

Internal aliens: northern Gaul in the early empire

The Roman representation of Gauls in the first and early second century



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Images	2
Figure I: The Three Gauls under the early empire.....	2
Figure II: The different civitates of Gaul	2
Introduction.....	3
Claudius, the Gaul?.....	8
Stereotyping Gauls	15
Northern Gaul through Roman eyes	21
Seneca the Younger	21
Tacitus	25
Suetonius and Pliny the Younger.....	30
Conclusion	34
Bibliography:.....	36
Sources:	36
Literature:.....	38

Images¹

Figure I: The Three Gauls under the early empire



Figure II: The different civitates of Gaul



¹ Both images come from: John Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul: the three provinces, 58 BC-AD 260* (Kent, 1983), 232-237.

Introduction

In 48 A.D. the Roman emperor Claudius delivered a speech to the senate where he proposed that aristocrats from all of Gaul would be allowed to enter the senatorial class.² He tried to solve the “Gallic problem”, the problematic relation between Rome and the foreign Gauls, who had been their enemies for so long. Claudius argument was that, while the Gauls had indeed been enemies of the Romans in the past, they now were an important part of the empire. They contributed greatly to the empire through taxes, so why weren’t they allowed to contribute through the senate? This event was of great importance for northern Gaul, which had been part of the empire for less than a century, as they now got the opportunity to take part in the empire as Romans. Of course, this evoked a response from the Roman aristocracy and the following debate showed different views on the Gauls. Selective argumentation was used by both supporters and the opposition. Claudius himself, for example, brought up ‘a hundred years of steadfast fidelity and a loyalty put to the proof in many trying circumstances’.³ At the same time he ignored the large revolt of 21 A.D. under Julius Sacrovir and Julius Florus.⁴ Seneca, on the other hand, recalled the age-old enmity between Romans and Gauls in his critique on Claudius reign.⁵ This public debate, therefore, gives us a clear insight in the Roman reception of Gauls and the way known stereotypes played a role in the creation of a Roman reception of “other” peoples.

There are several excellent works that deal with the Roman outlook on other peoples. It is striking, however, that most of them deal much more with the eastern peoples than with Gauls or Iberians. John Balsdon’s *Romans and aliens* is an interesting work that analyzes the ways Romans regarded others and themselves, but also the way they were regarded by those others.⁶ While he does touch upon the Gauls a couple of times, his main focus lies on the eastern parts of the empire. The great number of topics he discusses in his book lead to different simple analyses instead of one elaborate thesis. He does, however, justly note the distinction between the Greek and Roman outlook on other peoples. Where the Greeks made a strict division between Greeks and ‘barbarians’, the Romans had a more nuanced outlook. Some *peregrini*, as opposed to Romans, were inhabitants of the empire, while others were foreigners. Moreover, the separation between Romans and *peregrini* was not as fixed as the one between Greeks and “barbarians”. *Peregrini* could become Romans when they met with the right requirements.⁷ This does not mean the Romans held no prejudices against other peoples. The very pattern of thinking within an imperial society at the same time includes and excludes other peoples. Xenophobia and racism can exist in any complex society, but imperial states by their very nature are confronted continuously with a variety of peoples which form part of the

² Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius in the senate*, transl. William Stearns Davis, Readings in ancient history: Illustrative extracts from the sources 2 (Boston, 1912-1913), 186-188; cf. Tacitus, *Annals: books 4-6, 11-12*, transl. John Jackson, Loeb classical library 312 (Cambridge MA, 1937), XI.23-24.

³ Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius*, 187.

⁴ Ralf Urban, *Gallia Rebellis: Erhebungen in Gallien im Spiegel antiker Zeugnisse*, Historia Einzelschriften 129 (Stuttgart, 1999), 39-46.

⁵ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, transl. William Rouse, Loeb classical library 15 (Cambridge MA, 1913), III, VI-VII.

⁶ J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and aliens* (London, 1979).

⁷ *Ibidem*, IX-X.

empire, and settle in urban centres.⁸ The “imperialists” need to relate to these “others” because of the intensive contact between them. Benjamin Isaac contributed greatly to this debate with *The invention of racism in classical antiquity*.⁹ In this work he argues that, while racism is an 18th century invention, ancient forms of racism were common in the Graeco-Roman world. He creates a framework with which to analyse the Roman outlook towards ‘others’ within their imperial society. However, he only takes a few pages to enumerate the different prejudices that the Romans had regarding Gauls. The Roman view on the eastern peoples is examined in five chapters which treat, among others, the Greeks, Syrians, Persians and Egyptians. The chapter on the Roman outlook on Jews also focuses, naturally, mostly on the east. Comparing the Gauls to other peoples, he concludes that the Gauls aroused far less hostility, because they were no real threat, physically nor culturally. Erich Gruen’s *Rethinking the other in antiquity* is a third major work about the Roman outlook on other peoples.¹⁰ Gruen argues that Isaac put too much emphasis on the negative outlook of the Romans and that their views were much more complex. The Romans could visualize themselves as part of a broader cultural heritage and see links between themselves and other peoples, although they did acknowledge and sometimes emphasize the differences.¹¹ With regard to the Gauls, Gruen does not go further than the first century B.C. He gives a structured analysis of the Roman stereotypes of Gauls, both positive and negative, but does not look at post-conquest Gaul.

The three works treated above all deal with Roman relations with other peoples. The main focus clearly lies on the east. In the northwest the Germans seem to be the most interesting, because they have been opposed to the Romans throughout the entire history of the empire. Gauls, however, are only briefly addressed. A few works do give an elaborate examination of the Roman view on Gauls. One of these works is Bernhard Kremer’s *Das Bild der Kelten bis in augusteische Zeit*.¹² He analyses the views on Gauls as they emerge in the important works of late-republican and early-imperial writers, such as Livius, Cicero and Caesar. The focus of this work, however, is, as the title says, only on the early history of Roman Gaul. The latest writer analysed in his work is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, which allows him to stay well within Augustus’ reign. The dissertation of Martina Jantz deals with exactly the same time span.¹³ It also deals with the reception of Gauls in the republic and the time of Augustus and stops well before the end of Augustus’ reign.

The timeframe used in the earlier works make it look like the Gauls were domesticated through the peace of Augustus and they were no longer seen as another people. Isaac states that the Gauls were no longer much of a threat to the Romans. The Germans were more frightening physically and the Greeks and other eastern people might exceed them culturally. Because the Gauls did not

⁸ Benjamin Isaac, *The invention of racism in classical antiquity* (Princeton, 2004), 507.

⁹ Isaac, *The invention of racism*.

¹⁰ Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the other in antiquity* (Princeton, 2011).

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

¹² Bernhard Kremer, *Das Bild der Kelter bis in augusteische Zeit*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 88 (Stuttgart, 1994).

¹³ Martina Jantz, *Das Fremdenbild in der Literatur der Römischen Republik und der Augusteischen Zeit*, *Europäische Hochschulschriften* 3:656 (Frankfurt, 1995).

constitute a threat to the Romans anymore, there was no use of a prejudicial environment against them. He does examine Roman prejudices of the empire but only concludes that the same stereotypes were used over and over. The debate on Claudius' relation with the Gauls he dismisses as typically xenophobic but not anti-Gallic.¹⁴ There is something to say for this argument, but there is more depth to the debate than Gauls being just foreigners as we will see in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*. The same stereotypes do indeed appear over and over, not only the negative ones, but also the positive. They also are not exclusively used in times where Gauls play a major role in Roman politics, but also at times of tranquillity in Gaul. Besides, as history has shown, there are more times where the Gauls felt excluded and unappreciated, for example the "Gallic empire" of Posthumus and the end of Roman Gaul in the fifth century.¹⁵ The frequent use of Gallic stereotypes and the context in which they were used suggest that the attitude of Romans towards Gauls was more complex than "mere" xenophobia.

Gaul and Gauls in itself already are complicated concepts. The Greek word *Keltoi* and the Latin word *Galli* both mean "uncivilised barbarians of the north". Caesar, in the first sentence of his *De Bello Gallico* divides Gaul in three parts, 'one of which is inhabited by the Belgae, another by the Aquitani, and a third by a people called in their own tongue Celtae, in the Latin Galli.'¹⁶ Caesar might have linked the name 'celtae' with a word they already knew for 'northern barbarian'. The peoples also might actually have called themselves 'celtae' through the influence of the Greeks in Marseille. Whatever the reason for this label, it was a term already used by the Romans to name all peoples who lived to the north and were identifiable by common characteristics, earlier described by Herodotus.¹⁷ Before the Roman conquest the different 'Gallic' tribes did not identify with each other as much as the Romans thought. After the incorporation of *Gallia*, however, they started referring to themselves as Gauls. To be recognized as part of the empire and conquer their place among the Romans, they had to take over the terminology of the empire. An example are the Treveri and Nervii. Strabo told us that 'next after the Treveri are the Nervii, who are also a Germanic tribe'.¹⁸ However, according to Tacitus a century later, they spoke a Celtic language and were part of Gaul, but linked themselves to the Germans, 'as though this illustrious ancestry delivers them from any affinity with the indolent Gaul'.¹⁹ They probably went along with the Roman division of the world and accepted that they were part of Gaul, apparently preserving a link with the Germans. Tacitus writing this down shows us that even the Romans were, to some extent, aware of cases in which their division of the world was deficient. The peoples of northern Italy were also part of the Celtic culture according to the Romans. This is also

¹⁴ Isaac, *The invention of racism*, 425-426.

¹⁵ John Drinkwater, *The Gallic empire: separatism and continuity in the North-Western provinces of the Roman empire A.D. 260-274* (Stuttgart, 1987); John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (ed.), *Fifth century Gaul: a crisis of identity?* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁶ Caesar, *The Gallic wars*, transl. Henry John Edwards, Loeb classical library 72 (Cambridge MA, 1917), I.1.1; For the division of Gaul under the empire, see: Figure I.

¹⁷ Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: the construction of a myth* (London, 1992), 24-40.

¹⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, transl. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb classical library 50 (Cambridge MA, 1923), IV.4.

¹⁹ Tacitus, *Germania*, transl. Maurice Hutton and Henry Peterson, Loeb classical library 35 (Cambridge MA, 1914), XXVIII.4.

shown in the name the area was given after it was conquered, Gallia Cisalpina. The peoples, who lived here, however, quickly assimilated to Roman culture and by the time of the Gallic conquest they were no longer seen as Gauls. Gallia Narbonensis also assimilated earlier to the empire than the northern parts of Gallia Transalpina, Gaul across the Alps. This is why ethnographers, like Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Pliny the elder, make a distinction between Narbonensis and the “Three Gauls”, also called Gallia Comata. Narbonensis, however, is still seen as part of Gaul, unlike Gallia Cisalpina.²⁰ Probably, the physical division of Italy and western Europe by the Alps played a role. This division made it easier for the Romans to exclude the people on the other side of the mountains and present the peoples of Transalpina as essentially different from the Italian Romans and Gauls. The Narbonese Gauls could be educated to Roman levels and some of them could participate in the imperial apparatus and even the senate, but they retained their Gallic origin like their “uncivilised” northern brothers. Civilisation thus played a large role in the Roman definition of the Gauls.

This essay will focus on the way Gauls were regarded by the Romans. As shown above, there were different views of Gauls which were used side by side in the same period and even with regard to the same subject. I will start at the reign of Claudius, a “Gallic” emperor. During his reign he came into contact with Gauls on different occasions. Those events all called for a need to relate between Roman and Gaul. The reign of Claudius and the debate it caused, thus offer a good case to examine the problems that arise when analyzing the Roman views on Gauls. In chapter 1 I will take a closer look at Claudius and his reign. To examine the reactions on his reign, it is important to understand this reign. His relation with different groups within the Roman society of course had a large impact on his politics. Besides focussing on Claudius himself, I will look at his speech to the senate in 48 A.D. and other events in his reign where Gauls, or ideas about Gauls, played a major role. Thereafter, in chapter 2, I will look at the stereotypes that existed in the Roman world. Analyzing the different stereotypes that are used in the aftermath of 48 can place them within the broad framework of Roman prejudice. In chapter 3, the way Roman authors viewed the events of 48 and the Gauls will be examined. Here I will focus on four authors of the first and early second century. The first is Seneca the Younger, senator and contemporary of Claudius. He is the main critic of Claudius’ politics, often referring to his proposition to admit Gauls into the senate. Tacitus is another writer, who mentions the events of 48 in his *Annals*. The speech Claudius held in 48 survived in two versions: a tablet found in Lugdunum, modern Lyon, and a later version in Tacitus’ *Annals*.²¹ The speech and reactions on it show us a debate which makes use of different stereotypes on Gauls. The two versions can, through slight differences, tell us something about the evolution of the debate and Tacitean hindsight. Finally, I will look at Suetonius and Pliny the younger. Suetonius is our main source on the life of Claudius. His work, in particular, influenced our view on Claudius. The role of the Gauls in his works, however, seems limited. By examining these four writers and their agendas I hope to clarify the Roman approach to

²⁰ Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: the origins of provincial civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, 1998), 48-54.

²¹ Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius*, 186-188; Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.23-24.

Gauls. A period when the role of the Gauls is highly debated can, in combination with its aftermath, show us the Roman view on these Gauls and the problems that arise when trying to uncover the Gallic representation.

Claudius, the Gaul?

To understand the events of the year 48 we have to understand the emperor Claudius himself. He is often presented as a weakling and his accession did not pass untroubled. These things caused the political situation in Rome to be tense. The career of Claudius, the first emperor born outside Italy, was different from those of his predecessors, which distorted his relation with the traditional aristocracy from the start. He was born in Lugdunum, capital of the Three Gauls, in 10 B.C., when his father, Nero Claudius Drusus, son of Livia and stepson of Augustus, was governor of Gaul. Claudius' life and career, however, did not follow those of other members of the imperial family. He suffered of some kind of nervous disorder, but until this day it remains subject of debate which disorder it was.²² It is said that he was drooling, had a stammer and some kind of spasms. In this state he, obviously, was judged unfit for public office, let alone the emperorship. Suetonius describes the reactions of his mother and Augustus to his disorder. His mother is said to have called him, 'a monster of a man, not finished but merely begun by Dame Nature'.²³ Augustus is said to have corresponded with Livia to agree on a way to handle Claudius' public appearances. They wanted to protect him and themselves from mockery by the public and thus decided to keep him outside the public eye.²⁴ Despite his disorder, his family still cared for his education and he was schooled in the *disciplinae liberalis*. He learned rhetorics, literature, music, mathematics and jurisprudence. Being able to express himself, he devoted himself to scholarly work and his interest in history led him to produce several works on this topic. His interest in history did not go unnoticed and Livy was commissioned as his tutor.²⁵

Despite his zealous pursuit of knowledge, he was still excluded from the *cursus honorum*. This, however, provided him with the time to study the history of the Roman empire which provided him with a different view of the Roman empire than other Roman aristocrats. His elder brother Germanicus, on the other hand, became an important player within the imperial succession. After the death of his father, Germanicus was adopted as son and heir by his uncle Tiberius, as required by Augustus. Germanicus enjoyed great popularity by the Roman people and was a successful military commander. His suppression of the rebellion of the northern legions and retribution against the Germans for the defeat in the Teutoburg forest only strengthened his position. The death of Germanicus in 19 frustrated Augustus' plans for the imperial succession. Tiberius chose Gaius 'Caligula', Germanicus' only remaining son, as his successor. He is said to have considered Claudius an option, but chose to honour the wish of Augustus and follow Germanicus' bloodline. The succession by Caligula was at first rejoiced by the people.²⁶ The reign of his nephew was the first time

²² Josiah Osgood, *Claudius Caesar: image and power in the early Roman Empire* (Cambridge MA, 2011), 9-28; Barbara Levick, *Claudius* (Croydon, 2015), 14-31; Vincent Scramuzza, *The emperor Claudius* (Cambridge MA, 1940), 35-50.

²³ Suetonius, *Claudius*, trans. John C. Rolfe, loeb classical library 38 (Cambridge MA, 1914), III.2.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, IV.1-7.

²⁵ Margarethe Billerbeck, 'Philology at the imperial court', *Greece and Rome* 37:2 (1990), 191-203, esp. 197-200; Levick, *Claudius*, 18-21; Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 36-38.

²⁶ David Shotter, *Tiberius Caesar* (Oxford, 2004), 37-46, 72-75.

Claudius took office, when they shared the consulship from 31 to 37.²⁷ Claudius was no longer the weakling he was in his youth. Even according to Suetonius, who scoffs him at every possibility, he possessed majesty and dignity ‘but only when he was standing still or sitting, and especially when he was lying down’.²⁸ His three marriages to women of the highest aristocracy also show us that his defects might have waned when he grew older. He might have been given the office because he was popular and the young Caligula could sincerely use his knowledge. However, Caligula did soon take him for an embarrassment and he tried to explore the limits in which he could execute absolute power, ignoring his uncle.²⁹

Because most of the writers in antiquity belonged to senatorial class it is important to understand the relation between Claudius and the aristocracy. His accession did not pass untroubled and was the beginning of a troublesome relation with the *Curia*. The absolute rule of Caligula had caused a lot of opposition within the Roman aristocracy. Some even cherished the wish of a return to the republic, when autocratic rulers were a distant past and an unwanted future. Part of the senate, feeling threatened, might have sided with the emperor.³⁰ Finally, it were members of his praetorian guard who made an end to his life in January 41. After the assassination chaos broke out in the city and it was debated by the senate what to do. There were several candidates for the emperorship, but some senators saw this as the opportunity to get rid of the principate and return to the republic.³¹ This is also the reason they declared Claudius an enemy of the state. To achieve a return to the republic, Claudius survival was disastrous. The same goes for other candidates for the principate. While Claudius had won no personal prestige during office, which undermined his claim to the throne, he still was part of the imperial family. For this reason he was an opponent to be reckoned with by those who had their own plans for the empire. By declaring him an enemy of the state, the senate hoped to get rid of him so they could execute their own plans.³² At the same time, the Praetorians had taken Claudius to their barracks. Both the Praetorians and Claudius knew that their cooperation was necessary for mutual survival. The Praetorian guard had no right to exist without an emperor and Claudius needed the support of these troops to claim his title. At the praetorian barracks they swore an oath of allegiance to Claudius as their new emperor.³³ He also had other supporters. His popularity had won him some personal sympathisers, as did the popularity of his brother Germanicus, but their influence was to be discarded in the actual decision-making process.³⁴ The senate remained reluctant to accept Claudius as emperor, which was necessary to give him a legal title. When they learned that he was backed by the complete Praetorian guard and was ready to fight for his title they knew they had

²⁷ Levick, *Claudius*, 28-29.

²⁸ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XXX.

²⁹ Levick, *Claudius*, 29-30.

³⁰ Anthony Barret, *Caligula: the corruption of power* (London, 2000), 154-163.

³¹ Levick, *Claudius*, 34.

³² *Ibidem*, 39-40.

³³ Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 55-63; Levick, *Claudius*, 41-44; Osgood, *Claudius*, 29-31.

³⁴ Levick, *Claudius*, 36-37.

no choice.³⁵ After his accession he retained his relation with the army. He took the name *Caesar*, which was popular with the army, the peoples and in the provinces, but hated by the senate.³⁶ He also honoured the Praetorians for their role in his accessions by minting coins that emphasized the relation between emperor and soldiers.³⁷

As seen above, Claudius relation with the senate was distorted from the start. According to Cassius Dio he only entered the senate a month after his accession.³⁸ To secure himself he exacted from them the right to take a bodyguard with him into the *curia*.³⁹ He also acquired the right to permit members of the senate to travel abroad, a right earlier held by the senate.⁴⁰ These rights extended the emperor's power over the senate and also improved the safety of the emperor. His distrust of the senate was unsurprising, as they were not only reluctant to accept him as emperor, but declared him enemy of the state. However, after the hectic first days of his accession, he tried to forget the problems they involved, offering amnesty to all senators who opposed him and distribute offices to his rivals.⁴¹ While his relation with the senate was distorted, he treated them with great respect and acknowledged them as an important partner in government. In front of the senate, Claudius was careful not to emphasize his military power too much and preferred to appear as a colleague of the senators. Finally, he sat with them as often as possible, a custom almost completely ignored by his predecessor.⁴² Despite his respect, the problematic relation between him and the senate made it necessary to search for other allies too. The equestrian order was a logical option, but for some reason there was an estrangement between the equestrians and Claudius. Instead, Claudius recognised the abilities of his freedmen. These had always held important positions at the court and during Caligula's reign their power had even increased. Claudius institutionalised their position to strengthen his grip on government. They were placed in different bureaus, all tasked with the administration of different parts of the government. These positions signified great power, but they were reserved for imperial freedmen only. Because the bureaus were part of the imperial household, senators could not serve the emperor as secretary because they were his colleagues. In the same way equestrians were excluded, as they would not serve in anyone's household.⁴³ His good relation with the army paid off when in 42 the *legatus* of Dalmatia, Scribonianus, set up a revolt against him. Possessing two legions, stationed relatively close to Rome, he could easily reach Rome before other loyal legions could counteract. Senators and equestrians opposed to Claudius joined his cause en-masse after he had agreed to lead a revolution. However, the legions that were supposed to back Scribonianus turned against him when he expressed his intention to restore the republic. Suetonius states that the legions turned against

³⁵ Levick, *Claudius*, 41-44; Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 55-63.

³⁶ Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 62-63.

³⁷ Levick, *Claudius*, 43-44; Osgood, *Claudius*, 34-38.

³⁸ Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, transl. Herbert Foster, loeb classical library 175 (Cambridge MA, 1924), LX.3.2.

³⁹ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XII.1; Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, LX.23.2-3.

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XVI.2; Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, LX.25.6-7.

⁴¹ Levick, *Claudius*, 109.

⁴² Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 114-128; Levick, *Claudius*, 109-119.

⁴³ Scramuzza, *Claudius*, 80-89; Levick, *Claudius*, 94-96; Osgood, *Claudius*, 38-42.

Scribonianus when they could not lift their standards, an omen that the legions should not march against Claudius. Claudius struck back hard and many of senatorial and equestrian rank were killed in the aftermath.⁴⁴

Popularity with the people, in the provinces as well as the city was of utmost importance to an emperor. The people, who were not afraid to riot to get what they want, were a factor to take into account. Augustus had seen them as allies, and even Caligula enjoyed popularity with the people. The great popularity of Germanicus worked in favour of his family. Caligula made use of this and embraced the role of people's favourite, which resulted in popularity among the people until the end of his reign. Claudius acknowledged the importance of the people from the beginning of his reign. As a historian, he knew what they were capable of. Because he had hardly played any role in politics before, he had not lost the credit he inherited from his father and brother Germanicus. Even before he was emperor 'he never lacked attention from individuals or respect from the public.'⁴⁵ His relation with the Three Gauls also benefitted from the reputation of his father and brother. He was born in Lugdunum and many of the Rhine-legions contained Gallic soldiers. These soldiers had shared in the successes of Claudius' father and brother and later returned home. Besides, his father Drusus had dedicated the temple of Rome and Augustus in Lugdunum where the provincial assembly of the Three Gauls gathered every year.⁴⁶ The temple and yearly gathering were the centre of the relations between Rome and the Three Gauls. Claudius' political viewpoints are said to have coincided with the views of the so-called *popularis*. Claudius lived modestly and appeared to the people to be one of them. According to Suetonius, 'when they gave games, he also arose with the rest of the audience and showed his respect by acclamations and applause', showing the people that he liked the same things they liked.⁴⁷ He is also said to have dined with them, and recalled to the senate those times when he visited taverns.⁴⁸ He was not only popular because he was like the people. He also took good care of them, taking measures to assure a stable grain and water supply for Rome. Besides, he created jobs with his building program.⁴⁹ Part of this was the improvement of the Roman infrastructure in the provinces, especially in Gaul, which was needed for his invasion of Britain and maintaining contact with his troops there.⁵⁰ According to Suetonius, the people respected him so much, that when rumour

⁴⁴ Michael Swan, 'Josephus, A. J., XIX, 251-252: Opposition to Gaius and Claudius', *The American journal of philology* 91:2 (1970), 149-164, esp. 159-164; Barbara Levick, 'Antiquarian or revolutionary? Claudius Caesar's conception of his principate', *The American journal of philology* 99:1 (1978), 79-105, esp. 99; Osgood, *Claudius*, 43-44; Suetonius, *Claudius*, XIII.2.

⁴⁵ Suetonius, *Claudius*, V.

⁴⁶ Olwen Brogan, *Roman Gaul* (London, 1953), 26; Duncan Fishwick, 'The Severi and the provincial cult of the Three Gauls', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 22:4 (1973), 627-649, esp. 636.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, XII.2.

⁴⁸ Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, LX.2; Suetonius, *Claudius*, XXI.4, XL.1.

⁴⁹ Levick, 'Antiquarian or revolutionary?', 89-90; Levick, *Claudius*, 122-130.

⁵⁰ Levick, *Claudius*, 198-208.

spread that he was killed on his way to Ostia, they accused the senate and the soldiers of murdering their emperor.⁵¹

His troubled life, limited experience and distorted relation with the senate, the original power of Rome, is of vital importance to understand the speech of 48. Already before his speech in the curia, there was a shift in his lenient approach towards the senate. While he hardly had any political experience, he had seen how the politics at the imperial court worked. Besides, even though he was not taken serious, he had seen the senate in action during his first consulship. Through this experience he knew who he needed at his side to survive and how to play the senate. A lot of the senators opposed to Claudius, or the principate in general, did not survive the repercussions of the revolution of 42, which made it easier for him to impose his will on the senate. His respect for the senate he maintained, knowing that he had to preserve his relation with the allied senators and keep them in their place. However, in the late '40s Claudius apparently concluded that a stricter control of the curia was necessary.⁵² A case in which this is shown is the "trial" of Valerius Asiaticus in 47. Asiaticus was a wealthy Gallic senator, who had held the consulship twice. He aspired the imperial throne after the death of Germanicus, but was pardoned and advised Claudius in the beginning of his reign.⁵³ In 47 Claudius had him arrested, allegedly for violating Augustus' law against adultery with Poppaea Sabina and plotting a revolt in Gaul. Tacitus names Claudius' wife Messalina as the main instigator of the affair.⁵⁴ It is said that Messalina's motif to accuse Asiaticus was that she wanted the gardens of Lucullus, which recently passed into his possession.⁵⁵ This fitted with the image of Claudius as a 'slave of his wife and the freedmen', which was often presented in ancient literature.⁵⁶ Most modern writers, however, suggest that there was more nuance to it and it was more a way to destroy the memory of Claudius.⁵⁷ The fact that Claudius send his Praetorians to arrest him would suggest that there was more at stake than Asiaticus' adultery. Asiaticus was, through his wealth and influence, in Gaul as well as in Rome, in a position to damage Claudius, maybe even start a successful revolt.⁵⁸ The rebellion in 21 under Julius Sacrovir and Julius Florus had shown there was discontent among the Gauls. Gaul was a wealthy province and used by the Romans to fund their armies, especially on the German borders. The Gauls, however, felt they gained too little in return.⁵⁹ Asiaticus might have planned to play this discontent to pursue his own imperial ambitions. The fact that he was tried in the

⁵¹ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XII.2

⁵² Dennis McAlindon, 'Claudius and the senators', *The American journal of philology* 78:3 (1957), 297-286, esp. 285-286.

⁵³ Levick, *Claudius*, 36; Osgood, *Claudius*, 42.

⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.1-4.

⁵⁵ Osgood, *Claudius*, 147-148. Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.1-4.

⁵⁶ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XIX.1, XXIX.1; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LX.2.4-7, LX.8.4-6.

⁵⁷ Osgood, *Claudius*, 191-192.

⁵⁸ Levick, *Claudius*, 69-70; Osgood, *Claudius*, 148-149; Ralf Urban, *Gallia rebellis: Erhebungen in Gallien im Spiegel antiker Zeugnisse*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 129 (1999), 47-48.

⁵⁹ Levick, *Claudius*, 36.

palace instead of by the magistrates shows that Claudius did not trust others with the case. The senate was only informed after Asiaticus had been condemned to death and the sentence had been executed.

In the year 48 Claudius assumed the censorship with Vitellius, giving him control over the expulsion of senators and adding new ones.⁶⁰ This also fits with an aim to gain a better control over the senate. He proposed to admit wealthy aristocrats from Gallia Comata into the senate. Claudius, as emperor and censor, was allowed to grant citizenship and admit people into the senate, but the matter was controversial enough to consult the senate beforehand. After his Gallic wars Julius Caesar had already, ‘admitted to the House men who had been given citizenship, and in some cases half-civilised Gauls’.⁶¹ All Roman citizens could, when they met the conditions, apply for the senate. Augustus, however, had taken away from the citizens of the Three Gauls the right of candidature for magistracies in the city. Caesar’s ‘half-civilised Gauls’ apparently created so much aversion, Augustus expelled them from offices and as such limited their business in Rome. The Narbonese tribes were not included in Augustus’ ban.⁶² They had been subject to Roman rule for some centuries and adapted Roman requirements. Moreover, they were closer to the Mediterranean peoples than their northern brothers. The appearance of the northern Gauls, though not as fearsome as the Germans or even Britons, differed enough to make them stand out in Rome. These physical differences created enough of a barrier to remind the Romans of who these people once were and might have been the reason for Augustus to expel only the Comatan Gauls.⁶³

Claudius, after half a century, proposed to lift this ban and offer worthy citizens from Gallia Comata the same chances as all Roman citizens. The speech that was held in the senate to support his proposal has survived to us in two versions. One of it is a copy of the original as it was written down in the *Acta Senata*, the records of the curia. This copy has been found in Lugdunum on two bronze tablets, but unfortunately, the top of these tablets is missing. The fact that the assembly of the Three Gauls treasured a copy of this speech shows that it meant a great deal to them. A “complete” report of the speech is found in Tacitus’ *Annals*. Tacitus’ speech, however, is different from the speech that was originally delivered. Of course Tacitus did change the literary style of the speech so it would fit in his text, but he even changed the argumentation of the speech. He took out some of Claudius’ points and introduced new arguments, some of which might have been featured in the missing top of the tablets. Claudius’ original mentions three reasons for the proposal. First he stated that Romans had admitted foreigners into the senate from the earliest days of its existence. Secondly, there were already senators from Narbonensis, who had proven their worth. Finally, he mentions the peace and loyalty the Gauls

⁶⁰ McAlindon, ‘Claudius and the senators’, 285-286.

⁶¹ Suetonius, *Caesar*, transl. John C. Rolfe, Loeb classical library 31 (Cambridge MA, 1914), LXXVI, LXXX.

⁶² Theodor Mommsen, *The provinces of the Roman empire: from Caesar to Diocletian, vol. I*, transl. William P. Dickson (London, 1909), 98; Ernest George Hardy, ‘The speech of Claudius on the adlection of Gallic senators’, *The journal of philology* 32:1 (1912), 79-95, esp. 87-88; Levick, *Claudius*, 94.

⁶³ Adrian N. Sherwyn-White, *Racial prejudice in imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 1970), 56-61.

had displayed after Caesar's wars, especially during the conquest of Germany.⁶⁴ More reasons, however, may have played a role. The plot of Asiaticus may have revealed the underlying discontent among the Gauls to Claudius. The rebellion of Florus and Sacrovir was also still in his memory, although totally ignored in his speech. By offering them a chance to participate in Roman politics he offered them a chance of equality. Another point that Claudius apparently did not mention but is featured in the *Annals* was the wealth of the Gallic aristocracy. By offering this aristocracy positions in Rome, they could use their wealth for the sake of the empire.⁶⁵ Finally, the Gallic senators would be indebted to Claudius. His relation with the senate, especially the old Italian aristocracy, was difficult and new blood in the senate would increase his chances of controlling it. Moreover, the Gallic senators, who were only in office by the kindness of the emperor, would be especially willing to follow his lead and weaken the opposition in the senate.

⁶⁴ Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius*, 186-188.

⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.24.

Stereotyping Gauls

Despite opposition in the senate Claudius' proposal 'was followed by a resolution of the Fathers, and the Aedui became the first to acquire senatorial rights in the capital'.⁶⁶ The opposition partly originated in different stereotypes that existed in the imperial capital. These stereotypes, some of which already originated centuries before Claudius are important to understand the Roman representation of Gauls. Those who wanted to create a specific image of Gauls would do well to use the stereotypes that were known to the people. Recognizable images are easier acceptable to the people than newly invented views. For this reason this chapter will show the stereotypes about Gauls that existed in the Roman mindset. The different stereotypes that appear in the debate on the admission will be singled out and related to their origin and evolution in Roman literature.

The *Apocolocyntosis*, a satire on the life and reign of the emperor Claudius, is one of the works that clearly plays a role in the debate on the Gauls. Seneca the Younger, senator and contemporary of Claudius, wrote the work shortly after the death of Claudius while he worked at Nero's court. The work was used to slander the memory of the recently deceased emperor and does it by describing his ascension to heaven where he asks the gods to be deified. Of course, as with all bad emperors, they deny his request and sent him to Hades. Seneca did not only try his best to depict Claudius as a bad emperor, but grasped every opportunity to emphasize Claudius' Gallic background. In the *Apocolocyntosis* Claudius encounters Hercules during his ascension to heaven. Hercules asks him, in Homeric fashion, who he is and Claudius replies with another Homeric quote that he descends from Troy, as all Romans do. Then, however, lady Malaria turns up and declares: 'The fellow's tale is nothing but lies. (...) As I say, he was born at the sixteenth milestone from Vienne, a native Gaul.'⁶⁷ In fact, Claudius had not a drop of Gallic blood, but he was born in Lugdunum, a Roman colony and capital of the Three Gauls. While both his parents were Roman aristocrats and he was raised and educated in Rome, his birthplace was used to soil his memory. The fact that Gaul, as his birthplace, is emphasized to criticise him, indicates that it is an effective insult. Another example that proves the effect of presenting someone as a Gaul is the fact that it was used again. Caracalla, another Gallic-born emperor, is slandered in the same way more than a century later by the historian Cassius Dio. Born, just like Claudius, at Lugdunum, 'the fickleness, cowardice, and recklessness of Gaul were his.'⁶⁸

Those two cases of using Gallic credentials are not isolated. Gallic stereotypes were regularly used to slander the reputation of Romans and Gauls alike. The Romans had attached stereotypes to the Gauls from the time these two peoples came into contact and these were well-known, at least to the literate elite. One of the most frequently used stereotype is that of the savage Gaul as archenemy of the Roman people. After Claudius is introduced as a Gaul in the *Apocolocyntosis*, his accession is mentioned. As we have seen, he did not assume the imperial title the usual way, but took the throne

⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.23, XI.25.

⁶⁷ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, transl. William Rouse, Loeb classical library 15 (Cambridge MA, 1913), VI.

⁶⁸ Cassius Dio, *History*, LXXVIII.6.1.

with help of the Praetorian guard. The chaos of his accession elicited from Seneca the statement that Claudius ‘took Rome, as a good Gaul ought to do.’⁶⁹ Claudius also would have introduced himself quoting Homer, ‘Thither come, I sacked a city, slew the people everyone’.⁷⁰ So he is a Gaul, who not only took the city, but also stole its riches. Besides he is accused as is specified later in the *Apocolocyntosis* with the murder of numerous Roman senators and knights, as well as others.⁷¹ The only instance where Gauls ‘took’ Rome and sacked the city is the Gallic attack on Rome in 390 B.C.. Roman envoys were called to help the Clusians, who were at the brink of war with a party of Gauls. When a fight between the two parties started the envoys, against the laws of nations, joined the battle. When the Romans did not want to compensate the Gauls for this offense, they fought by the Allia, a battle which was won by the Gauls. They then proceeded to sack the city of Rome itself and negotiated with the remaining defenders about compensation. Marcus Furius Camillus, an exiled statesman, returned to Rome with an army of Veii and arrived just in time to defeat the Gauls and return the treasures of Rome.⁷² Although it happened more than 400 years before Claudius reign, it still left its scars. It is often presented as one of the greatest traumas in Roman history and the start and main cause of the Roman *terror gallicus* while there have been voices that this *terror gallicus* has been overestimated altogether.⁷³ Not only Seneca used it in his work, it was a popular topic in Roman literature. Polybius starts his history of Rome, written in the late second century B.C., from the moment that the Gauls were expelled from the city.⁷⁴ He describes an invasion in 222 B.C. which caused great alarm in Italy. Everything would have been focussed on stopping the Gauls, ‘as the terror the old invasion had inspired still dwelt in their minds’.⁷⁵ Cicero used it in his speeches in defence of the Roman governor of Gaul Marcus Fonteius, who stood accused by the Gauls. Cicero stained the Gallic accusers by mentioning the recent wars between Gaul and Rome, ‘to say nothing of ancient times’, suggesting that a hint of the sack was enough for the people to remember the trauma.⁷⁶ He identifies the accusers of Fonteius as the tribes who took Rome and points out the blood-feud between the Romans and their ‘bitterest foes’, the Gauls.⁷⁷

The old attacks on Rome were remembered in the empire and used to point out the threat the Gauls still were. By using war rhetoric, speaking of a muster of Gallic forces, Cicero points out the

⁶⁹ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, VI.

⁷⁰ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, V; Homer, *Odyssey*, transl. Augustus Taber Murray, Loeb classical library 104 (Cambridge MA, 1919), IX.40-41.

⁷¹ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, XIV.

⁷² Livy, *History of Rome*, transl. Benjamin Oliver Foster, Loeb classical library 172 (Cambridge MA, 1924), V.35-55.

⁷³ Heinz Bellen, *Metus Gallicus-Metus Punicus: Zum Fürchtmotiv in der römischen Republik* (Mainz, 1985), 3-46; Bernhard Kremer, *Das Bild der Kelter bis in augusteische Zeit*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 88 (Stuttgart, 1994), 62-68; Lellia Cracco Ruggini, ‘Intolerance: equal and less equal in the Roman world’, *Classical philology* 82:3 (1987), 187-205, esp. 191-192.; cf. Veit Rosenberger, ‘The Gallic disaster’, *The classical world* 96:4 (2003), 365-373.

⁷⁴ Polybius, *The histories*, transl. William R. Paton, Loeb classical library 128 (Cambridge MA, 2010), I.6.2-3.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, II.23.

⁷⁶ Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, vert. N. Watts, Loeb classical library 252 (Cambridge MA, 1931), XII.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, XIV-XV, XIX.

threat they once were and could be again.⁷⁸ In his speech to the people after the Catilinarian conspiracy the Gauls are not only ‘not completely pacified’, but also ‘the only remaining nation to appear both able and not unwilling to make war upon the Roman people.’⁷⁹ In the years before Caesar’s Gallic conquest, presenting the Gauls as enemies and emphasizing their threat clearly worked. But even in the empire the trauma of 390 B.C. was not forgotten. As seen Seneca used it in the *Apocolocyntosis*, but also mentioned it when he described the ungratefulness of Catilina when he wanted to ‘let loose against it [Rome] the cohorts of the Allobroges, (...) [and] summon an enemy from beyond the Alps to satiate its old and inborn hatred’.⁸⁰ and some decades later Juvenal remembered the Catilinarian revolt and accused Catilina of plotting ‘to attack homes and temples at night and set them on fire, like the sons of trousered Gauls and descendants of the Senones.’⁸¹ In Tacitus version of Claudius’ speech on the admission of the Gauls into the senate the senators used the attack as a counterargument: ‘Was it too little that Venetians and Insubrians had taken the curia by storm. (...) What if there should arise the memory of the men who essayed to pluck down the spoils, sanctified to heaven, from the Capitol and the citadel of Rome?’⁸² Claudius, on the other hand, skipped the mention of the old wars and only recognized the Gauls had ‘defied the divine Caesar for ten whole years’.⁸³ He quickly goes on to attenuate this by stressing their loyalty after the wars of Caesar, completely ignoring the revolt of Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir.⁸⁴ Tacitus also mentions the defences of the empire, stating that the Rhine legions, Rome’s main strength, were ‘ready to cope indifferently with the German or the Gaul.’⁸⁵ The Gauls apparently remained a people which in the Roman mind could never truly be trusted.

This treacherous and dishonest nature was another topic often used with regard to the Gauls. Seneca’s lady Malaria emphasizes that Claudius tells Hercules, ‘nothing but lies’.⁸⁶ This was unsurprising as he was introduced as a Gaul in the next sentence. The distrust cohered with the Roman fear of the Gauls. Polybius is the first author mentioning the dishonesty, stating that ‘anyone who is aware of the general reputation of the Gauls, [would] think twice before entrusting to them a wealthy city, the betrayal of which was easy and profitable’.⁸⁷ Cicero obviously used this argument too in his defence of Fonteius, asking the court if nations like the Gauls ‘are influenced when they give evidence, by the sanctity of an oath or by fear of the immortal gods’.⁸⁸ During the Gallic wars of 50 B.C. Ambiorix, according to Caesar, swore by oath to offer the Romans, quartered in his territory, safe

⁷⁸ Ibidem, XX.

⁷⁹ Cicero, In Catilina, III.22.

⁸⁰ Seneca, *De beneficiis*, transl. John W. Basore, Loeb classical library 310 (Cambridge MA, 1935), V.16.1.

⁸¹ Juvenal, *Satires*, VIII.234.

⁸² Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.23.

⁸³ Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius*, 188.

⁸⁴ Claudius, *A discourse of Claudius*, 188.

⁸⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, IV.5.

⁸⁶ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, VI.

⁸⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, II.7.5.

⁸⁸ Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, XXX.

passage to leave because the Germans were coming. When they did, he attacked them and it turned out to be a stratagem to lure the Romans out of their winter quarters into the open.⁸⁹ Frontinus' *Stratagems* tell us about Marius who wished to test the loyalty of the Gauls. He 'sent them a letter, commanding them in the first part of the letter not to open the inner part. (...) Afterwards, he demanded the same letter back, and finding all seals broken, he knew that acts of hostility were afoot'.⁹⁰ The historian Lucius Florus places the blame of the war between Rome and the Gauls in 390 B.C. with the Gauls, because the '[Roman] ambassadors were sent to protest. But what sense of justice could be expected from barbarians?'⁹¹ He also states that the Gauls are not 'mere savages, for they can act with cunning'.⁹²

Not all stereotypes were negative. One of the most positive credential of Gaul was its vast wealth. However, this point was not merely seen as something positive. In Tacitus' version of Claudius' speech the emperor argues that by letting the Gauls enter the senate the Romans can profit from their wealth.⁹³ As senators they would take on public works and invest their money, Gallic money, in the city of Rome itself. On the same time, the Roman senators, according to Tacitus, asked themselves "what honours would be left to the relics of their nobility or the poor senator who came from Latium?"⁹⁴ The senate was restricted to Roman citizens of free birth and good standing. Moreover, from Augustus second census in 18 B.C. onwards, a candidate needed to own property worth at least a million sestertii. However, those who were not able to gather this amount of money were often bestowed the lacking part by the emperor.⁹⁵ The senate feared, that when the Gauls, of whom most would easily gather the one million sesterii, were admitted they would supplant the poorer senators from Italy. Those needed the support from the emperor or other sponsors to make up the required sum and were thus a less favourable choice for the emperor.

The wealth of the Gauls was not something new to the Roman aristocracy. The ethnographers of the early empire emphasized the fertility and numerous resources of the recently added province. Strabo claims to be citing even older sources, 'Poseidonius and several others'. According to him the wealth of the Gauls mostly derives from the numerous gold- and silver mines that are found in Gaul. Gold is found so abundantly that both men and women alike wear golden ornaments and their dignitaries even dye their clothes in gold.⁹⁶ Besides its natural resources, the Gallic wealth also originated in other products. The fertile soil made it possible for the Gauls to cultivate large parts of the land and they exceeded others in their fine iron-works and linen.⁹⁷ They were not just wealthy,

⁸⁹ Caesar, *The Gallic wars*, V.27-37.

⁹⁰ Frontinus, *Stratagems*, transl. Charles Bennett, Loeb classical library 184, (Cambridge MA, 1925), I.4.

⁹¹ Florus, *Epitome of Roman history*, transl. Edward Morgan Forster, Loeb classical library 231, (Cambridge MA, 1929), I.7.13.

⁹² *Ibidem*, I.45.10

⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.24.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, XI.23.

⁹⁵ Richard Talbert, *The senate of imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), 9-11.

⁹⁶ Strabo, *Geography*, IV.1.13, IV.2.1-2, IV.3.3, IV.4.5.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, IV.2.1-2.

according Marcus Manilius their wealth was ‘unrivalled’.⁹⁸ The wealth of the province gave it a special position within the empire. Pliny the Elder claimed that Narbonensis’ ‘agriculture, the high repute of its men and manners and the vastness of its wealth make it the equal of any other province: it is, in a word, not so much of a province as a part of Italy’.⁹⁹ Just like Manilius called the Gallic wealth unrivalled, Josephus, a hundred years later, claimed that through this wealth and fertile lands the Gauls were able to supply the whole world ‘with the overflow of their product’.¹⁰⁰ Those writers, who described the history and geography of the empire, saw the wealth of Gaul as an advantage to the whole realm. However, the wealth of the Gauls was already legendary to contemporaries, which created an environment of suspicion and envy against them. People who had to compete with the Gauls, who had this wealth to their disposal, saw it as a threat to their own position.

A final stereotype is the cultural gap between Gauls and Romans as perceived by the latter. Seneca hints to it stating that Claudius reckoned, that in the presence of great men he was not as great as he thought. Even for the ‘poor simple Hercules’ Claudius felt that he was no match.¹⁰¹ To emphasize this Seneca used the expression: ‘the Gallic cock was worth most on his own dunghill’.¹⁰² Using the wordplay that is embedded in the Latin word *gallus*, Seneca seems to link both Gaul and the Gaul to the farm.¹⁰³ While the farmer was a positive topic in Roman literature, placing the Gaul on the Dunghill linked it with a less enviable part of the farm.¹⁰⁴ The Gauls were still seen as grubbing in the mud, or dung. However, one of our earliest sources on the Gauls, Cato, shows us a more nuanced view that is also found in Diodorus Siculus. The Gauls are not only interested in fighting, but ‘they have sharp wits and are not without cleverness at learning’.¹⁰⁵ Cicero, on the other hand, stresses that difference between the civilised Romans and the barbarous Gauls. According to him, the most honourable native of Gaul could not be compared to ‘the meanest citizen of Rome, let alone with the highest men of our commonwealth’.¹⁰⁶ The Roman, as a civilized man, however, was bound to think of the interest of these ‘savage, barbarous tribes’.¹⁰⁷ The Romans apparently were better than the Gauls, ‘for nature has the habit of subjecting the weaker to the stronger’.¹⁰⁸ The gods had destined them to civilize the rest of the world, especially these inferior barbarian tribes. This belief also suited Strabo,

⁹⁸ Marcus Manilius, *Astronomica*, transl. George Patrick Goold, Loeb classical library 469 (Cambridge MA, 1977), 690.

⁹⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural history*, transl. H. Rackham, Loeb classical library 352 (Cambridge MA, 1942), III.4.

¹⁰⁰ Josephus, *Jewish war*, transl. Henry Thackeray, Loeb classical library 203 (Cambridge MA, 1927), II.372.

¹⁰¹ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, VI.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, VII.

¹⁰³ The Latin word *Gallus* can be translated both as Gaul and as cock. Linking the word with his own dunghill c

¹⁰⁴ Brendon Reay, ‘Agriculture, writing, and Cato’s aristocratic self-fashioning’, *Classical Antiquity* 24:2 (2005), 331-361, esp.335-335.

¹⁰⁵ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History, Volume III: Books 4.59-8*, transl. Charles Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library 340 (Cambridge MA, 1939), 5.31.1; Cato, *Origins*, transl. Hans Beck and Uwe Walter, *Die frühe Römischen historiker 1* (Darmstadt, 2001), II.3.

¹⁰⁶ Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, XXVII.

¹⁰⁷ Cicero, *Letters to Quintus*, transl. David Roy Shackleton Bailey, Loeb classical library 462 (Cambridge MA, 2002), I.1.27.

¹⁰⁸ *Epistles*, transl. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb classical library 76 (Cambridge MA, 1920), XC.4.

picturing Gauls as barbarian tribes that have become more and more subdued over time.¹⁰⁹ The Romans were the masters over the barbarous Gauls and according to Martial when forced to choose between a Gaul and a Roman, ‘the one that was born in the imperial city (...) should best a Gaul’.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, Juvenal returns to the earliest views on Gauls stating that when you wanted to learn rhetorics you had to go to Gaul. In Rome the study of rhetorics had stagnated and Gaul had taken its place in the educational system.¹¹¹ This was, however, not generally accepted. Around the same time Pliny the younger wrote to his friend that he ‘didn’t think there were any booksellers in Lugdunum’.¹¹²

As seen, the ideas about Gauls that existed in the empire were not merely negative. Both positive and negative stereotypes existed side by side. In a time where Juvenal pleaded to learn rhetorics in Gaul, Pliny held on to the idea of backward Gauls that probably did not even read. In this context writers could create their own Gaul, picking the stereotypes they could use, to meet the purpose of their texts. In this context the following chapter will examine three writers whose ideas on the admission of the Gauls by Claudius are handed down to us.

¹⁰⁹ Strabo, *Geography*, IV.1.5, IV.4.2.

¹¹⁰ Martial, *Epigrams*, transl. David Roy Shackleton Bailey, Loeb classical library 94 (Cambridge MA, 1997), III.1.

¹¹¹ Juvenal, *Satires*, VII.145-149.

¹¹² Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, transl. Betty Radice, Loeb classical library 59 (Cambridge MA, 1969), IX.11.2.

Northern Gaul through Roman eyes

As seen, the Gauls are used as examples to explain or enhance an argument. To meet the purpose of their texts writers could use the specific stereotypes to contribute to their specific case. Therefore, it is important to know the context of the texts, as well as the background of the writers. Four authors, who wrote on Claudius' life and the events of 48, will be examined in a chronological order. This article has chosen to focus on Seneca the Younger's *Apocolocyntosis*, Tacitus' *Annals*, Suetonius' *Lives of the twelve Caesars* and the works of Pliny. Seneca's importance lies in the fact that he was personally acquainted with Claudius. Even though he himself lived in exile in 48, the sentiments that lived among his friends in Rome would surely be known to him. Tacitus and Suetonius never knew Claudius himself. Tacitus, however is interesting because he writes an extensive report of the events of 48 and because he knew the outcome of these events. Suetonius cannot be absent for he is our main source on Claudius' life and like Tacitus, had the benefit of hindsight.

Seneca the Younger

Seneca's humiliation of Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis* looks like a direct attack on the late emperor. Meanwhile, he does not refrain from using negative Gallic stereotypes in his attack on Claudius, denigrating the Gallic provincials as well. Seneca, however, was a provincial himself. He was born in Cordoba, capital of the Roman province of Hispania Baetica, around 4 B.C.. His father came from a wealthy aristocratic family originating in the city. Seneca the Elder had lived and studied in Rome before he returned to his hometown and his three sons were born. At an early age Seneca the Younger was brought to Rome by his aunt and lived there with his father. Here he studied grammar and rhetorics, but was especially interested in, mostly stoic, philosophy.¹¹³ He only started a political career at a relatively late age, but was surely a senator during Claudius' reign.¹¹⁴ At the end of 41 Seneca was exiled to Corsica. The accusation was adultery with Julia Livilla, sister of the late emperor Caligula. Whether or not Seneca did fornicate is unclear, but the real reason behind the charge is said to have been Messalina's wish to get rid of Julia. After eight years, Seneca was pardoned by Claudius because Claudius' new wife, Agrippina, wanted him to educate her son Nero.¹¹⁵

After an exile of eight years, Seneca had his reasons to hold a grudge against Claudius. As a provincial, however, the position of Seneca seems similar to that of the Gauls. The question, therefore, is why he still uses the old Gallic stereotypes to mock the emperor. An answer might be found in the fact that Cordoba was already a part of the empire in the second century B.C.. Aristocrats from Hispania already had proven their worth and Seneca had been educated in Rome together with the Italian elite. Because of this, he thought of himself as a Roman, better than the people who had found themselves merely a century under Roman rule. His view on Gallia Narbonensis shows that he

¹¹³ Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: a philosopher in politics* (New York, 2003), 34-43.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 43-51.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 59-63.

believed Roman rule could raise a province to Roman levels of civilisation. Narbonensis had been turned into a province in the second century B.C. to secure the connection with Hispania. He wrote that, when the Greeks founded the colony of Massalia around 600 B.C., ‘they established themselves in the midst of what were then the most savage and uncivilized peoples of Gaul’.¹¹⁶ He speaks clearly in the past tense, suggesting that they now had lost this title and became civilized. The fact that he probably would no longer think of Narbonensis as a backward province can also be concluded from the fact that his wife’s family, the Pompeii Paulini, originated in Arelate. According to Pliny the Elder, one of her ancestors from the second century B.C. already was a Roman knight, who ‘descended on his father’s side from a tribe that went about clad in skins’.¹¹⁷ Narbonensis, just like Spain, had been part of the Roman empire for centuries and its elite thus became as civilized as Rome’s. The elite who lived there, could be seen as worthy individuals who had earned Roman citizenship.

Seneca’s belief in the civilizing mission of the Roman empire did not match with the beliefs of Stoic thought. The stoics believed in natural equality and that all men belonged to one large state. Granting citizenship to all, let alone give them the right to sit in the senate, was by no means necessary to reach this state.¹¹⁸ But Seneca went further, believing that better men should rule their inferiors. Romans had the right, or even the obligation, to rule the lesser peoples.¹¹⁹ This did not mean that the Italians did not benefit from cooperation with provincials. In his work *On anger*, he states that the empire had greatly profited from the union of ‘victors and vanquished into one’.¹²⁰ Because old enemies had learned to live together, both could prosper. He himself, his friend Burrus and his wife Pompeia Paulina were, among others, the fruits of this union.

Some historians even attribute Seneca with the promotion of provincials in political functions. Together with Sextus Aranius Burrus, prefect of the praetorian guard and born in Vasio in Narbonensis, Seneca was one of the main advisors of the young emperor Nero. These two provincial advisors are believed to have promoted mainly the accession of Gallic and Spanish provincials in the government service. Out of a nationalistic affinity they felt favourable to other nobles from the western provinces.¹²¹ There probably was an increase in senators from Gaul and Spain during the early reign of Nero, when Seneca’s power flourished. However, the date of entry to the senate is hard to document and thus hard to use. More interesting is the fact that the dignity of Gaul regarding the number of consulships is matched, if not surpassed, by Spain in the same period. When an increase in provincials in government service was inevitable an emperor could still choose which provincials

¹¹⁶ Seneca, *The consolations ad Helviam*, transl. John W. Basore, Loeb classical library 254 (Cambridge MA, 1932), VII.8-9.

¹¹⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural history*, transl. H. Rackham, Loeb classical library 394 (Cambridge MA, 1952), XXXIII.143.

¹¹⁸ Griffin, *Seneca*, 249.

¹¹⁹ Seneca, *Epistles*, transl. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb classical library 76 (Cambridge MA, 1920), XC.4.

¹²⁰ Seneca, *De ira*, transl. John W. Basore, Loeb classical library 214, (Cambridge MA, 1928), II.34.4.

¹²¹ Siegfried de Laet, *De samenstelling van den Romeinschen senaat gedurende de eerste eeuw van het principaat* (Antwerpen, 1941), 318; Ronald Syme, *Tacitus: vol. II* (Sommerset, 1997), 590-592.

would benefit.¹²² The significance of the consulships, however, also diminishes because most of these consulships are held by Seneca, Burrus or their relatives. Seneca did have connections in the western provinces and is seen helping these when they came to Rome. Both his wife's family and his own brothers flourished, not only as consuls, during the height of his power.¹²³ The fact that they were related, however, reduces the significance of these offices as representation of Seneca's approach to provincials. His influence on the increase of provincials is probably overestimated. The only provincials that profited by his power were his relatives and close friends.¹²⁴ He probably saw the admission of 48 as a way for the emperor to weaken the power of the senate by adding his "own" men. In his *De beneficiis*, written during the reign of Nero, he explains the matter of collective benefit and individual debt on the basis of the Gallic case. 'If the emperor should grant citizenship to all the Gauls (...) would the individual on account of that owe him nothing?'¹²⁵ Seneca recognised that, while the emperor had offered the Gauls a place in the senate, the Gauls would owe him for that. This limited the power of the Italian aristocracy and increased the emperor's influence in the senate.

With regard to Seneca's politics, then, his relation to the Gauls was not altogether negative, although xenophobia might have played a part in his approach of Claudius' proposal. His philosophy shows us that he might have felt a slight feeling of superiority over some provincials, especially those who had not been civilized like the Narbonese Gauls and the Spaniards. The only mention of the Three Gauls, outside the *Apocolocyntosis*, is when he writes to his friend Liberalis, a native of Lugdunum, after this city has been destroyed by a fire. Seneca consoles his friend by stating that the city, which had been 'the pride of Gaul' will rise again.¹²⁶ Consoling a friend, however, says little about his approach of the Three Gauls. Even in Gaul worthy individuals could be found, who transcended their barbarian background and met with Roman standards. The *Apocolocyntosis* offers us another view on the city. Lady Malaria clearly stresses that Claudius 'was born at the sixteenth milestone from Vienne, a native Gaul'. In Claudius' times, Vienne was the Roman capital of Narbonensis, while Lugdunum was the capital of Gallia Lugdunensis and of the so-called Three Gauls. By stressing the distance between Lugdunum and Vienne he emphasizes the difference between Roman and barbarian Gaul.¹²⁷

While Seneca's life does not give clarity on his reasons for using the term "Gaul" as an insult, the *Apocolocyntosis* itself might. The authorship of the work has been debated, but Seneca is generally accepted as the author of the text.¹²⁸ As mentioned before it describes Claudius' accession to heaven and descent to hell. The purpose of the text is, like the authorship, debated. It clearly mocks Claudius,

¹²² Griffin, *Seneca*, 251-253.

¹²³ Ibidem, 83-84, 88-89, 253-254.

¹²⁴ Ibidem., 253-255.

¹²⁵ Seneca, *De beneficiis*, VI.19.

¹²⁶ Seneca, *Epistles*, transl. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb classical library 76 (Cambridge MA, 1920), XCI.2.

¹²⁷ Allan Perley Ball, *Seneca's Apocolocyntosis* (New York, 1978), 181.

¹²⁸ Kirk Freudenburg, 'Seneca's Apocolocyntosis', in: Shadi Bartsch and Alessandro Schiesaro, *The Cambridge companion to Seneca* (Cambridge, 2015), 93-108, esp. 94; Ball, *Apocolocyntosis*, 23-50; Allan A. Lund, *L. Annaeus Seneca: Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii* (Heidelberg, 1994), 11; cf. Barry Baldwin, 'Executions under Claudius: Seneca's "Ludus de morte Claudii"', *Phoenix* 18:1 (1964), 39-48.

but also ridiculed the practice of deification. If an emperor like Claudius could be deified, there was something wrong with the practice.¹²⁹ Deification was important for Nero's legitimacy to the people. He himself, however, was said to have made fun of Claudius. He would surely have appreciated a text like *Apocolocyntosis*, presented to him in a private sphere, probably during the *Saturnalia*.¹³⁰ The events of 48, also play a significant role. Claudius had been portrayed very carefully as a citizen of the Three Gauls, clearly distinguished from Gallia Narbonensis in chapter 6. In the next chapters, Claudius has arrived in the court of the gods and it is debated whether or not Claudius is fit for admission.¹³¹ The court of the gods is compared with the Roman *curia* and Seneca even calls it by the same name.¹³² Letting Claudius, according to the story a full Gaul, apply for admission into the *curia* of the gods resembles the fact that Claudius had admitted Gauls into the *curia* of Rome.¹³³ By sending him to hell, Seneca's gods give a clear sign that Gauls have no place among Roman senators, let alone Roman gods. Another sign is the fact that Augustus is the one who has the decisive voice.¹³⁴ As mentioned earlier, Caesar had already enfranchised Gauls and let them enter the senate, while Augustus had proclaimed laws to prevent them from entering the *curia*. Augustus had thus not only barred the doors of the Roman senate for the Gauls, but also blocked the entrance of Claudius, the Gaul, into the godly curia. Presented to the emperor and his intimates, Seneca emphasized what, in his opinion, were the flaws of Claudius. If Nero wanted to be more like Augustus, the only one who had deserved deification, he should not meddle with the privileges of the Italian aristocracy.

A final episode in the *Apocolocyntosis* that showed Seneca's disapproval of the admission of the Gauls revolves around Claudius' death. While Claudius is on his deathbed, Mercury asks Clotho why Claudius is still alive. Clotho replies that she wanted to wait 'until he should make Roman citizens of the half dozen who are still outsiders'.¹³⁵ Seneca goes on to explain to the reader that 'He had made up his mind, you know, to see the whole world in the toga, Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards, Britons, and all'.¹³⁶ Seneca's gods, however, did not approve of this, as they did not let Clotho wait for Claudius to fulfil his "intention". They wanted to 'leave a few foreigners for seed'.¹³⁷ This was not a common charge against bad emperors. There was, under Claudius, an increase in citizenship, which threatened the exclusivity of the Roman aristocracy.¹³⁸ They could have felt that Claudius gave it away indiscriminately and exceeded the limits of bestowing citizenship on worthy individuals. Seneca, as part of this aristocracy, would surely not remain quiet when his privileges were at stake. Even in the

¹²⁹ Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean satire* (Baltimore, 1993), 77, 78-90; Steven J. Green, 'Undeifying Tiberius: a reconsideration of Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 1.2', *The classical quarterly* 60:1 (2010), 274-276.

¹³⁰ Lund, *Annaeus Seneca*, 19.

¹³¹ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, VIII-XI.

¹³² *Ibidem*, VIII.

¹³³ David Braund, 'The Aedui, Troy, and the *Apocolocyntosis*', *The classical quarterly* 30:2 (1980), 420-425, esp. 423; Freudenburg, 'Apocolocyntosis', 104;

¹³⁴ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, X-XI.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, III.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, III.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, III.

¹³⁸ Osgood, *Claudius*, 164.

third century Seneca's reproach about Claudius re-echoed within the senatorial elite. The Roman senator and historian Cassius Dio, who had seen Caracalla's grant of Roman citizenship to all free men in the empire in 212, felt that Claudius' had 'granted citizenship to others quite indiscriminately, sometimes to individuals and sometimes to whole groups'.¹³⁹ Discontent about overstepping the tradition of rewarding worthy individuals with citizenship thus appeared on different occasions in history. Seneca was not the only senator who deplored a massive grant of citizenship and his feelings even continued to be shared into the third century.

Seneca is thus seen taking different positions regarding the Gauls. He clearly saw the Gauls as part of the Roman empire. The Romans, as greatest civilisation of the world, had the obligation to help these less developed peoples. As such the Gallic tribes could benefit from a union with the Roman empire. Examples of this benefit were Hispania and Gallia Narbonensis, two provinces who had developed themselves to Roman standards and as such merged with the Roman people. Even Gallia Comata could have harboured worthy individuals who met with Roman standards and could participate in the empire. However, the ancient hatred was not forgotten. The enmity of the Allobroges, although coming from Narbonensis and producing senators, was still fresh. Even worse, Claudius had done as Gauls were used to do: capturing Rome and slaughtering its inhabitants. In Seneca's opinion, the Gauls belonged to the empire, but as an inferior people they surely did not belong in the senate. As a provincial from Hispania, Seneca had proven his worth to the empire. He had earned his place within the Italian aristocracy. The only thing the Comatan Gauls had proven in 21 was that they could not be trusted. He did not refrain from using all the stereotypes that he knew to emphasize the foreignness of the Gauls. Although being a Stoic, Seneca was also a senator and an aristocrat who had react when his own position was at risk.

Tacitus

Tacitus is one of our most important sources for Claudius' speech on the Gauls in 48. Like his report of the speech, his own relation to Gaul, Gauls and provincials in general is a hotly debated topic. Tacitus was probably born in the provinces during the early reign of Nero. Gallia Cisalpina and Hispania have been suggested, but most scholars believe in a Narbonese background. He was probably born in Narbonensis when his father was procurator of Gallia Belgica and the two German provinces. Whether his father originated in Gaul himself, or was part of the old Roman elite remains subject of debate, but it is believed that he was enfranchised during the Roman conquest of Narbonensis.¹⁴⁰ There is at least some link with Gaul as his wife, Julia Agricola, originated in Narbonensis.¹⁴¹ His

¹³⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, transl. Herbert Foster, Loeb classical library 175 (Cambridge MA, 1924), LX.17.5.

¹⁴⁰ Syme, *Tacitus*, 611-624, 796-807; Mark Toher, 'Syme's Tacitus', in: A. J. Woodman, *The Cambridge companion to Tacitus* (New York, 2009), 317-329, esp. 326-328; Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus' Annals* (New York, 2010), 10-11.

¹⁴¹ Anthony R. Birley, *The Roman government of Britain* (New York, 2005), 71-73.

Gallic background probably would have had its influence on Tacitus' views. There is, however, another background that has to be taken into account. Tacitus had been born into the new Roman aristocracy. He became part of the senatorial class under Vespasian and even obtained the consulship in 97.¹⁴² Being part of the senatorial elite, he, like Seneca, was acquainted with the view that the Roman people were destined by the gods to civilize the known world.¹⁴³ Agricola, Tacitus' father in law, had 'educated the sons of chiefs in the liberal arts. (...) Thus even our style of dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen'.¹⁴⁴ Tacitus clearly presented his beliefs in his *Annals* through the Roman general Duivius Avitus. He credited Avitus with telling the Germans that 'all men had to bow to the commands of their betters: it had been decreed by those gods whom they implored that with the Roman people should rest the decision what to give and what to take away.'¹⁴⁵ Tacitus speeches were an important narrative instrument that served to express his criticism on the Roman empire and morals of his days.¹⁴⁶ The gods had granted the Romans their victory over the Germans and thus these Germans had to live up to the will of the gods and subject themselves.

While Tacitus' Germans had to bow to the commands of their betters, the love of freedom of the northern peoples met with his approval. He used the loss of freedom in the barbarian people, as they were one by one subjected to Roman rule, to criticize the loss of freedom in Rome itself.¹⁴⁷ In his description of Britain Tacitus compares the inhabitants of the island with the Gauls. Once the Gauls had been fierce fighters like the Britons, but peace, or Roman domination, had made the Gauls indolent and estranged them from their ancient courage and liberty. 'This happened to such of the Britons as were conquered long ago: the rest remain what the Gauls once were'.¹⁴⁸ The virtues that the Gauls of old had possessed had been lost in the Gauls that were living during Tacitus' days. The stereotypes that no longer fit the Gauls were transferred to "other" barbarians.¹⁴⁹ Even "Gallic" tribes tried to be identified as Germans 'as though this illustrious ancestry delivers them from any affinity with the indolent Gaul'¹⁵⁰ Because he presented the submission of the barbarians as a mirror for the loss of freedom in Rome, his sympathy seems to have been with the barbarians. However, Rome was not that bad. Tacitus also saw that barbarian societies could not match Rome in bringing peace and stability. To have a stable government, a strong leader was essential. The alternative to Roman rule was anarchy and chaos, as had existed in the barbarian states and still did in Germany, together with

¹⁴² Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, transl. Betty Radice, Loeb classical library 55 (Cambridge MA, 1969), II.1.6.

¹⁴³ Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman culture: unity, diversity and empire* (Oxford, 2005), 64-67.

¹⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola*, transl. Maurice Hutton and Henry Peterson, Loeb classical library 35 (Cambridge MA, 1914), XXI.2.

¹⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.56; Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 48-76.

¹⁴⁶ David S. Levene, 'Speeches in the Histories', in: A. J. Woodman, *The Cambridge companion to Tacitus* (New York, 2009), 212-224, esp. 212-215.

¹⁴⁷ Mellor, *Annals*, 78-92.

¹⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola*, XI.4.

¹⁴⁹ Antti Lampinen, 'Migrating motifs of northern barbarism: depicting Gauls and Germans in imperial literature', in: Majiastina Kahlos (ed.), *The faces of the other: religious rivalry and ethnic encounters in the later Roman world* (Turnhout, 2011), 201-237.

¹⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Germania*, transl. Maurice Hutton and Henry Peterson, Loeb classical library 35 (Cambridge MA, 1914), XXVIII.4.

the desired freedom.¹⁵¹ This is why the gods granted the Romans their victories over the barbarians and justified Roman superiority.

Tacitus' narrative on Gaul has been divided in four stages by Ronald Syme.¹⁵² Those stages all worked towards an apotheosis of Gallo-Roman relations, which clarified Tacitus' view on the Gauls. He starts with the revolt of Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir in 21. During the revolt, the Aeduan Julius Sacrovir rode to his troops, 'reminding them of the ancient laurels of the Gauls and the reverses they had inflicted upon the Roman; how glorious their freedom, if they conquered; how much more insufferable their bondage, should they be vanquished once again'.¹⁵³ This speech, early on in Tacitus' story, showed the great love of freedom even the Gauls had once possessed and how proud they had been. The Gauls, however, like Rome itself, lost to the empire and their bonds were tightened. This tightening of control over the Gauls is the second stage. Caligula started with the benefit of his father's reputation. He, however, did not live up to the positive reputation his father had in Gaul. He gave games in oratory at the altar of Augustus in Lugdunum, where the losers had to erase their writings with a sponge or their tongue. When they refused they were thrown into the Rhone or beaten with rods.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Caligula used his power to get his hands on the Gallic wealth. When he was gambling and found out that he had no more money, 'he called for the census lists of the Gauls and ordered the wealthiest of them to be put to death; then, returning to his fellow-gamesters, he said: "Here you are playing for a few denarii, while I have taken in a good one hundred and fifty millions"'.¹⁵⁵ This strict control of the Gauls did create discontent, but it also pacified the Gauls. When the Romans had taken away a large part of their wealth, they did not have the means to raise an army and start a successful revolt.

The third stage of Tacitus' narrative is Claudius' speech to the senate in 48. Tacitus rewrote the speech and used it to express his view on the matter. In contrast with his criticism on the loss of freedom in Rome, Tacitus' belief in civilizing the barbarian world is shown in Claudius' speech. As said before, Tacitus' was, like Seneca, the result of successful assimilation of provincials into the Roman state. They were the living proof that civilizing provincials was possible. Claudius saw it too and gave the Gauls from Comata a chance. Wealthy individuals from northern Gaul might contribute to the empire, just as Comatan and Hispanian aristocrats did. Tacitus' belief in a mutual benefit of the relation between Romans and barbarians pops up in one of Claudius' arguments. 'Now that customs, culture, and the ties of marriage have blended them with ourselves, let them bring among us their gold and their riches instead of retaining them beyond the pale'.¹⁵⁶ This Gallic wealth did not feature in the

¹⁵¹ Richard Alston and Efrossini Spentzou, *Reflections of Romanity: discourses of subjectivity in imperial Rome* (Columbus, 2011), 206-224; Syme, *Tacitus*, 547-550;

¹⁵² Ronald Syme, *Tacitus: vol. I* (Somerset, 1997), 458-464.

¹⁵³ Tacitus, *Annals*, III.45.

¹⁵⁴ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*, transl. John C. Rolfe, Loeb classical library 31 (Cambridge MA, 1914), XX; Juvenal, *Satires*, I.44.

¹⁵⁵ Cassius Dio, *History*, LIX.22.3.

¹⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.24.

known part of Claudius original, but Tacitus was actually saying that, while the Romans had helped the Gauls by enhancing their culture, it was now time for the Gauls to let the Romans share in their wealth. He probably approved of Claudius proposal. He defended the emperor from critics and improved the speech, even though some modern authors see Tacitus' adjustments as an attack on Claudius' ideas.¹⁵⁷ This speech showed the generous Roman nature and the willingness of letting other peoples share in their success. However, after the speech only a small number of Comatan Gauls was admitted to the senate. Still, this minority got the opportunity to hold high positions within the empire.

Tacitus' view of indolent Gauls, who do not care about their freedom anymore, might have been caused by Claudius' speech, which had Romanized them like their Narbonese brothers. Especially, if, as Tacitus tells us, 'the emperor's speech was followed by a resolution of the Fathers, and the Aedui became the first to acquire senatorial rights in the capital'.¹⁵⁸ There is, however, a last chapter to be told and hindsight of these events has shaped Tacitus' view of Gauls. Tacitus' Gallic narrative culminates in the years 68-70. In 68 the governor of Lugdunum, Julius Vindex, started a revolt to depose the emperor Nero. Unfortunately, the part of the *Annals* which would have dealt with the revolt is lost, so we lack Tacitus' direct opinion on the matter. We do have, however, among others Cassius Dio's report and references in Tacitus' *Histories*. Vindex, an Aquitanian noble, descending from a royal house, had been one of the Gallic nobles who were admitted as a result of Claudius' speech.¹⁵⁹ According to Dio, Vindex stirred up the Gauls, who were willing to revolt because they had suffered under the emperors. Vindex had been allowed to enter the Roman aristocracy, by becoming a senator. Still, he made a clear distinction between the Romans and "his Gauls". He encouraged his troops to 'succour yourselves and succour the Romans; liberate the entire world'.¹⁶⁰ While he made a distinction between the Gauls and the Romans, he had no desire to split Gaul from Rome. Rather, as a good senator, he wanted to liberate the whole empire from a "bad" emperor. He pledged his allegiance to Galba, the governor of Spain, as new emperor. He did not differ much from the Italian senators as some of them also wanted to depose of Nero.¹⁶¹ The fact that he was a Gaul, as were his troops, may not have mattered to his own intentions, but it did certainly matter to the Romans. Verginius Rufus, commander of those Rhine legions, which were 'ready to cope indifferently with the German or the Gaul' finally had an opportunity to react to a Gallic insurrection.¹⁶² Vindex' army was destroyed by these legions and Vindex himself committed suicide. In the meantime, Nero had also committed suicide and Galba was proclaimed emperor. Nero's death did not solve the problems. The years 68 and 69 saw the rise of 4 different emperors, of which Vespasian, finally gained the upper hand. More

¹⁵⁷ Mellor, *Annals*, 181-184; Miriam Griffin, 'The Lyons tablet and Tacitean hindsight', *The classical quarterly* 32:2 (1982), 404-418; Cf. Kenneth Wellesley, 'Can you trust Tacitus?', *Greece & Rome* 1:1 (1954), 13-33.

¹⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.25.

¹⁵⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, LXIII.22.1(.2).

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem, LXIII.22.6.

¹⁶¹ Cassius Dio, *Roman history*, LXIII.23.1; Plutarch, *Galba*, transl. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb classical library 103 (Cambridge MA, 1926), IV; Suetonius, *Galba*, transl. John C. Rolfe, Loeb classical library 38 (Cambridge MA, 1914), IX.2.

¹⁶² Tacitus, *Annals*, IV.5.

importantly the death of Vindex and the civil wars caused more unrest in Gaul. The Batavian Julius Civilis, like Vindex a Roman general who originated in a local royal family, led his countrymen against the Romans and persuaded the Gauls to do the same. The Gauls united in their revolt and some of them, following Julius Classicus and Julius Tutor, hoped to establish their own Gallic empire. The revolt was hindered when discord arose between the different tribes over who would be the leader of a united Gaul.¹⁶³ The Roman label had created some kind of unity among the Gauls, but ultimately they all fought for their own tribe. All revolts, ultimately, were put down when Vespasian send Cerialis with a large army.¹⁶⁴ In Tacitus' *Histories* there are some references to the revolt of Vindex, mostly regarding the following uprising by Civilis and the Gauls. Significantly, like Cassius Dio, Tacitus' stated that, in Rome, Vindex' army was believed to be a foreign army. The people of Rome had barely been affected by Vindex revolt, 'because the city at that time was safe and the war was in a province; since it was between the legions and the Gauls, it was regarded as a foreign war'.¹⁶⁵ Vindex' actions, however, were not altogether seen as anti-Roman. Tacitus' speech of Galba states that 'it was not Vindex with an unarmed province, nor I with a single legion, but his own monstrous character', that had caused Nero's downfall. Here, Vindex is represented by Tacitus not as a Gallic aggressor, but as the leader of an unarmed provincial revolt against a bad emperor. In yet another segment, Tacitus' belief in the godly duty to civilize the "lesser" peoples pops up again. He describes how Gaius Vocula, a Roman commander, tried to convince the Gallic auxiliary commanders Classicus and Tutor to remain loyal to the Roman case. He did so, according to Tacitus, by claiming that the revolts of Sacrovir and the Aeduans and also the revolt of Vindex had only been able because the Romans had been too easy on the Gauls. If Claudius had not allowed Gauls into government service Vindex could have never risen to such a high position. Galba's generosity in reducing the tributes had given them the opportunity to organize themselves. This lenient approach to the Gauls was the reason they had risen again. 'Now they are enemies because the burden of their servitude is light; when we have despoiled and stripped them they will be friends'.¹⁶⁶

These revolts had put an end to the ambition of Comatan Gauls. Narbonensis had also played its part in the Gallic revolts, but had had the time to prove itself to the curia. Their northern brothers had only had little more than a decade to show that their aristocracy could match that of Narbonensis. The end of the civil wars, at the same time meant the end of northern Gauls in high offices.¹⁶⁷ The Gauls had once possessed a so enviable freedom. The rest of their society, however, could not match the stability and peace the Roman empire had brought. Even the gods approved of this idea, as they had let the Romans win their battles against the Gauls. Tacitus' view, although being a Gaul himself,

¹⁶³ Tacitus, *Histories*, transl. Clifford H. Moore, Loeb classical library 249, (Cambridge MA, 1931), IV.69-70; For the internal division of Gallia Comata see: Figure II.

¹⁶⁴ John Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul: the three provinces, 58 BC-AD 260* (Kent, 1983), 40-50.

¹⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Histories*, transl. Clifford H. Moore, Loeb classical library 111 (Cambridge MA, 1925), I.89.

¹⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Histories*, transl. Clifford H. Moore, Loeb classical library 249, (Cambridge MA, 1931), IV.57.

¹⁶⁷ Sherwyn-White, *Racial prejudice*, 51-61; Drinkwater, *The three Gauls*, 48; Syme, *Tacitus*, 455-457, 462-463.

did not differ much from the general sentiment within the Italian aristocracy. He made it clear that all provincials deserved a chance to become part of the empire, to complete the Roman mission of civilizing the barbarians. His own province, Gallia Narbonensis, was an example of successful assimilation. The northern Gauls, however, had wasted their opportunity and were deservedly returned to their subservient position. Tacitus' description of the Roman generals who found themselves amidst the Gauls and Germans in 69 disclosed his own thoughts. When the gods had allowed the Gallic armies to be defeated, they should bow to Roman rule. Unfortunately, the Gauls did not acquiesce in this godly judgement and had to be suppressed to prevent further revolts.

Looking at Tacitus, he barely makes use of the old stereotypes. His version of Claudius' speech is the only time stereotypes appear. However, the stereotypes, which are voiced by the senators against Claudius' proposal, are countered in the following speech. It seems that he really tried to create a well-considered image of the northern Gauls. Moreover, they had once possessed this freedom that was so praiseworthy in barbarian peoples. He knew, however, that peace and stability came with a price and thus the addition of Gaul to the empire meant an improvement for the province. His Narbonese background and historical insight might have created some affinity with his northern brothers. His narrative, however, is carefully created to justify the position of the Three Gauls at Tacitus' time. He as a Narbonese Gaul, had assimilated to Roman standards, while the Comatan Gauls had shown that they still were barbarians.

Suetonius and Pliny the Younger

Gaius Sertorius Suetonius was one of Rome's most famous biographers. He was probably born in Hippo Regius, in the province of Africa, or Italy somewhere around 70 and thus as a contemporary of Tacitus. His father belonged to the equestrian class and had served as a tribune under the emperor Otho. During Suetonius' days the imperial household was no longer ran by freedmen, as in Claudius' days, but by the equestrian order. Suetonius himself was appointed into this household under Hadrian in 117 and dismissed in 122. He probably died after 130.¹⁶⁸ His *Lives of the Caesars* have won him eternal fame. These biographies are centred around the lives of the "emperors" from Caesar to Domitian. They are not to be confused with imperial histories, which look at the history of the entire empire, but rather focus on the lives of individual historical actors.¹⁶⁹

While the position of Tacitus and Seneca was rather similar, Suetonius found himself in a different position. First of all, Suetonius had no Celtic background whatsoever. While Tacitus had Narbonese roots and even Seneca's background was linked to a, maybe distant, Celtic past, Suetonius

¹⁶⁸ Ronald Mellor, *The Roman historians* (London, 1999), 146-147; Roy K. Gibson, 'Suetonius and Pliny the Younger', in: Tristan Power and Roy K. Gibson (ed.), *Suetonius the biographer, studies in Roman lives* (New York, 2014), 199-230, esp. 200.

¹⁶⁹ Tristan Power, 'Introduction: the originality of Suetonius', in: Tristan Power and Roy K. Gibson (ed.), *Suetonius the biographer, studies in Roman lives* (New York, 2014), 1-18, esp. 4-18; Mellor, *Roman historians*, 147-157.

was either African or Italian. Moreover, he was an equestrian and no senator. This might be an explanation for the lack of interest in the “gallic problem”. Claudius censorship of 48 is briefly mentioned, but his proposal of the admission of Gauls into the senate is completely lacking, as are the revolts of Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, Vindex revolt is mentioned a few times, but the revolts of Civilis, Classicus and Tutor during the civil wars are limited to a remark on Domitian’s participation in ‘an expedition against Gaul and the Germanies’.¹⁷¹ First of all, the admission of the Gauls and its backlash in aristocratic circles was in a distant past. It might have been remembered, but the revolts of the late 60’s had frustrated Claudius’ intentions and, with respect to Comatan Gauls in the senate, all had been returned to the situation before the speech. Tacitus did remember it, but in Tacitus’ case it served his narrative, in which he had to relate himself to “the other Gauls”. Moreover, while Suetonius himself was no part of the senatorial class, he might have been less interested in who was admitted and why. Admitting northern Gauls did not impair his class, while it might have felt unfair that “barbarians” were admitted before “Roman” equestrians.

There are a few cases in which Suetonius mentions the Gauls. One of his most outspoken criticisms on Gauls is found in his *life of Caesar*. Caesar did grant citizenship to ‘half-civilised Gauls’.¹⁷² This statement comes closest to a personal verdict of Suetonius on the status of the Gauls during Caesar’s days and clearly rejects Caesar’s action. He continues with the reaction of the people after Caesar even admitted some of these Gauls into the senate. A text was spread which called the people to refuse new senators the directions to the Curia. Moreover, they mocked the decision in their songs: ‘Caesar led the Gauls in triumph, led them to the senate house: Then the Gauls put off their breeches, and put on the laticlave’.¹⁷³ Creating such a one-sided image, Suetonius clearly seems to have disapproved of Caesar’s politics. Another sign of disapproval is his description of druidism. Describing the abolition of the druidism by Claudius, Suetonius defines it as ‘the cruel and inhuman religion of the Druids among the Gauls’.¹⁷⁴ Finally, when he is describing the calm and mild expression of Augustus he mentions one of the leading men of the Gallic provinces. He admitted that the emperor’s calm expression ‘had softened his heart, and kept him from carrying out his design of pushing the emperor over the cliff, when he had been allowed to approach him under the pretence of a conference’.¹⁷⁵ Those statements clearly fit the stereotype of barbarian Gauls who believe in an inhuman religion and are not to be trusted.

A more subtle approach of the Gauls is found in his description of the year of the four emperors. ‘After the world had put up with such a ruler for nearly fourteen years, it at last cast him off, and the Gauls took the first step under the lead of Julius Vindex, who at that time governed their

¹⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XVI.1-4.

¹⁷¹ Suetonius, *Domitian*, II.1.

¹⁷² Suetonius, *Caesar*, LXXVI.3.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, LXXX.2.

¹⁷⁴ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XXV.5.

¹⁷⁵ Suetonius, *Augustus*, LXXIX.1.

province as propraetor'.¹⁷⁶ Nero's downfall was thus presented by Suetonius as a result of Gallic action. However, the end of Nero's reign, characterized by cruelty and abuse, was not something to regret. The revolts set in motion, the people of Rome even vandalized statues and columns, filling them with jokes on the emperor's career as singer and actor, which could not be compared with governing an empire.¹⁷⁷ As seen before, there were however also people who saw the revolt of the Gauls as an attack on the empire. Galba himself, had 'learned of the rebellion of the Gallic provinces through an urgent appeal for help from the governor of Aquitania'.¹⁷⁸ This governor must have felt threatened by a "Gallic" revolt under another governor. Moreover, corresponding with Tacitus, in Suetonius text the German legions felt the same about Vindex' army. These legions saw it as a Gallic revolt, which made it their job to end it. When Galba did not acknowledge their 'services against the Gauls and Vindex', they forsook him in favour of Vitellius.¹⁷⁹ While Suetonius' approach to Vindex' revolt seems neutral, it strikes that he emphasizes the background of his troops. It is emphasized a couple of times that the revolt was initiated by the Gauls or Gallic provinces, unlike the civil wars which were fought by Roman generals with their Roman legions.

While the Gauls are almost absent from Suetonius works, it is no exemption. In the vast collection of letters of Pliny the Younger, the lack of references to Gaul is found too. Pliny was born in Novum Comum in northern Italy around 61. His father was an equestrian, but Pliny, by being elected quaestor, earned his place in the senatorial class. During his career, he repeatedly visited the eastern provinces, especially Bithynia. Pliny was well acquainted with both Tacitus and Suetonius. Tacitus was a friend of his and a senatorial colleague. Suetonius, having followed an official equestrian career, ended up working on Pliny's staff.¹⁸⁰ In Pliny's texts Gaul seems to be absent altogether. He makes a few remarks on his friend, Verginius Rufus, who defeated Vindex.¹⁸¹ However, he does not judge the intentions of Vindex, but rather praises his friend. There is one letter in which he gives an insight on his view of Gaul. Writing to his friend Sejanus, who has apparently written to Pliny from Lugdunum, he says: 'As I did not imagine there were any booksellers at Lugdunum, I am so much the more pleased to learn that my works are sold there'.¹⁸² Pliny had never visited any western province and he might have actually believed that Gaul still was a backward province.¹⁸³ It was, however, known that rhetorics had become rather popular in the western provinces. Pliny's contemporaries stated that rhetorics had spread even into Gaul and a bookshop at one of its most important cities would have been no surprise.¹⁸⁴ Even Pliny himself told a friend that his verses would

¹⁷⁶ Suetonius, *Nero*, XL.1.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, XLV.2.

¹⁷⁸ Suetonius, *Galba*, IX.2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, XVI.2.

¹⁸⁰ Gibson, 'Suetonius and Pliny', 200.

¹⁸¹ Pliny, *Letters*, II.1, V.3, VI.10, IX.19.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, IX.11.2.

¹⁸³ Adrian N. Sherwyn-White, *The letters of Pliny: a historical and social commentary* (Oxford, 1966), 490.

¹⁸⁴ Martial, *Epigrams*, II.3.1-6.; Juvenal, *Satires*, XV.3.

spread 'as widely as the speech of Rome'.¹⁸⁵ Where people spoke Latin, they would read Latin books. Therefore, it would not be surprising that there were shops that sold those books, especially in a Roman colony. His surprise about the Gallic bookshops, probably, was no more than a joke about "those dumb barbarians". Joking about this, however, he displayed the ancient prejudice of the backward Gaul who, culturally, could not match the civilized Roman.

Two of the most important writers of the early second century apparently did not feel as strong about the Gauls as Tacitus. The absence of the Gauls in Pliny's work might be seen as a result of his pursuits in the eastern part of the empire. He had never been in the western provinces and as such was not acquainted with the area. Moreover, he did not write about the past as Tacitus or Suetonius did, a past in which the Gauls had played their part. Suetonius lack of interest might also be found in the absence of personal experience with Gaul. As a historian, however, he had to mention the Gauls and the roles they played with regard to the emperors, but limited his description to the necessities. This silence on the Gauls by both writers, however, can also tell us something about the image they had. The Gauls had been subdued after the revolts of 68-70. Moreover, the absence of their aristocracy in high imperial circles limited the contact between Roman and Gallic aristocrats. This lack of personal experience with the Gauls caused the Romans to fall back on the old stereotypes. So Pliny recalled the backward Gallic culture and Suetonius mentioned their cruel religion and treacherous nature. Moreover, Suetonius presented them as a homogenous, foreign, group, in contrast with the Roman legions when they revolted against Nero.

¹⁸⁵ Pliny, *Letters*, II.10.2.

Conclusion

The Roman image of Gaul is far more complex than it is earlier perceived. The biggest problem with examining the problematic relation between Rome and Gaul is the label “Gaul” itself. This label is a construction invented by the Romans to describe the people in their northern provinces. This construction did eventually create a common identity among the people who lived in the Roman provinces, together labelled the Three Gauls. However, the common identity had only just grown and was weak, as shown by the failure of Classicus in uniting the tribes. Another complication is the limited scholarly interest in the Roman relation with Gaul. While the reign of Augustus is often used as the end of this scholarly interest, the “Gallic problem” still existed a few decades later. The public debate that is shown in Claudius’ speech, but also in Seneca’s works, uncovers diverse reactions on the position of Gauls within the empire. With the completion of the Gallic provinces under Augustus, the problem was not solved. Examining this relation is difficult because, to the Romans, the label “Gaul” included all Gauls and the discussion mainly focused on the natives of the Three Gauls. These northern Gauls had, of all Celtic people, been opposed to Rome for the longest period, but were also attributed with the wars between Rome and Narbonese and Cisalpinian tribes. While Cisalpina and even Narbonensis assimilated into the Roman empire, the Comatan Gauls were preserved as the dangerous Gauls of the past. They could not be Roman because they were too different. This played a large role in the debate and shows that even after Augustus the “Gallic problem” existed in the minds of Rome.

The inhabitants of these Three Gauls were the Gauls that were excluded from government service by Augustus. This ban had impeded their assimilation with the Roman empire and Claudius proposed to lift the ban and level the position of Roman citizens from Comata with that of other citizens and let them enter government service. He acknowledged the transformation Comata has undergone and thought the “Gallic problem” had been solved. It is because of this proposition that aristocratic opposition resurrected the stereotypes and hostile images of the Gauls. Seneca’s arguments can be seen as xenophobic, as Claudius’ proposal cleared the way for Gauls into the senate and limited the power of the traditional aristocracy. However, the diversity of Seneca’s negative images suggest the existence of an underlying feeling against the Gauls, that was deeper than mere xenophobia. The Gauls were welcome to contribute to the empire, but they were unfit to participate in the Roman bureaucracy. By the time of Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny Claudius’ proposal had already been unofficially reversed. As a result of the Gallic insurrections under Vindex, Classicus and Tutor they had been removed almost completely from Roman offices and returned to their pre-Claudian isolation. This clearly influenced the later Roman writers in their judgement. For the Gaul Tacitus, it was of importance to relate himself to the “other Gauls”. He was of course not comparable with the subdued Gauls of the north. For this reason his work is not altogether negative about the Gauls, but he does approve of the Roman suppression of Gallia Comata. His familiarity with Gauls also explains the lack of stereotypes. The only time he uses these stereotypes he immediately counters them. Suetonius and

Pliny both had no relation to Gaul and were unfamiliar with the province. The distance that time had created between them and the politically active Gauls also proved to be a barrier. Because of their unfamiliarity with Gaul, they recycled the Gallic stereotypes. These stereotypes, part of the common knowledge, were the only things they knew about Gaul.

In all the texts a feeling of superiority against the still barbarian Gauls can be found. At the same time, other provincials with a Celtic background had to relate their own position to that of these “barbarian” Gauls. However, the representation was not static and developed over time. In Seneca’s time the participation of the Gauls was an important issue. His view indeed partly originated in xenophobia and his texts served the purpose of showing the problems with Gauls in the senate. The promotion of his relatives from Narbonensis, however, shows that he did not have a problem with Gauls, but only with Comatan Gauls. Tacitus’ story is the same, even though there is a sense of regret in his story. The oppression of the Gauls was a necessary evil. Tacitus was a Gaul himself and had proven why he was worthy to sit in the senate, while “other” Gauls were excluded after they turned out to be a liability to the empire. The limited contact between Rome and the Gallic aristocracy meant that the need to relate to the Gauls also was reduced.

Even though the exemption of Roman citizens from Comata was peculiar, it might still be interesting to look at the reactions on the admission of other provinces. The reactions on the admission of the first Cisalpine, African or Hispanic citizens might offer the possibility to gain an even better understanding of the view that the Roman aristocracy had of “foreigners” in their senate. As Tacitus and Seneca had proven assimilation was possible and there had to be a point at which the Italians saw the provincials no longer as others. The Gauls had been given this chance too, but they alienated themselves when they revolted during the Civil wars. Once again, the Gauls had been thrown back into the position of an internal alien.

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