies of Caesar, which is great, we have one by a Greek writer, Plutarch and one by a Latin writer, Suetonius, but by a terrible coincidence the beginning of both of them is missing. So we don't have the biography of his early life very firmly in place. And of course we have accounts of him from historians and letters but they tend to talk about him when he's at the height of his power so they don't really talk about his early life. But we imagine he had the typical education of an elite Roman. He was certainly well versed in Latin and Greek literature. He was known to be very skilled at speaking and he could make use of all of that literature so that was the typical education of a Roman boy.

**M:** What sort of household was he born into then? One of privilege but what do we know about his family?

**R:** He's in a very, very elite Roman family. The *Julii* were, they were patricians, so they came from very ancient elite stock. They later on traced their ancestry back to the goddess

Venus through a tortuous line via Venus's son, the Trojan Aeneas, who is said to be the founder of the Roman race after he left Troy, through his son who had an alternative name, Iulus. They claim that Iulus turned into Iulius, or Julius. This is etymologically stupid. But it was very convenient for them and that was the line that they traced. So, an extremely aristocratic family but they'd kind of hit hard times. He wasn't fabulously wealthy. He was still very wealthy by the standard of many Romans but he didn't have the kind of resources that you needed to make it in the Republic, really. And that was a disadvantage. Also his family hadn't performed that well in politics recently so he didn't have, you know, he didn't have a father who'd been **consul** or a grandfather who had been **consul**, which made it much easier to get into Roman politics. So he started from a relatively disadvantaged point.

**M:** I know that Caesar was the High Priest of Jupiter for a while there and that he also, due to his position became a bit of a pawn in the political landscape?

**R:** Well he was made the, it was called the Flamen Dialis at quite a young age which in a way was a huge honour.

**M:** The High Priest of Jupiter?

**R:** Yes.

**M:** Yeah.

**R:** But it was also very restrictive. It's possible that he was made Flamen Dialis to kind of keep him under wraps because this priest was not meant to leave the boundaries of Rome because if he's away Rome is considered in danger. And he's sort of bound by all this ritual so it's actually something that might have restrained his political career because a Roman man who is ambitious would expect to hold magistracies and also priesthoods but that one, in a way, although it's an honour it was a bit of a double edged sword. It means that you can't pursue a military career. How can you pursue a military career if you can't leave Rome? So it's possible they saw a bit of danger in Caesar and gave him that role because of that.

**M:** And he got married about that time as well?

**R:** He did. We would consider that very young and Roman men didn't necessarily get married very, very young. Roman women tended to. But he was married around that time because he held this priesthood he had to get married in a very, very formal way, much more ceremonious than Roman weddings had to, to be. He married a woman called Cornelia and in a way that got him into a bit of trouble because at this particular point, I'll explain a bit of background, there was a civil war in Rome. It had sort of been brewing for a while and it was between Caesar's uncle Marius and another warlord, Sulla. So Caesar is technically on Marius's side because he's related to Marius, at least his aunt is married to Marius so he's related by marriage. And Cornelia is the daughter of

one of Marius's main allies, a man called Cinna. And so that really puts him in Marius's camp. And it's the losing side. Marius loses the civil war. Sulla very definitely wins. He demands that Caesar divorce Cornelia when Caesar was just 19 years old. And Sulla is amazingly powerful at this time. He's technically dictator of Rome which is a role that gives you absolute power. It's a role you can take on in a time of crisis. And Caesar just said no I'm not going to divorce her. I'm not going to do what you tell me to. He also left Rome at that point and went out east. He became a military figure at that point. He didn't stick around for the consequences of denying what Sulla had asked him but it shows that very early on Caesar wasn't willing to be pushed around. And he's willing to stand up to someone who has supreme authority.

**M:** Did Caesar stick with her out of loyalty or ...

**R:** We don't know. I mean it was, it's loyalty to a lost side. All right. It's loyalty to something that's definitely not going to come back, or there are a few Marians (they're called Marians the followers of Marius) hanging on but it must have been pretty clear to him that Sulla was the victor and that was it. Some people think it's out of affection. We don't know. I think it's just that he does not want to be told what to do. I like to think of it like that. Of course, it's in light of what happened afterwards where Caesar subsequently took risks, he refused to be dictated to but it's sort of in line with that and it's a good indicator very early on that he's not going to be intimidated.

**M:** So at this point he's entered the military?

**R:** He has. And he's gone off east to fight in Rome's eastern provinces and he does very, very well there. He wins an award called the Civic Crown, the *Corona Civica* which you get for saving the life of another Roman citizen. So this shows pretty early on bravery in warfare and I guess if we think of Caesar as a soldier we think of him as the general who is in command strategising, sending soldiers in to war but from an early period he was actually there on the battle field. He's not just kind of one of the elite who stands back. He's had very direct contact with conflict, with warfare.

**M:** Do we know a lot about this point or does it kind of skip over and go to, he became a Governor later on? Because these seem to be very formative years if anything?

**R:** We know bits and pieces and it's mostly anecdotes from the biographies because he's actually not that exceptional at this point so he doesn't tend to crop up so much in histories of this period and the information is from biographies which tend to like the kind of stand out anecdotes. We know that he went actually to complete his education at Rhodes in the 70s BCE, the whole ship was captured by pirates and they took him hostage and we sort of think of pirates as a, I don't know, an 18th Century phenomenon or something up to the present, I guess, but they were everywhere in the Mediterranean and usually they would take boats that had something valuable on it or they would take boats that have valuable, a valuable person on it and then they would ransom them

which they tried to do with Caesar. Now this is a story that's probably been greatly embellished. It's in both of his biographies. But it is a really good story because it shows ... again that Caesar is really gutsy. The pirates say that they're going to ransom Caesar for 20 talents which is a Greek currency and is a lot of money especially seeing as Caesar doesn't come from an extremely wealthy family and he's actually getting into debt at this point and will get much deeper into debt. And Caesar is supposed to have said you can't ransom me for 20 talents. I'm worth much more than that. You've got to charge at least 50. Which, of course is a stupid thing to say because he doesn't come from a rich family. But his friends were sent off to try and raise the money and they went off to Asia Minor. Somehow they got the money, they ransomed Caesar. The story is that while he was with the pirates, this gives us an indication that he's sort of a man of the people I suppose, that he joked with them, he chatted with them, he got quite friendly with them but he also said in a jokey way, after I'm set free I'm going to make sure that you're captured and crucified.

**M:** Right.

**R:** Which is a great joke, isn't it?

**M:** Yeah.

**R:** Oh no, they obviously didn't take that seriously so the 50 talents were raised, he was ransomed, he got away, he went back to the Roman province and told the Governor there that he'd been captured by these pirates and he wanted the Governor to go out and get them and the Governor wasn't particularly bothered and didn't, so Caesar raised some ships and a kind of little mini private navy of his own and went out and caught them and took them back and crucified them.

**M:** Wow.

**R:** So he did exactly what he said he'd do. And again this anecdote, who knows how much truth there is in it except he probably was ransomed but it gives us this idea, and the biographers are trying to confirm this idea, that he's not a man to be crossed. He can talk with people from any level of society and he can be jokey with them like he was with the pirates but if you go against Caesar you are going to suffer. Again it makes him sort of very decisive. He's a man of his word I suppose. There's also the story of his clemency, his mercy in that they were crucified but they were also stabbed on the cross so that they didn't suffer there. So it's a very mixed message story. You will be punished but Caesar's also a man of mercy.

**M:** It's a very self serving story as well, kind of, don't cross Caesar. I can imagine there being an element of truth but also an element of fiction to this as it would serve him best?

**R:** It's quite possible that he fed this story himself. I think as with a lot of the stories about Caesar's early life they tend to be embellished in light of what happened later. Later on he becomes a man of great authority and power so we like to see the flashes of that in his early life and I think that that has actually helped that story along. I still love it though it's a great story.

## Caesar the politician

Transcript of interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans

**M:** *Ave* and welcome to Emperors of Rome, a podcast series looking at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host Matt Smith and with me as always is Dr Rhiannon Evans, lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. And this is Episode II, Caesar the Politician. When we last left Caesar he'd entered military service, he'd become a priest and he'd briefly been captured by pirates. He's now reaching the age where he can start to think about a political career. Here's Rhiannon Evans.

**R:** One of the lowest rungs of the political magistracies is Quaestor and you become Quaestor when you're 30. There are very strict rules about this.

**M:** Yeah.

**R:** And he does that. He's a Quaestor in 69 BCE and it's also, kind of, a great year for him. This is going to sound weird in terms of being a great year for him but there are two important deaths in his family. His wife dies and his Aunt Julia who was married to Marius the warlord dies. Now you might think that's not a particularly wonderful thing for him personally but what it gives him the opportunity to do is to make speeches at their funerals. And this is an opportunity for him to speak in public because these two women are given very public funerals which is quite unusual for women of the time. So he really uses them to forward his political career especially with Julia to make that connection with Marius because Marius had been a very important military and political figure in Rome. And so he wants to make the connection back to Marius's military victories in particular. And we know from independent evidence like the orator, Cicero, that he was a great speaker. Cicero says he could have made oratory his career if he hadn't wanted to go into the military or concentrate more on the military. So he makes these very great speeches and that really sort of puts his name on the boards. That's when he becomes a serious contender.

**M:** Contender for a further political career?

**R:** Exactly. Yes.

**M:** So where's the starting point of this then?

**R:** Well being Quaestor is the first rung. He now has some political power, particularly over financial matters but of course there are lots of Quaestors, okay, the political system in Rome is, is a bit like a triangle in that there are lots of people at the lower ranks, there are then fewer at the next rungs up, things like Praetor. And there can only be two *consuls* per year. So there are lots of people who are never going to make it to the top. He's managed to get to the first rung and he's managed to make himself stand out by giving these great funeral speeches but that doesn't assure him of a future career. He has to get voted in again and he is voted for by the people and the way you do that or the number of ways you do that are by making great speeches, having great military victories, he's already started with a military career, and spending loads of money on the people. So you put on spectacles for them, you put on gladiatorial games or theatrics or you give them donations, all right, things we would regard as bribery but perfectly normal in the Roman political system.

**M:** So this is what he does, does he?

**R:** Well he hasn't got the money of course ...

**M:** No.

**R:** ... but he starts borrowing it in huge quantities, just gets into enormous debt. Debt that we can't even contemplate. And clearly somebody sees promise in him. We think he's borrowing from a very rich man at the time called Crassus who's going to be really significant in Caesar's career. And Crassus, if it is Crassus, seems willing to just keep lending him money.

**M:** So at this point I imagine the way to get ahead politically would be for Caesar to make some very careful strategic political alliances, wouldn't it?

**R:** Absolutely. And in the 60s BCE is a time when things are really, really starting to grind to a halt in the late Republic. Powers being held on to by a small group of families and this is pretty frustrating for Caesar and also for a man who's had huge military victories, Pompey. They kind of come together to try and break this stranglehold. They're not particularly natural allies but they've got something in common in that Caesar it's pretty clear is becoming what will eventually be called a *popularis*, a man of the people, a popular man. It doesn't mean he's a democrat. People used to translate it like that. What it means is that he gets his power base from the people. Pompey isn't a natural *popularis* at all and he will end up on the other side of this battle which is called the *optimates* or the best men, who are much more into hierarchy and structure. But he does want land for his veterans. He wants to settle the veterans of his army on land and Caesar wants land reform. This has caused all kinds of conflict for decades in Rome, so the two of them form a kind of informal alliance. And they get a third man involved in this who's called Crassus, the man who was probably lending money to Caesar who, again, isn't a particularly natural ally that seems to have seen that this would be a good

power base. And they sort [of], they're informally called The First Triumvirate which is the first group of three men, band together. And they have no constitutional base for this. It's probably all done in secret at first at least and the way that they seal the deal is that Caesar's daughter, Julia, marries Pompey. So, again we get marriage as a politically strategic move. Pompey, we know was born in 106 BCE, so if we agree that Caesar was born in 100 Pompey is six years older and he's marrying Caesar's daughter, we don't know exactly when she was born but she's the daughter from his first marriage to Cornelia, so she's probably born some time in the mid to late 80s. She's a lot younger than Pompey. This is a huge age difference even by Roman terms. Where it would be normal to have, I don't know, 15, 20 year gap. And it's a marriage that does at least potentially generate children although, unfortunately Julia dies in childbirth. But it's something that brings Caesar and Pompey together. Caesar becomes Pompey's father-in-law which is a bit weird because he's younger than him.

**M:** Around the same time Caesar gets married again doesn't he? Is that also a marriage for political reasons?

**R:** It's a marriage that we don't know too much about. He marries a woman called Pompeia but this is not anything to do with an alliance with Pompey. She's not closely related to him. The main thing we know about it is why it broke up and that's because somebody called Clodius kind of invaded a private ceremony that was meant to only be for women which was being held at Caesar's house. Caesar at this point had gotten another important priesthood, the most important priesthood. He was Pontifex Maximus, he was Chief Priest. So this is part of his rise to power. This is not something that means he has to stick around in Rome but it's a really important influential role and one that he holds for the rest of his life and then it's something that the most important man in Rome will always take on and in fact Pontifex Maximus is still the name that the Pope uses for himself. Well, he is the Pontifex Maximus, the Chief Priest. So it's something with a tradition that comes down to our day. So Caesar's Chief Priest and because of this his wife gets to hold this ceremony, the ceremony of the Great Goddess in her house. There must be no men present at all. But Clodius, this rather tricky figure invades the ceremony apparently to meet with his lover who's also present there, one of the women there, he dresses up as a woman but he gets discovered and because of this Caesar divorces Pompeia and says that, this is where we get the phrase about Caesar's wife from, I don't know if you've, the phrase is Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.

**M:** Right.

**R:** So he's saying I don't believe anything went on, whereas it probably did, but Caesar's wife has to be above suspicion and it's sort of like saying you know I must look squeaky clean which is sort of hilarious because Caesar was known to have affairs with married women throughout his life and this is part of the sort of risky behaviour that Caesar adopts. And similarly he sort of risks his career a lot of times by getting involved with the wives of

elite men. And he just seems to have been addicted to having affairs with these women. He could have had affairs with prostitutes or courtesans or less elite women but there's a theory that he sort of liked the danger as he's always at risk of making political enemies by doing this.

**M:** This is Caesar who's also referred to by his enemies sometimes as Caesar the Queen of Bithynia?

**R:** Yes. The story about that comes from early on and perhaps something I should have gone into when Caesar was trying to make his mark early on in the east in that he's supposed to have had a relationship with the King of Bithynia, Nicomedes.

**M:** He spent too long there, didn't he?

**R:** He did.

**M:** And everyone got suspicious?

**R:** They did.

**M:** Yes. So it's kind of an amazing little bit of double standards there. Maybe it was a convenient reason to get divorced from his wife?

**R:** Maybe so. The Nicomedes taunt is something that's used about him throughout his life but is very typical of the kind of cut and thrust of Roman politics. If they find something to fix on and they say oh you're a, they call it a *canidus* which is a particularly nasty taunt. But here he does divorce his wife at this point. He probably hasn't spent that much time with her but he's on the way up and he can't risk any scandal at this point.

**M:** So as a result of being a part of this gang of three does that extend his political career at this point? Does it have the effect that he wants?

**R:** Absolutely. He has the support of a really influential person in Pompey and another influential person in Crassus and ...

**M:** With deep pockets.

**R:** Both of them immensely rich. And it's in their interest to get Caesar into the consulship and so they no doubt fund that because Pompey knows if Caesar gets to be **consul** then he will get the land settlement for his men and that's what, absolutely what he's after. So Caesar becomes a **consul** in 59 BCE and it's a very, very controversial year because getting this land reform through makes him a lot of enemies, perhaps the most famous one is Cato, often called Cato the Younger who really hates the idea of this because he's a senator, a magistrate and a lot of the more traditional senators don't want land reform because power in Rome is based on land and these senators have vast amounts of land. So they just say no, no, no and it's kind of their hard line that's going to lead to conflict at Rome eventually. And they hate Caesar. They're sort of a minority in the senate but

they're vocal and they try and stand in his way at every turn. And he just starts, he starts using the power of what are called the Tribunes, the Tribunes of the people who have the veto, they're meant to protect the ordinary people to get around what they people keep trying to do. He's **consul** also with one of those conservatives, a man called Bibulus which is a really funny name because Bibulus means drunkard now. There's always two **consuls** every year and the purpose of having two **consuls** is that there is balance because they can veto each other, all right, so nothing new can happen unless everybody wants it. This leads to a very conservative state. But at the first outing of the land bill Bibulus gets up to veto it and Caesar says well okay I'm going to take it to the people. Which is entirely illegal. I mean, it doesn't make any sense. The people vote for the **consuls** but they don't get to make decisions after that. And he ... makes this great speech to the people, people that he's probably organised to be in the forum, so Bibulus has to respond and there's basically a riot and he gets a big barrel of dung thrown at him, poor Bibulus and then never appears in public again. And basically during that year which the Romans name years by who's **consul** that year, it's meant to be the year of the consulship and Caesar and Bibulus, people start calling it the year of the consulship of Julius and Caesar because Bibulus is nowhere to be seen. He has no authority anymore. He's effectively been drummed out. And of course this means Caesar has a lot of power and he gets to do what he wants but it also means that there's lots of people feeling more and more angry with Caesar that he's sort of taken this power all to himself. So there's trouble brewing. He's setting himself up to have enemies who really detest him at the same time that he's getting very popular with a lot of the ordinary people and a segment of the senate too.

**M:** So if you're only **consul** for one year where does that leave Caesar to go after he's held this position?

**R:** After you've been **consul** it's normal to go and govern a province. You get called Proconsul then because you sort of still retain a lot of the similar powers as **consul** but not in Rome itself. And he sort of manages it during his year as **consul** that he will get to be the Proconsul of Gaul, which at this point is actually just a tiny little bit of Southern France that we call Provence and a bit of Northern Italy which technically doesn't have Roman citizenship at that point, and also a little strip of what we think of as Croatia. So it's a sort of weird province because it's a bit all over the place. But he does this strategically because he knows there's the rest of Gaul, France and Belgium to conquer and ...

**M:** It gives him a big frontier to work from?

**R:** It gives him a place to conquer, it gives him a kind of field of glory. And he knows he can make his name, even more, he can get even more honours by doing this. He'll get a triumph out of it. By the way we should mention that he gave up a triumph to be *consul* which is, you know, the height of glory for a military leader is to hold a triumph, a huge parade in Rome. He wants to go out and earn one now in Gaul and that is exactly what he does.

## Caesar and Gaul

Transcript of interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans

**M:** *Ave*, and welcome to Emperors of Rome, a podcast series looking at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host, Matt Smith, and with me as always, Dr Rhiannon Evans, lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. This is episode III, Caesar and Gaul.

When we last left Caesar, he'd entered the political sphere; he was made the governor of one of the northern provinces, and he was starting to turn an eye to the territories out west. Now, we know quite a lot about his campaigns in Gaul, and that's mostly due to the fact that he took the time to write it all down. Here's Rhiannon Evans.

**R:** Julius Caesar, he's left us with two books. They're known as, in Latin, as *commentarii*, which roughly translates as notes. We tend to call them the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*, which in Latin is *Bellum Gallicum* and *Bellum Ciuile*. But there's a lot of argument about what it's actually called because of the complexities of the manuscript tradition, and the whole lot are probably just called "notes", and they're notes on particular wars, and there are books within that. Much simpler for us to call them the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*, but we don't know exactly what they were called in antiquity.

**M:** And is this our main source of information on the *Gallic Wars*?

**R:** Absolutely. It's the only contemporary source, apart from some letters of Cicero and others bits and pieces. Others talk about it later, historians who write in Latin and Greek.

**M:** The one thing that I did pick up about these books is we don't actually have copies of Caesar's books themselves or any contemporary copies of that time.

**R:** Absolutely not.

**M:** What do we have and how reliable is it?

**R:** Well, it's pretty reliable. We have a decent manuscript tradition of Caesar's texts, so that they're complete. In fact, some people would argue that the unreliable aspect of that is that other people added things in, that scribes might have decided to elaborate on some

of his descriptions, like we write marginalia that then got incorporated. One of the things that scholars do is look at his text and think about what is not actually authentic; they try to get rid of things that they think don't fit or look like they've been added later. But on the whole, and compared to lots of other classical texts we have, we have a pretty good resource with Caesar's text, as is the case with nearly every classical text we have. The original text, as it were, or text from Caesar's time, doesn't exist; there's isn't too much debate about the texts of the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*.

**M:** So tell me about the texts, and what was Caesar doing? What are these texts about? They're about the Gallic Wars, but where do they start, where do they finish? Is it a battle report?

**R:** In some ways it is. It goes year by year, so there are seven books written by Caesar and then an eighth book written by one of his generals. And all of the books written by Caesar cover one year of campaign: book 1 is the year 58 BCE. And lots of people have imagined that this is what he sent back to the senate, or something analogous with what he sent back to the senate as his report of what he was doing in Gaul. But he doesn't actually start out with, "This is me, I'm off to Gaul to conquer it." He doesn't even start out with himself. He starts out with a map of Gaul, because he basically maps out what he eventually conquers.

**M:** Okay, so book 1, he puts a map there, he goes, "This is where I'm going to go." How did he define Gaul? What did he define as Gaul? Because we think of Gaul as France, but it was bigger than France.

**R:** Absolutely.

**M:** What did he define as Gaul, and is that the definition that we go by for history?

**R:** Well, I would say this is another area where basically Caesar's won, in that before Caesar went to Gaul for the Romans, Gaul meant a couple of things: it meant stuff to the north of Italy, but it actually meant stuff that we now think of as in Italy, because there's an area call Cis-Alpine Gaul, which means "Gaul this side of the Alps".

Now, we think of everything south of the Alps, and part of the Alps, as Italy now, but the Romans didn't. Northern Italy was originally a little bit outside to them, and possibly even barbarian; it was occupied by Gauls, it was not technically part of Italy, it wasn't something incorporated until Caesar did that in 48 BCE. And so they thought of Northern Italy as a little bit sub-civilised, which is quite different to the way Italy thinks of itself now, where the northerners think they're much more sophisticated. But that was not the case in antiquity. So Gaul is Northern Italy and then the other side of Gaul, Transalpine Gaul, really means to them a part of France that we now call Provence, which was the earliest Roman province, and that's where the name Provence comes from and they just called it "the province"; it was the province of Transalpine Gaul.

But Caesar actually defines Gaul as something completely different, which is all of Gaul beyond there, and that is everything west of the Rhine, which incorporates what we would now think of as France, bits of Belgium, bits of Germany, bits of the Netherlands, so quite a big territory in the north-west of Europe, and that is the way that we tend to use Gaul now, perhaps also with Provence in there. But he redefines Gaul, and almost instantly people start referring to it in that way; that's the way Cicero refers to Gaul in his letters. It's something that Caesar seems to create, and it's almost like he invents the geography of north-west Europe.

**M:** Caesar maps out what he's going to conquer. What are the margins of the territory then that he's defined as this? Where does he intend to go?

**R:** The boundaries that he lays out ... what become provinces... he gives us a definition of [them]. And this actually has an impact on the way we think of the Gallic Wars as being written, because some people think it was written year by year and sent in, as I say, perhaps to the senate. Some people think he got to the end and just wrote it altogether. And there are scholarly arguments about whether the style changes, therefore it was probably written year by year.

But I think possibly one of the arguments that it was all written together is that at the beginning he lays out this territory, which he can't really say is conquered, certainly not for 2 or 3 years, and arguably it's right at the end that he's pacified this space. So it's as if he told us at the beginning what he's going to do, "This will be Gaul."

**M:** So what did Caesar's writings tell us about the Gallic War and the Gallic people?

**R:** Well, in some ways it's very partial. Along the way, he tells us bits of information in relation to the way the Gauls fight against him. And you have to understand actually he's not fighting all of Gaul at once; it tends to be particular areas, particular peoples, particular tribal groups who rise up at any particular time. Sometimes they've been allied with him before and they break that treaty.

And that's one of the things he tells us about the Gauls, and this actually fits into a previous Roman stereotype: they're unreliable, they might flick the other way at any particular point, they can't unify. At various periods, especially in 52 BCE, which is book 7 of his work, they try to form this big kind of alliance to stand up, one last stand really against Caesar, under the great demagogue Vercingetorix, but it all falls apart: they don't trust each other, they never really stand behind Vercingetorix, they think that he's got ambitions to be a king. And so it's the lack of Gallic unity that plays against them and plays into Caesar's hands, of course, because he can divide and conquer.

**M:** So is this our most complete picture of what the Gallic people were like?

**R:** Yes, it is. Partly because Caesar, for reasons that we're not entirely clear about, suddenly in book 6 says, "At this point I'm going to tell you all about the Gauls and Germans" and

for about half of the book almost he goes into what we would regard as a formal ethnography. He says, “The Gauls have this form of government, they’re very status conscious, they’re really addicted to religion”, he tells us, and this is when he tells us about the druids. And this is our earliest account of the druids and really one of the very few from antiquity. So when people dress up in robes and go to Stonehenge, they’re sort of basing all of that on Caesar and extrapolating from it a great deal.

And what he tells us about the druids is that they’re very very learned, they have to train for an awfully long time and they have to keep all of the learning in their heads because the Gauls won’t write down this sacred text, even though they can write. So he doesn’t give us a negative view of the Gauls in all aspects by any means, and he seems to have a lot of respect for this learning. On the other hand, their religion also involves human sacrifice which, even though the Romans said that they themselves had practised it on occasion, usually in very extreme circumstances, it wouldn’t have seemed like a civilised activity and a normal religious ritual to the Romans. So he is differentiating them in that way.

**M:** What sort of picture did he give, if any at all, about the diversity amongst the Gallic people? Were the, say, Gallic people in France the same as those, say, from the Germanic tribes?

**R:** Well, he actually sees the Germanic peoples as a separate people. Now, archaeological evidence doesn’t seem to indicate there was a great deal of cultural difference either side of the Rhine, but Caesar says there was and he marks them out as very different. And this is one way that he talks about the Gauls, as being culturally superior to the Germans, or we shouldn’t really call them the Germans, the *Germanii* in his terms. The *Germanii* don’t have much agriculture, they seem to be semi-nomadic, they don’t have gods, or they do but they’re just the sun, they’re not like Roman or Gallic gods, they don’t really seem to have organised religion. So he makes them look very different and in our language sub-civilised really.

But within the Gauls he does differentiate too, and part of that differentiation is based on how close they are to the *Germanii*, spatially, or how close they are to the Roman province. The ones in what we would call modern Belgium, he called them the *Belgae*, they have had more contact with the *Germanii*, they’ve fought against them, so they’re tougher and less civilised. And the ones closer to the province, they’ve had more contact with trade and wine and they’ve sort of become more civilised but also a bit softer, more accustomed to rule than easiest conquest in some ways. So there is a difference within the Gauls.

I mean, famously at the beginning of the work, in this map that he draws, he says, “All of Gaul is divided into three parts.” And those three parts, in some ways he doesn’t really talk about the rest of the work except to say the *Belgae* are tougher. And then there’s a

big part in the centre, which are confusingly the *Galli*, the Gauls, and then there's the *Aquitani*, who don't get that much attention; they're in the south-west corner. So he does differentiate, but largely along these cultural lines and largely based on their proximity to the Roman province or to the *Germanii*.

**M:** You said that a large part of the ethnography came in book 6. Is there evidence that his view changed through the books on how he perceived the Gallic people to be?

**R:** There is, but I think you have to infer it. He talks about the *Germanii* a lot actually as barbarians, he uses the Latin word *barbarus* a lot for them. He uses it occasionally for the Gauls as well, but in book 7 he never uses it; it's as if they've become more civilised by book 7. It could be a coincidence he just doesn't happen to use the word there, but I think that is actually a message that they're sliding under Roman rule and therefore becoming more civilised. I don't know if his view changes though. Maybe you could infer that the Gauls changed, rather than his view changed; they're a people to be conquered throughout.

**M:** What does his book say about his fighting and his war? How much of it was propaganda?

**R:** It's all propaganda. It builds up Caesar as an entirely admirable commander. Quite often there will be occasions when the Roman army's in trouble because Caesar's somewhere else, and when Caesar turns up, almost just the sight of him inspires his troops and they will win that battle. But he also commends the Roman army, the Roman soldiers, as superior to the Gauls; they're superior in bravery, they will stand fast, they're unified, which the Gauls often aren't.

They have superior technology. So they can build bridges really quickly, he builds a lot of bridges, including two over the Rhine. And, you know, he doesn't actually claim all the credit for that; he does say, especially when they build the second one, the fact that they were experienced and they were really enthusiastic, they really got to it, "We did it really quickly." So he commends his soldiers a lot because they are the ideal Romans, and their technology is superior to that of the Gauls.

The Gauls are constantly amazed at the appearance of this fort or this tower or this bridge, and they're also amazed by the speed of the Romans, lots of forced marches. Being a soldier under Caesar must have been hell. It gives us this overall impression of this military machine that's hard to defeat, but it has to be led by Caesar.

**M:** So where did Britain come in? Are they part of what Caesar saw as Gallic? And what sort of challenge did it present, them being, as he said, across the ocean?

**R:** An enormous challenge and he didn't really need to go there. It's very much a symbolic move, to have conquered Ocean as much as going to Britain. He campaigns in Britain twice in 55 and 54 BCE, but it's more the getting there that is the victory, I would argue.

Indeed, most people think what he did the first time around is, you would regard it as a failure, if it were anyone but Caesar presenting it. The second time around he sort of, you know, makes an alliance with the Trinobante king and there's a little bit of networking, if you like, going on. But as I say, it's conquering Ocean that's very very important. He gives us a short ethnography of the Britons; they're not Gallic, in his view, but they're much more closely related to the Gauls than the *Germanii* are, even though they're across a much bigger, more treacherous, body of water. Indeed, he says he's heard that the religious knowledge, the knowledge that the druids have, comes from Britain, Britannia, and if the druids need a sort of almost like a workshop they go over to Britannia to retrieve more of that knowledge. So that's the source of their religious ritual and knowledge. He also though seems to define the Britons as not as civilised as the Gauls, so again there's a bit of a hierarchy and it's probably based on this idea he has of proximity to southern Europe basically; they're further away so they don't have very organised agriculture, and this is one of the reasons he gives for not hanging around in Britain, that it's difficult to stay there because he can't get corn. He's obsessed with the corn supply. He's a practical military leader; you've got to feed your troops, and if you can't get this effectively then you can't stay there. And it's the same in Germania; they don't have organised agriculture so it's not easy to campaign in their territory. That's the sort of excuse for leaving early, as it were.

## Caesars triumph

Transcript of interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans and Dr Sarah Midford

**M:** *Ave*, and welcome to *Emperors of Rome*, a podcast series in which we look at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host, Matt Smith, and joining me is always is Dr Rhiannon Evans, lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. Also joining us is [Dr] Sarah Midford, a lecturer at La Trobe University. This is episode IV, Caesar's Triumph.

When we last left Caesar, he'd spent years expanding the borders of Rome, bringing Gaul and the Germanic tribes into the Roman Empire, and he's now reached the time where he can return home as a conquering hero and receive all the accolades that come with it.

**S:** The greatest thing that one could hope for after a military campaign in Rome was a triumphal procession. So when Caesar came home, he was obviously hoping for a triumphal procession. There was a lot ... that happened in between him finishing his campaign and him receiving this triumphal procession, but he did, and the Gallic triumph was the most spectacular of a quadruple triumph that he celebrated for all his campaigns. This 4-day procession actually happened over a period of about a month and it was one of the most spectacular triumphal processions that Rome had ever seen. So basically he was saying, "I'm better than everyone else that's come before me."

**M:** Describe a triumph for me. What are we talking here? Are we talking crowds of people cheering on all the soldiers marching, Caesar leading the way, waving from the top of a horse?

**S:** Well, he was in a *quadriga*, which is a 4-horse chariot. The 4 horses would have been abreast, and it was a particular type of chariot that was associated with the gods, it was a special chariot. But the procession itself was actually a religious ritual and a payment to Jupiter for the benefit that had come to Rome from the war that had been won.

Before anyone left campaigning in Rome, they would go to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill and they would pay sacrifice and say, "Please help me. I'm going to war and I want to win." And when they won, their duty was to come back to Rome and to thank Jupiter Optimus Maximus for the win. So the triumphal procession was actually a religious ritual and a religious payment to Jupiter for the good fortune.

And because it was religious, it was highly ritualised. So the order of the procession actually started with the spoils, it started with the captive soldiers, the senate, and finally, the last person to come in would be the *triumphator*. It built and built and built and people got more and more excited. People would come in from out of town for this; certainly for Caesar's, a lot of people came in from out of town. According to Suetonius, there were so many people in the city for Caesar's triumphal processions that quite a few got trampled to death, so it was basically a giant mosh-pit for the duration of these processions.

And then Caesar came in on his *quadriga* and he would have lapped up all the glory, headed straight for the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and paid that sacrifice he owed to the gods for his victory, on the way slaying all the prisoners in the prison and depositing a lot of the spoils in the Treasury. A lot of the spoils he got to keep for himself.

**M:** Right. So there was a real kind of, it was like a victory lap of Rome.

**S:** Absolutely.

**M:** When you say, "slay all the prisoners", these are the people that they'd taken captive in the war.

**R:** They almost certainly wouldn't have brought all of the captives home, but a representative number and all of the high profile ones, the chieftains, they were really important.

**M:** So Vercingetorix would have been there.

**R:** Absolutely. He was.

**M:** How long was he a captive at that point then?

**S:** Kept alive for 6 years.

**M:** Wow.

**R:** Because it was a complicated process for Caesar to get his triumph, and so Vercingetorix had to be just kept there as this trophy so that he could be killed on that day.

**S:** Yeah. A couple of hours on the street so people could have a look at him, 6 years worth of feeding, moving.

**R:** Which is another reason you wouldn't bring every single captive back. You have to feed them and keep them alive until you kill them.

**S:** But the more that you did bring back, the greater you were showing off your wealth. So if you had a lot of prisoners in your procession, then you were basically saying, "I have the wealth to be able to keep these people alive for this long, and also to then expend their life just for the spectacle of it."

In earlier triumphs, not in Caesar's triumph, often if there weren't that many spoils, they would bring back people and vice versa, so if they had a lot of spoils then maybe they wouldn't bring back quite so many people; they might bring back representatives or people in national costume. It was about representing what the place looked like. In a sense, the triumph was a sort of a visual newsreel of the local culture of the territory of the people, their resources. Basically anything that was different to Roman, they would put in this procession deliberately to show that it was different.

**M:** So our main source of the *Gallic Wars* is the writings of Caesar. How much do we have on his triumph?

**S:** There are a couple of sources that give us some detail. There's nothing really contemporary that talks about his triumph at all, unfortunately.

**R:** And by later, for example, Suetonius, who was a biographer, and his longest biography is that of Julius Caesar, he is writing probably around 120 CE, so that's getting close to 200 years after the fact.

**M:** So how much can you trust ...

**S:** Well, a lot of them I think are commenting on the opulence that was going on in a triumph, regardless of who's writing about any triumph in any time period. It's usually a commentary on foreignness being brought into Rome and wealth being brought into Rome and how that's actually making the Roman people softer and more opulent and not as good as their traditional austere ancestors. This extends to Caesar's triumphs as well.

And especially in later periods because of the transition between the republican period and the imperial period that happens around the time of Julius Caesar, people are

actually making more of a commentary on the changes that are being brought in in these processions than they are about what's actually in them. So when they talk about ivory models of cities that have been carved in Caesar's triumph, they're saying that this is just a waste of money, like, "Why would you carve a city out of ivory? I mean, yeah, it looks cool for the day but what are you going to do with it afterwards?"

**R:** I mean, there are two things to bear in mind: (1) that Suetonius wasn't just making this up nearly 200 years later, he had other earlier sources to look at and he was actually an imperial secretary, secretary to the Emperor Hadrian, so he would have had good access to any sources that there were. But as Sarah says, they're very much writing in retrospect in the knowledge of what happened afterwards.

**S:** The triumph is a very unique and rare honour in Rome. It's only offered if a general fulfils a huge list of criteria that are set out by the senate, and then the final criteria is the senate agrees to the award. It's a long process; sometimes people are sitting outside of Rome for years with their army, with their captives, with foreign animals, just so they can have this honour. And it happens less than once a year throughout the republic, much less than once a year throughout the republic. So to be awarded this honour is an amazing right. It is so amazing because it is the only time in Rome where one person gets to stand alone with power.

So the Roman system of government, the highest office you can hold is a consulship, and you always hold that with another *consul*; there's two people in power at the same time. And you're not allowed to command an army while you're in the city of Rome. And you have power, you can only command an army when you are outside the city of Rome, and you're not allowed to bring that army anywhere near Rome.

**R:** So there's a real distinction between civic and military. They actually talk about going into the Toga, that's your civic costume, and going into the general's uniform which they call the *sagum*, the military cloak. And that is meant to be an absolute divide; you're either doing the citizen role or you're doing the military commander role.

**S:** And you've got this triumphal robe, which is the gap between these two spaces, because it is the robe that you wear when you have both civic and military power. And you stand in your *quadriga* and you ride through the streets of Rome in this special purple outfit, and purple is a colour that is normally reserved for the gods, and you have a slave that's standing behind you who is reminding you constantly by whispering in your ear to look behind you, which in Rome means to look to the future, because the future comes from behind, so look behind you and remember that you are just a man.

So you're constantly being reminded that you are a mortal while you're having this triumphal procession, because you're wearing the clothes of the gods and you have civic and military power at the same time. And in addition to this, the slave is standing behind him whispering in his ear and he's holding a golden crown over the *triumphator's*

head, so he's almost a king as well. So he has all of this power for the duration of this triumphal procession.

And what Caesar does, he takes little elements out of this procession that's only supposed to last for a day: first of all, his lasts for 4; second of all, he starts wearing the triumphal costume around to different festivals; and he starts getting presented crowns. And people start calling him *Rex*, or king. Now, Caesar never accepts the crown and he never calls himself king. He says things like, "I am not king; I am Caesar."

So many kings have taken the word "Caesar" to mean king in future societies. The word Kaiser comes from him, the word Tsar comes from Caesar as well. So effectively, he's starting to sort of bleed this very very ritualised, very contained, special ceremony into his daily life, and the power that comes with it eventually becomes too much.

**M:** Is that ego, is that seeded during his triumph, or is that something that you can also see coming through in his books? I mean, I know that you said that it's propaganda, but he does seem to get a big head as a result of that. And being the slave who has to tell you that you are just a normal man must be the worst job in the world; I don't envy that slave. But is there signs of Caesar the person seeded in his writing?

**R:** I don't think that he does give us signs of it there; I don't think he wants us to think of him as adopting that role. While he's on campaign, he's on campaign. He gives us this idea that he's entirely single-minded about this campaign. So he rarely mentions Italy, okay, so the campaign happens basically during the summer; spring, summer, early autumn. And his job by the way, his job is not to be in Gaul, I should mention, his job is to be back in the Province, Illyricum and Cisalpine Gaul, he's governor of those places.

You could say that what he's telling us in these books is going beyond what he's meant to, but he doesn't emphasise that. He emphasises the geographical and military conquest, but he doesn't talk about the way that this might relate to his relationship with Rome, I suppose you could say, or his relationship with the republican institutions. In fact, he rarely mentions what's going on in Rome, and there's a lot going on in Rome at this point. He's got people ... standing in for him [and] keeping his name alive back in Rome; they're not mentioned.

When he goes back to, usually to Italy, or at least to Cisalpine Gaul every winter, that's all he says, "I went back and I carried out the assizes", it's usually translated as, which means he went back and judged some cases, which is one of his jobs. He did his job as governor back in the winter. But he's not giving us really any impression that he's developing a different role. All he's telling us is that he's going beyond what any military commander's done before.

Because this is part of his propaganda war with Pompeius Magnus, Pompey the Great, and Pompey had had great conquests in the east and great success in that and, you

know, had amassed a huge amount of money and authority through that. And it will be Pompey with whom he has the *Civil War* when he comes back into Italy at the end of the *Gallic War*.

They're carrying out this propaganda war in all kinds of ways through their conquests abroad and then through - while Caesar's away, Pompey has a huge building plan in Rome, including most famously Pompey's Theatre. He builds the first permanent theatre at Rome and, you know, that will make him popular with the people because it's an entertainment structure. So they're carrying it out in different ways, through public building, through the wars and their conquests, and with Caesar through his writings. So I think it's much more about trying to be better than his opponents at that time. You wouldn't guess from reading the *Gallic Wars* that he's going to go on and do what Sarah suggested, which is take this role of king, which is anathema to the Romans, and try and run with it.

**S:** I think also the fact that he's writing it down, and obviously it's been disseminated afterwards, otherwise we wouldn't have it, it's another way of standing alone, by himself, in power; he's demonstrating that he is in charge of this army and he is in charge of this conquest and he is doing this, by himself, for Rome, obviously for Rome, not for Caesar, but it is, it's a way of defining himself.

So I think there's a connection there, but I think absolutely it's about propaganda and it's about competing with Pompey and it's about all sorts of other things. Caesar's always looking for a way to define himself from the pack; he wants to stand all by himself. And he does at the end of his life; he's the dictator for life; he has effectively made himself a king without using the word, and he's assassinated for that.

**R:** I suppose you should think about the different audiences that they're for as well. I mean, arguably, his written work is for people who can read the *Bellum Gallicum* or I guess can have someone read it to them, and there are arguments about how much literacy there was at Rome, but it would be relatively low. So it's aimed mostly at an educated class, and you could say mostly at the senate perhaps, whereas the triumph is for everybody; everybody can come and look at this and people of any status, and these symbols will be meaningful to them because it's not something in writing, it's not something you need and education to understand. You can see how glamorous and how amazingly opulent this ceremony is. So it's very important that Caesar transmits that message to the whole of Rome, which he does through his triumph, not really so much as through his writings.

## Caesar and civil war

Transcript of interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans

**M:** Ave, and welcome to Emperors of Rome, a podcast series in which we look at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host, Matt Smith, and with me as always is Dr Rhiannon Evans, lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. This is episode V, Caesar and *Civil War*. When we last left Caesar, he'd conquered Gaul and the Germanic tribes, returned home the triumphant leader, enjoyed his triumph, and now with a great army standing right behind him, he's ready to take power in Rome.

**R:** By about 51 BCE, it seems like all of Gaul is pretty much pacified and he's ready to come home, of course he wants to come home to a triumph, which he's certainly going to be awarded. However, he has problems with coming back for a number of reasons. The main one is that he made all those enemies in the senate and they want to prosecute him now. And in Rome, once you give up your magistracy, once you give up the power that they call *imperium*, you can be prosecuted. So a *consul* can be prosecuted at the end of his year; a proconsul or governor can be prosecuted when he gives up his power.

Caesar hasn't been prosecuted as *consul* because he went straight into being proconsul. But now when he gives up being proconsul, which he's been for a good long time longer than most people get that power, he's been in Gaul from 58-51, right, 5 years would normally be a long time, once he gives that up, people like Cato are ready to pounce. So he's in a bit of a dilemma: does he come back to Rome or does he hold onto his army and hold onto his *imperium*? And this is something that has to be negotiated very carefully.

And there are signs that Pompey and other senators were trying to negotiate with Caesar a way that he could give up his army, or maybe retain one legion, there's a whole kind of series of negotiations going on through 50 BCE, an attempt to prevent any conflict basically. It's important to note that Caesar can't come into Italy at the head of his army. If he does that, that's a declaration of civil war.

**M:** And how have his alliances fared while he's been away in Gaul at this point?

**R:** Well, things are starting to fall apart a bit. In a way, the first triumvirate, that gang of three, was a way, not of bringing together three people who were natural allies, but a way of bringing together people who had some things in common, they wanted the land distribution, but also a way of reinforcing their individual power. They had enemies, so they could stand against these enemies together. But they're not people who would naturally stand together. And Crassus in fact has died in 53 BCE in terrible ignominy at the Battle of Carrhae in Parthia, where the Romans lost their standards, which is the worst thing you can do.

**M:** That being the banners that hold the crests.

**R:** Exactly, with the eagle on top. So this is a source of terrible shame, but it also means one of the gang of three is gone. Pompey, remember, was married to Caesar's daughter,

Julia, but she had died in childbirth in 54, and there are signs that now there's tension between Caesar and Pompey. And this is not surprising, because the republican system was that you went for individual power, all right, it's often called a zero sum game: you win, everybody else loses. And it's sort of a tension between power [that] should be spread out, so you have two **consuls**, you have other magistrates, you're only **consul** for a year, and you have to try and achieve the most you can as an individual. So this tension is coming to a head now: will it be Caesar or Pompey who allows the other to have more authority?

**M:** So Caesar knows that if he gives up his title of proconsul, then he's going to be prosecuted. If he comes back to Rome, then not only will he lose his army, but he has no real allies to come back to either.

**R:** There are fewer and fewer. He has people who have been acting in his interests while he was in Gaul ...

**M:** But still they're far outnumbered and not as influential as the enemy.

**R:** The enemy is actually not huge in number in the senate, but they are very influential.

**M:** Right.

**R:** And there is this argument that he should have come back and faced them down. He now, having had this amazing success in Gaul, and by the way that means he's got a lot of money now. From having been in extreme debt, he now has so much money that he's just doling it out to his soldiers like there's no tomorrow. There was a danger, you know, people often survived prosecution, but he might not have done; he might have been sent into exile, which would have been the end of his career possibly.

**M:** So he's got a massively loyal army.

**R:** That's the other thing to mention. This army has, by and large, been with him for those 8 years. And this is the other part of the problem with the late republic, the same was happening with Pompey, that now armies are becoming loyal to individuals rather than loyal to Rome. So they're Caesar's army in effect; Pompey has his army.

So even if he were to give them up, he's still got all of these veterans who would be loyal to him, and this is a very dangerous situation. This is clearly perceived at Rome, and that's why there are these furious negotiations to try to settle the situation without war. Because a lot of older Romans remember the time of Sulla and Marius, which had resulted in huge huge bloodshed, terrible terrible suffering for years and years and years. There was a lot of memory of that and attempts to prevent it, but it didn't work.

**M:** So the saying, "Crossing the Rubicon" is around these days and basically it means going past the point of no return. This is the origin of this phrase, isn't it? Caesar, if he

took his armies over the river Rubicon, then that would really signal his intentions of returning to Rome with his army and seizing power.

**R:** Yes, and this is what happens eventually. It sounds like a very decisive move, and it is when it happens but, as I say, it sort of happened very slowly, with a lot of negotiation which didn't work, and eventually Caesar does bring his army into Italy. We don't actually know where the Rubicon is; it's a river and ... obviously people have tried to find it. Unfortunately a lot of river courses have changed since antiquity. We know it's somewhere between Rimini and Ravenna on the east coast of Italy. But we don't know exactly where, but we do know when he crossed it, this was a statement that he's declaring war against the senate. That's certainly how the senate read it.

**M:** So if you can't bring an army into Italy and Caesar's coming into Italy with his army, what does the senate do? What's the reaction? They've suddenly got Caesar's army at the walls.

**R:** Well, remember that the senate is pretty much divided, so there are the traditionalists who are absolutely opposed to Caesar, and they kind of choose Pompey as their sort of leader now.

**M:** That's ironic.

**R:** Well, it's ironic that he was Caesar's ally. But all along, I'd say this was a pretty uncomfortable alliance and it's fallen apart in the late 50s. And they sort of negotiate with Pompey. I guess the theory is mostly that Pompey was unhappy that Caesar wouldn't submit to Pompey's authority; he wanted to be the man in charge. So it's not so much that he's fighting for the republican cause as he wants to be no. 1 in Rome. But for whatever reason, Pompey leaves Italy to congregate his army, he doesn't have an army in Italy, and Caesar continues marching down to Rome.

And then he sort of takes control in Rome and is declared dictator in 48, and so civil war is on really from 49-45. As dictator, Caesar can really do anything he wants. It's a position that you are elected to when there is a crisis, and there's no doubt that there is a crisis. It's something that you're only meant to have, according to republican law, for 6 months at a time, but it's something that Caesar never really gives up after this.

**M:** At this point, Pompey is Caesar's big challenger, is the person that he really needs to worry about. So Pompey's objective at this point is to rally his forces against the dictatorship of Caesar. So where does he go to do this?

**R:** His power is pretty much always in the east. So he rallies his army there, he goes to Egypt, and he's murdered; he's murdered by the Ptolemies, who want to please Caesar. They've decided Caesar is the man to back in this game and they think that presenting [the murdered] Pompey to Caesar, who also comes to Alexandria, to Egypt at the time, will look good for them. But Caesar is actually not pleased about this; he regards this as,

you know, they've slaughtered a high-born Roman, this is the wrong thing to do. And so he occupies Egypt and starts messing around in their internal politics and basically puts Cleopatra in charge. This is how he comes into contact with Cleopatra.

**M:** Was he annoyed that he didn't get a big showdown to really cement his power, do you think?

**R:** Against Pompey?

**M:** Yeah.

**R:** It may have been that, yeah, that he wants to be the conqueror in the *Civil War*. Also it's kind of pointless, because it doesn't end the *Civil War*, it continues with people like Cato espousing the cause. So it doesn't actually help anything. It doesn't look good that a foreign power has killed an ex-Roman *consul*, a great Roman military figure. For whatever reason, Caesar was not happy with this.

**M:** So Caesar has really just become dictator, but he meets this person, Cleopatra, who has quite an influence of his life, his - no? That's just according to fiction then really?

**R:** Well, it's hard to know exactly what their relationship was based on. In terms of relationships and, as we've seen in Rome, marriages that are put forward for political gain, it sort of fits that model. Cleopatra needs a powerful ally, and she probably knows that Caesar is prone to sleep with lots of women, and so she's perhaps prepared to make that bargain. Whether it was a real love affair is very very hard to judge, especially because it's quite hard to know whether the Romans viewed romance in the way that we do, or they almost certainly didn't. So it's foremost a political alliance, but it's something that I guess is sealed by the sexual alliance.

And there are stories that Caesar, a bit like Antony later on, sort of spent months riding up and down the Nile on her luxurious barge and was giving way to this luxury. I know one of his modern biographers reads this as: Caesar needed a rest; he'd been at war for years, he'd be in Gaul, he comes back to *Civil War*. Why shouldn't he take a little bit of time out?

**M:** Fair enough, yeah.

**R:** But he does stay in Alexandria for a few months and he clearly does become involved with Cleopatra. When she gives birth to a son, she claims that Caesar is the father.

**M:** This really kind of takes his focus away from Rome when he doesn't need it to be, does it?

**R:** Well, I mean, he's making an alliance in Egypt, I guess you could read it like that, which is an important power base. And he does go back to the war in 48 and it rages

on for another 3 years, kind of around the Mediterranean, so Spain and Africa are also important bases for this war. But Caesar is ultimately victorious.

**M:** So at this point, he's made dictator for life.

**R:** He is. In 46, he is elected dictator for 10 years, and the following year, when it's clear that the *Civil War* has been won by Caesar, that is converted into dictator for life. This is highly irregular; there have been highly irregular things happening throughout the late republic, as we call it. For example, when I've been talking about minimum ages for magistracies, Pompey pretty much disobeyed all of those.

You're also meant to have 10 year gaps between consulships, which Caesar, up until this point, up until 48 [BCE], there had been a 10 year gap, but after that, he's **consul** an awful lot, and he only lives til 44 [BCE], so the rules are all falling apart. But perpetual dictatorship is different; perpetual dictatorship is basically saying one man rule, not in a time of crisis, not for a short period, but forever. And that looks like monarchy to the Romans, and they were right, it pretty much is monarchy.

## The death of Caesar

Transcript of interview between Matt Smith and Dr Rhiannon Evans

**M:** *Ave*, and welcome to Emperors of Rome, a podcast series looking at the rulers of the ancient Roman Empire. I'm your host, Matt Smith. With me as always is Dr Rhiannon Evans, lecturer in Ancient Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. This is episode VI, The Death of Caesar.

When we last left Caesar, the Roman Empire had been dragged through a bloody *Civil War*, with Caesar on one side, and Pompey and his supporters on the other. Julius Caesar emerges triumphant and for the most part he forgives those who criticised him and life more or less returns to normal in Rome. But while the *Civil War* is over, the grudges are by no means forgotten.

**R:** Once the *Civil War* is over, Caesar is dictator and he's also doing a number of things that start to look worrying to some members of the senate. So there's talk about him being a monarch, being a king, something that the Romans are sort of allergic to and the republican system is not meant to countenance. But Caesar starts doing things that aren't quite acceptable. For example, he wears the clothing of the general who is carrying out his triumph every day.

**M:** Purple, wasn't it?

**R:** Yeah, purple robe, big red boots. And he gets to wear the laurel wreath, which we think was because his hair was receding that he liked this idea, but it's a symbol; it's a symbol of being the *triumphator*. And he gets to sit in a chair between the **consuls**, when he's not

actually **consul** himself. This chair is made of ivory but at some point he has it gilded, so he's sitting on a gold throne basically. So there are all kinds of rumours circulating that he's angling to be king.

There's a story that Marc Antony, who's been his closest ally and kind of right-hand man for a while now, at an official ceremony called the Lupercalia, came up to him with a crown and presented it to him and tried to basically hold a coronation, and that Caesar rejected it. And historians read this story in lots of different ways: was Caesar testing the water to see whether the crowd would be happy with this? Or was it all prearranged so that he could be publicly seen rejecting the role of king? "I may be going around as a *triumphator*, I may have a gold throne, but I'm not actually going to call myself king."

Whatever the reality behind the story is, clearly Caesar was aware that people were saying these things, and he wanted to say publicly that that was not the case. It seemed to have backfired largely, because it sort of brought into people's minds even more the potential for Caesar and kingship.

**M:** So Caesar at this point, he's come into Rome, he's seized power, he's had a civil war, he's killed his enemies and he's taken power, that's a long step away from the Caesar who stood in front of the people and argued with his fellow **consul** and was really the man of the people at that point. How do the people take him being dictator?

**R:** He's not really going against the people, you could argue, I think very successfully, by being dictator. What he is opposing are the traditions of the republic, the traditions of the senate, and the power of the senate, so it's really the Roman aristocracy who lose power here. The Roman citizens are still going and voting for magistrates. Caesar has nominated the candidates, behind the scenes, but the mechanisms of the power that the people have are still there. Caesar does an awful lot of things to placate them. He's very much still aware of what they need, they need land, they need corn doles, so he keeps the people generally pretty happy.

And it should also be said that he hasn't got rid of all his enemies by any means, he's actually been very merciful. So thinking back to when he supposedly was merciful with the pirates by sparing them before they were on the cross, similarly he spared a lot of his enemies. And this turns out to be a big mistake. And he hasn't actually got rid of all of those who fought against him in the Civil War, he's taken a lot of them into the fold.

For example, Brutus had been on the republican side in the Civil War, although at some stage he had changed sides. So he changed over to Caesar's side towards the end of the Civil War and Caesar had said okay, but he and a few others seem to have been very disillusioned with what they got with Caesar. He obviously is very famously one of the leaders of the plot to assassinate Caesar.

It does seem to be this disillusionment; it's not necessarily those who were his enemies on the battlefield that come to get him; it's those who, some of them have been on his side all along, a man called Trebonius, who had fought with him in Gaul, who aren't happy with the way things turn out, that this wasn't exactly what they thought they were fighting for. They were fighting perhaps for a charismatic leader who was a man of the people, a *popularis*, but they weren't fighting to get rid of all of the institutions of the republic, and that's sort of what they see happening.

**M:** The plot to kill Caesar then, from what I can see, seems to be the worst kept secret. Is it something that he should have seen coming and something maybe he should have paid a bit more attention to?

**R:** There were rumours of conspiracy and assassination constantly, apparently. And he refused to have a bodyguard, he didn't want to live like that; he didn't want to live constantly fearing for his life. There are strange stories in his biographies that he was ready to die, but this sounds like nonsense to me; making yourself perpetual dictator doesn't imply that you're ready to go. And he clearly had plans for Rome; it would have been really interesting to see what would have happened if Caesar had lived beyond 44 [BCE] and how things would have changed.

He's bringing in lots of reforms, famously reforms the calendar, that kind of thing, and bringing in lots of building work in Rome itself. He's really interested in change and kind of reforming the way that Rome is run. He doesn't seem to be a man who assumes he's going to die tomorrow; he just misread it, he thought that he was safer than he really was.

**M:** But there were quite a lot of people who were in on the plot to kill Caesar, wasn't there?

**R:** Apparently so, although it's always very difficult to know, given that the plot was successful, what people say afterwards about who knew what. Certainly it seems that Cicero didn't know, Cicero who is kind of the chief orator of the time, who ended up on the side of the Republicans but had really prevaricated for a long time and seems to have sort of accepted Caesar when he comes back in power. He didn't know about it and he's a leading senator, so it's very difficult to know who knew about it. It's a minority of the senate that's involved; 60 senators is still not most of the senate.

**M:** How did the events unfold on the day? We've heard about the Ides of March and it seemed like it was planned for that date. Is that right?

**R:** It absolutely was, and that is because Caesar was planning to leave Rome. One of the things he was planning was to go off on military campaign because there was still unfinished business, and this time he'd get to fight foreign enemies, not Romans. For example, Crassus had lost those standards in Parthia, definitely on his shopping list of things to put right. So he's about to leave Rome on military campaign in about 3 days.

They haven't got much chance to get at him, it has to be now at a meeting of the senate, which was not held in the senate house, it was held in the theatre of Pompey, and he was probably killed near or under, as is often depicted, a statue of Pompey, which is kind of the ultimate irony. This was their chance to get at him. They really had to do it before he left Rome and had an army with him.

So on the 15th of March, he appears in the senate, he is approached by one of the senators, and it's all a bit of a shambles at first. Apparently the first senator who tried to stab him sort of just grazed him, didn't do it properly. So obviously there's chaos, but enough of them approach him and stab him; he's supposed to have ended up with 23 wounds on his body.

And as Brutus approaches him, Brutus the man that he forgave and brought back into the fold, he is supposed to have said, you know, the famous line from Shakespeare, "Et tu, Brute", "And you too, Brutus." Actually, according to Plutarch, the Greek biographer, what he said was, "Kai su, teknon", "You too, child." Teknon means boy/child, which is even sadder really, that he regarded Brutus as his son. Remember Caesar did not have a legitimate son, he only had a daughter. So the idea that he sort of sees this man in the role of a child, even possibly a successor I guess, calling him teknon/child, and he's about to stab him, just gives the whole scene a lot more pathos.

**M:** So Caesar was stabbed about 23 times, so this was really quite a frenzied, maybe panicked, attack. This is kind of a sign of frustration really and everybody wanting to get a piece of him. How much do you think this is a result of the anger that's built up against him?

**R:** The assassins saw themselves as liberators, and Brutus puts coins out with the word "liberatore" or liberator on them afterwards. Caesar had made the connection in his family back to the goddess Venus; Brutus makes the connection with the man of the same name, Brutus, who had murdered the last of Rome's kings. Rome had been a monarchy early on and in around 510 the story was that the kings had been driven out, and one of the first **consuls** and the man who was behind all of this is a man called Brutus. And Brutus who murdered Caesar says that he's descended from him. We actually have no evidence whether this is true, but it's very convenient for him.

So he makes that link directly that he's driving out another king, he's getting rid of somebody else who would choose to dominate and be tyrannical in Rome. So that's how they depict themselves. As I say, it's likely that they were just disillusioned with Caesar, that they weren't getting what they thought they would out of Caesar, maybe that he's only putting himself forward to the people. They're not getting what every Roman aristocrat would want, which is glory, reflected glory at the very least.

**M:** So with Caesar dead, the main thing that they wanted to achieve out of this would be a return to the senate. But it clearly doesn't unfold like that, does it?

**R:** No. Almost immediately they have to flee because there's a lot of anger, and not just amongst the people who by and large had loved Caesar, but also in the senate. A lot of them had backed Caesar, now where were they? So Brutus and Cassius are forced to flee. They leave Rome and they're pursued; they're pursued by Caesar's heir, Octavian, and by Marc Antony, and in 42 BCE they're killed in battle.

**M:** And Caesar's body lay where it fell on the senate floor for nearly 3 hours.

**R:** Yeah. A great use is made of Caesar's body and the toga he was wearing at the time, which was brought into the forum and displayed on a statue of Caesar. Can you imagine how weird that would be?

**M:** Yeah.

**R:** You actually get this garment that's covered in blood and has holes all over it and you display that publicly. Very much as the story of how Rome got rid of their first kings, was because the son of the king had raped an elite woman and her body - she then kills herself - her body is taken into the forum and displayed, "This is what the kings have brought us."

And the assassins of Caesar are kind of demonised by this toga being displayed in the forum, that, "These are murderous types, is that what we want in Rome?" And a reminder of the Civil Wars and all the bloodshed during that time. So it's a great display and it's a great indicator of just how good at propaganda the successors of Caesar will be.

# Glossary

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**Achillas:** Senior guard to Ptolemy XIII and military commander. Murdered Pompey the Great in 48 BCE. Put to death by Arsione in 47 BCE.

**Aedile:** Magisterial office responsible for the maintenance of public buildings and the regulation of public festivals.

**Aeneas:** Trojan prince/hero from Homer's *Iliad* and the protagonist in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Son of Venus and Anchises, father of Iulus. Said to be Julius Caesar's and therefore Augustus' ancestor.

**Anthropomorphic gods:** gods represented in human form, characteristic of both the Greek and Roman pantheons.

**Ara Maxima Herculis:** The altar of Hercules the Great. Located in the *Forum Boarium* this is the oldest known cult to Hercules in Rome.

**Arsione:** Arsione IV, Queen of Egypt (48-47 BCE). Daughter of Ptolemy XII and half-sister of Cleopatra VII.

**Area Capitolina:** The precinct of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Contained several temples and shrines and was also home to many statues of divinities, the Etruscan kings and notable Romans. It also displayed victory trophies.

**Arverni:** The name of a powerful Gallic tribe who lived in the last few hundred years BCE. The tribe was from a place now called the Auvergne region of France. During the Gallic Wars with the Roman Empire, they were led by Vercingetorix.

**Auspicium:** Literally looking at birds for a sign to encourage or discourage a proposed act. If used to refer to a person or event, it can mean that the person or event is blessed with good fortune and is favoured by the gods.

**Barbarus** (plural **barbari**): Latin noun and adjective adopted into Latin from Greek and variously translated as 'barbarian', 'savage', 'native' and 'foreigner'. In Greek it seems to have meant only 'non-Greek' originally, but later implied subcivilised.

**Campus Martius:** Literally the 'field of Mars'. This was an area outside the gates of Rome where the military could assemble. Aspirational **triumphatores** set up camp on the Campus Martius waiting for the Senate to sanction their triumphal procession.

**Carcer:** Prison.

**Cato the Elder:** Marcus Porcius Cato, 234-149 BCE. Roman politician and writer often referred to as 'Cato the Censor', known for his conservative values and implacable opposition to Carthage.

**Circus Flaminius:** A public square built in 221 BCE by the Censor C. Flaminius. It was located in the **Campus Martius** and, although it was named a 'circus', the only games ever held there were rare horse races. There is no archaeological evidence that the area featured any architectural structures. Public assemblies were often held here, as were markets. The area became the staging ground for triumphal processions. There were probably a number of triumphal arches erected in this area over the years.

**Circus Maximus:** The Great Circus. This was Rome's racecourse. It was located between the Palatine and Aventine hills and was founded by Romulus during Rome's mythical past. The Circus Maximus was continually added to, expanded and refurbished until the 4th century CE.

**Clivus Capitolinus:** Capitoline Hill.

**Consul:** This was the highest magisterial office in Rome during the Republican period. There were two *consuls* elected annually. Once the period of office concluded, *consuls* would become pro-consuls and be given command of an army and the task of administering a Roman province for a period of one to two years.

**Cognomen:** This is the third name of a Roman citizen and could be hereditary. **Cognomen** were often awarded to men for military success or physical attributes such as hair color. They were used to distinguish individuals and their decedents from other members of their clan.

**Crassus:** Marcus Licinius Crassus (115 – 53 BCE) was a military commander, politician and said to be Rome's richest man. Crassus was a member of the First Triumvirate with Caesar and Pompey. After his death Pompey and Caesar's rivalry escalated into civil war.

**Curia:** Senate House.

**Cursus Honorum:** This was the political ladder in Rome. One had to be a senator in order to hold an office, and it was essential that politicians held junior offices before proceeding to senior offices. Each office had a minimum age requirement and could not be held again within a prescribed period. There was also a prescribed period of time which had to pass between holding each office on the political ladder.

**Deus:** god.

**Dictator:** This was an extraordinary magistracy that could be awarded by the *consuls* to one man in emergencies. The Dictator had the right to exert authority beyond that of an ordinary elected magistrate – he could over-rule, over-throw or execute any other man in the Roman state including elected magistrates.

**Drachma:** Plural, **drachmae**. This was a unit of money roughly equivalent to the daily wage of a skilled worker.

**Effigies:** Plural, **Effigies**. A copy, image, portrait, effigy or statue.

**Fasces:** Bundles of rods carried before the highest magistrates of Rome to symbolise their power. The binding together of sticks may symbolise strength through unity.

**Fasti Triumphales:** A list of triumphs from the foundation of Rome to the Augustan period (c. 12 BCE). They are part of the **Fasti Capitolini**, which is a larger inscription now on display at the Capitoline Museum, Rome.

**Felicitas:** Good fortune, luck or happiness.

**Flamen Dialis:** High priest of Jupiter. One of fifteen **flamines** (priests) who served the gods of Rome.

**Forum Boarium:** This forum runs along the Tiber from the Aventine to the Capitoline hills. Its location meant that it was always prone to flooding. It is thought to have originally been Rome's cattle market. By the end of the Republican period the **Forum Boarium** was cluttered with buildings and roads.

**Forum Holitorium:** The Forum of Vegetable Sellers. Located between the **Forum Boarium** and the **Circus Flaminius**.

**Forum Iulium:** The Julian Forum. Julius Caesar commenced construction as early as 54 BCE. It was the first of the imperial **fora**. The temple of Venus Genetrix was located in this forum and was designed to look like a Hellenistic temple enclosure. Augustus completed the construction of this forum after Caesar's death.

**Forum Romanum:** Roman Forum. This was originally the central marketplace in Rome but became the civic heart of the city by the Republican period. During the Republican period, the Senate met at the **Curia** in the **Forum Romanum**. Business was conducted in buildings in and around the **Forum Romanum**, and the most important religious buildings, including the Roman treasury in the Temple of Saturn, were located here.

**Gens:** family. Plural, **gentes**.

**Gloria:** Glory

**Grafi:** representations.

**Imago:** Plural, **Imagines**. A likeness, image, statue or an idea.

**Imperium:** The supreme power given to a Roman military commander. Literally the power to command an army and exercise power over life and death, but it can also mean authority, command or rule.

**Imperium Maius:** Literally meaning great power, this is **imperium** greater than regular **imperium**. It could extend beyond the normal boundaries imposed on **imperium** or last for a longer period. It could also mean **imperium** that trumped that of other commanders.

**Juba:** Son of Juba I, King of Numidia. Lived with Caesar after being displayed in his

triumphal procession. Reinstalled as King of Numidia in 30 BCE by Octavian. Ruled as Juba II in Numidia until 25 BCE and then in Mauritania for a further fifty years.

**Legion:** A legion was the largest unit of men in the Roman army. One legion contained approximately 4,500 men during the time of Julius Caesar.

**Lictor:** Plural, **lictors**. The attendant to a magistrate.

**Lupercalia:** An annual festival to purify the city and promote health and fertility. It was also a reminder of Rome's original foundation and the sacred ploughing of the **pomerium**.

**Marius:** Gaius Marius (157 – 86 BCE) was the first man in Rome to hold seven consulships during his lifetime. This was an especially noteworthy achievement because he was a **novus homo**. Marius reformed and professionalised the Roman army. He was the leader of the **populares** in the civil wars with Sulla.

**Mater Matuta:** Indigenous Latin deity with a temple located in the **Forum Boarium** very close to the **Porta Carmentalis**. Its foundations dated back as far as eighth century BCE.

**Mina:** This is a unit of money worth 100 **drachmae**. Each **drachma** was roughly equivalent to the daily wage of a skilled worker.

**Nobiles:** The small group of senators able to claim consular ancestry. **Nobiles** tended to patronise clients with similar political views, and, as a group, influenced elections in favour of allied **nobiles**. To be **nobilis** was to be 'notable' or 'well known' and defined the elite as public figures for their personal qualities and marks of distinction rather than by their service to the **Res Publica**.

**Novus Homo:** Literally 'new man'. Referred to someone who was the first in his family to be admitted to the senatorial class and elected *consul*.

**Oikoumene:** The whole known world. Could be depicted as a globe.

**Optimates:** Literally 'best men'. The conservative faction of Roman elite politicians who wanted to limit the power of the people and the popular assemblies.

**Ovatio:** A lesser Roman triumphal procession. Awarded to commanders who had defeated 'lesser' enemies, who had been victorious in a war that was not necessarily sanctioned by the senate or who had not fulfilled all the criteria required to be awarded a full triumphal procession.

**Pantheon:** This literally means 'all gods'. The word can either collectively refer to all of a culture's deities, or, can refer to a building that houses statues of each of the culture's deities.

**Paterfamilias:** The head of a Roman family. This was the eldest male member of a family. He held legal power over all those in his household (whether they lived in his house or elsewhere) including his immediate family (wife and children), his extended family (cousins,

adopted children and relatives by marriage), his clients, freedmen and slaves.

**Patrician:** The patrician class was comprised of Rome's wealthy aristocratic families. It is said that these families were named upon Rome's foundation by the mythical Romulus. The senators of Rome were members of this class.

**Pax Deorum:** the peace of the gods. This occurs when there is harmony between gods and mortals. The correct execution of religious ritual resulted in **Pax Deorum**. However, incorrect ritual practice could injure the peace and anger of the gods.

**Pegmata:** Processional floats.

**Pharnaces:** Pharnaces II of Pontus. King of Pontus and the Bosporan. Son of King Mithridates VI of Pontus. Died while at war with Julius Caesar in 47 BCE.

**Pictae:** Paintings, drawings, depictions or portrayals.

**Plebes:** Most free Romans were 'plebs' by this point, as patrician families were dying out.

**Pompey:** Gaius Pompeius Magnus, or Pompey the Great (106 – 48 BCE), was a military commander and politician. Pompey was politically successful from a very young age and completely by-passed the **cursus honorum** celebrating a triumph before he was elected to any magisterial office and holding a consulship before any lesser office. Pompey was a member of the First Triumvirate with Caesar and Crassus. Pompey was killed in Egypt and this ended the civil war between him and Caesar.

**Populares:** The faction of Rome's elite who relied on the popular support of the people and their assemblies.

**Pothinus:** Eunuch and regent for Ptolemy XIII. Murdered Pompey the Great in 48 BCE. Executed by Caesar in 47/8 BCE.

**Porta Carmentalis:** This is a double gate in the Servian Walls. The **Vicus Iugaris** passes through this gate and connects the Campus Martius with Rome's market places.

**Porta Triumphalis:** The Triumphal Gate. It was through this entrance to the city that **triumphatores** ceremonially entered on the day of their triumphal procession. This gate has not been confidently identified by archaeologists, and many scholars think it might be mythical or that the **Porta Carmentalis** became the **Porta Triumphalis** for the day of the triumphal ceremony.

**Praetor:** This was the second highest magisterial office available in Rome during the Roman Republican period. Six of the eight elected **Praetores** acted as judges in the Roman courts while the other two handled civil matters. After the conclusion of their one-year tenure **Praetores** would take command of an army and a Roman province for one or two years.

**Princeps:** This word literally means first but when taken on as a title by Augustus in 27 BCE it

was referring to the fact that he was the first man in Rome. In other words, Augustus was the most powerful man in Rome. This title was awarded to all Rome's subsequent emperors and gave the name 'principate' to the Roman imperial system of government.

**Principes:** Gaul's ruling elite.

**Quadriga:** A chariot drawn by four horses abreast.

**Quaestor:** A magisterial office responsible for Rome's financial affairs.

**Quintilis:** The month later re-named July by Julius Caesar when he reformed the Roman calendar in 46 BCE. Caesar was born on the 12th **Quintilis** 100 BCE and re-named the month after himself. This month was always 31 days long.

**Res Publica:** Literally the business of the people, but more commonly this is the term used for the Roman Republic.

**Rex:** King.

**Rostra:** Speaking platform located in the **Forum Romanum**. Named for the captured ships' beaks (**rostra**) affixed to it after the Romans won victory over the Latins at Antium in 338 BCE.

**Sacra Via:** Sacred Way.

**Servius:** Maurus Servius Honoratus was a grammarian writing in Italy during the late fourth century and early fifth century CE. Servius wrote a commentary on Vergil's **Aeneid** entitled *In Vergilii Aeneidos commentarii*.

**Sestertius:** Plural, **sesterces**. A silver coin weighing more than 1 gram. One **sestertius** was approximately enough to buy two loaves of bread in ancient Rome.

**Signum:** Plural, **signa**. An image or statue. When used in reference to a triumphal procession it specifically means the statue of a god.

**Simulacrum:** Plural, **simulacra**. A likeness, image or statue. When used in reference to a triumphal procession it specifically means the statue of a god.

**Spina:** Literally spine. Refers to the central division in the **Circus Maximus** which separated the stadium into a long and thin U shape with very sharp corner at one end and the start and finish lines at the other end.

**Sulla:** Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138 – 78 BCE) was a conservative politician. In the civil wars with Marius, Sulla led the **optimates**. Sulla marched on Rome twice and after the second time revived the office of Dictator in Rome. Sulla used his dictatorship to reform the Roman constitution. He relinquished the dictatorship when he had restored order to Rome's unstable political system.

**Supplicatio:** Prayers, thanksgiving, supplication.

**Tabulae:** Large panels wheeled on **pegmata**. They depicted details and background information about a war being celebrated in a triumph. After the triumph, **tabulae** were often exhibited around the city as an historical record of the war and of the triumph.

**Talent:** A unit of measurement. A Roman talent was 32.3 kilograms.

**Triumphator:** Plural, **triumphatores**. The military general who celebrates a triumph.

**Velabrum:** Located between the **Forum Boarium** and the **Forum Romanum**. This is where the Roman food market was situated.

**Vicus Iugarius:** Juno Road.

**Vicus Tuscus:** The Tuscan Road.

**Villa Publica:** A large park on the **Campus Martius** with a small structure designed for the Censors to take the census.

**Virtus:** Manliness or excellence usually associated with manliness, strength, power, courage and/or bravery. During the first century BCE, its meaning changed to also encompass an idea similar to the modern notion of virtue.

**Vortumnus:** An Etruscan god personifying change able to take on many guises.