Moral Revision in Latin Ethnography: A Reassessment of Tacitus' Germania and Caesar's Bellum Gallicum.

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Abstract
ABSTRACT

The preponderance of interest in the Roman frontier and its peripheral non-Roman cultures has manifested itself in all aspects of the discipline of Classical Studies: from material archaeology to the social historian’s inquiry into the voiceless minorities in antiquity. Consequently, scholarship pertaining to the ethnography of those who inhabited the frontier has been made intrinsically more important.
outdated modes of inquiry and overly positivistic interpretative study and, in some cases, stripped texts of their underlying sig Germania is one such text.

Within the ethnographic tradition, the Germania exists as a series of singularities: as a monograph rather than an excursus; as a work without a didactic statement of intent; as an ethnographic work which adheres to neither scientific inquiry nor romantic exaggeration; and as text with an inordinate preoccupation towards moralism. As such, how do we rationalize the text in a manner which can account for these discrepancies? I believe Tacitus invites the reader to examine the text as a deliberate admonishment of Roman moral turpitude through Germanic contrasts.

Although the reading of the Germania as a morally guided or the ire of a century’s worth of Tacitean commentators, the de anachronism, inconsistencies with the Tacitean corpus itself, and the German people demands a critical reassessment. Furthermore, such interpretations of the text may reveal rather than an instance of literary anomaly, a discernable moralistic intent behind other seemingly ‘innovative’ ethnographies.

Key Words: Tacitus, ethnography, Latin historiography, Stoicism, Caesar, Gaul, Roman history, ancient Rome.

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