

By roughly the middle of the nineteenth century, Caesar's version of his conquest of Gaul had become the standard text for Latin high-school students in their second year of study: "Caesar is usually, and with great propriety, among the first books put into the hands of pupils commencing the study of Latin" (Bullions, 1859). This and similar statements by later editors foreground this text's unusual suitability to the needs and skills of the students in question, but these same rationales usually include an ideological subtext, one that is clearly stated by Harkness (1870, 1883): "For the student who is just entering upon a course of study in Latin authors, no better work can be found than the Commentaries on the Gallic War. The purity of the style, the dramatic interest of the narrative, and the historical significance of the wonderful career of discovery and conquest which they record, all unite to render them at once attractive and valuable" (the italics are mine). Delicately touched on here, the core of the subtext is manifest in the explanation by J.H. and W.F. Allen and H.P. Judson (1892) of who the Gauls were and why Caesar had to subdue them. Though "more civilized than either Germans or Britons," they were "addicted to fighting," "they had a barbaric taste for gaudy ornaments, and they were "not a nation, but a group of nations or tribes." These tribes "may be compared to the North American Indians, though they were at a much higher degree of civilization." Therefore: "It was the destiny of Julius Caesar to bring the great Gallic people into the system of civilization and government represented by Rome; it was a define and large extension of the bounds of civilized society."

These writers and their intended readers seem, for the most part, to have taken 'the will to empire' for granted, regarding it as both natural and rational. Their manner of re-representing Caesar (it is echoed in Louis Napoleon's life of Caesar) is to treat him as 'Caesar our contemporary': he pacified Gauls, we pacify Indians. Most of us who have taught this text in the last decades of the twentieth century understand that this mode of re-representation is no longer viable. On the other hand, simply to treat this author as a monster and his empire as immortal is merely an easy way of evading the problems of reception and the complexities that rigorous political analysis cannot ignore.

In this talk, I want to sketch a course in which relevant passages of *Gallic Wars* (along with a selection of its nineteenth century introductions) are given a close reading and then compared both with other passages (e.g., in Cicero, in Livy) that support Caesar's imperialist imperative and with passages (e.g., in Sallust and in Tacitus) that contest it by giving the vanished their voices. A second part of such a course would be devoted to the study both of the speeches of Native American Indians and to the voices in Washington that tried to justify the ways of White Americans to Indians (and to themselves). Finally, students would be asked to turn back to Caesar and to reread (and re-represent to themselves) what this text now meant to them. The main purpose of such a course: to get the students to thinking through the problem of empire from multiple perspectives, thereby finding a perspective from which they were able to read Caesar in ways that would be suitable for them while not being unfair to him.

The phrase, 'the will to empire,' is taken from Stephen Howe's *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, which would be of fundamental importance to the course I have it mind.