

Arms and Letters: Julius Caesar, the Commentaries of Pope Pius II, and the Politicization of Papal Imagery^{*}

by EMILY O'BRIEN

In their title, the Commentaries of Pope Pius II recall the works of Julius Caesar by the same name. The connections between these ancient and humanist histories, however, run much deeper. This article explores this relationship in detail and in the broader historical and historiographical contexts of fifteenth-century Italy. It argues that in both Caesar's histories and in his career more generally, Pius found much that resonated with his own experiences, challenges, and goals. More importantly, he found in these ancient Commentaries valuable apologetic strategies for constructing his own textual self-portrait as both pope and prince. In choosing Caesar's histories as his models, Pius was following a recent historiographical precedent. Several Italian Renaissance humanists had also turned to Caesar's works as guides for writing histories about leaders of contemporary temporal politics. This article argues that by adopting the same models when shaping his own image, Pius was effectively politicizing his self-portrait in his Commentaries.

1. INTRODUCTION

While a book's title does not offer the means of evaluating its text, more often than not it does signal something important about the book's content and meaning. From this basic premise springs the following investigation into one of Renaissance humanism's most acclaimed works, the *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt* of Pope Pius II (Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, 1405–64).¹ Part autobiography,

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¹Pius's *Commentaries* are available in several modern editions. All references in this article are to the edition of Luigi Totaro, cited as Piccolomini, 1984. The *Commentaries* were likely composed sometime between the spring of 1462 and the spring of 1464: see Ceserani, 1964, 277; Ceserani, 1968, 106.

part European history, the *Commentaries* offer a detailed, wide-ranging account of temporal and ecclesiastical politics in the first half of the fifteenth century, and from the perspective of one of its most prominent participants. The remarkable breadth of this work may help to explain its rather generic title, loosely translated as *Commentaries on Memorable Things that Happened in [Pius's] Age*. Most of the words in Pius's title offer only the vaguest impression of the book's contents and even less about their significance, but in the very first word there is much to discover.

The term *commentaries*, as Gary Ianziti has ably demonstrated, had a wide range of meanings for Renaissance historians.² In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Ciceronian definition seems to have prevailed: *commentaries* referred primarily to the textual raw materials with which historians crafted works of contemporary history. After ca. 1450, the word was also used to describe polished historical texts. The ancient precedents for this second definition were the *Commentarii belli Gallici* (*Gallic War*) and *Commentarii belli civilis* (*Civil War*) of Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE), which Cicero had explicitly distinguished from the provisional historical writing of the same name.³ The *Commentaries* of Pius II fall in line with this second, Caesarean tradition. Shaped from a vast collection of documents and shorter literary texts, the pontiff's magnum opus reads as a carefully fashioned historical narrative.

While it is clear that Pius sought to link his *Commentaries* to those of Caesar, what is not so clear is why he did so, or how deep the parallels run. While scholars have spoken in general terms about the appeal of this historiographical model, there are as yet no explanations for what specifically drew Pius to Caesar.⁴ Furthermore, while historians have identified some parallels between Caesar's and Pius's works, there is still no clear sense of just how Caesarean the pontiff's *Commentaries* are.⁵ If titles do indeed signal something significant about a book's content and meaning, we have yet to learn fully what the term *commentarii* in Pius's title tells us about this important text.

The following pages advance this line of inquiry through a series of comparative analyses. The first part of this article pairs Caesar's works — particularly his *Gallic War* — with Pius's *Commentaries*. The second part examines Pius's text in relation to the works of fellow humanist historians who in turn had found in Caesar a useful historiographical model when

²Ianziti, 1992. See also Ianziti, 1988, 6–15; Ianziti, 1983.

³Cicero, 1962, 226 (75.262).

⁴Ianziti, 1988, 176; Ianziti, 1992, 1032–33, 1058–60.

⁵Guglielminetti, 211–13, 215–16; Kramer, 79; Van Heck, 125; Martels, 2, 10–11.

crafting accounts of contemporary events. Both sections seek to reconstruct the particular historical circumstances from which these various texts emerged.

Through such a design, this investigation promises to do more than simply illuminate Pius's *Commentaries* and the image of himself and his papacy that he projects therein. It also aims to shed new light on the methodology of one of the fifteenth century's most prolific historians. Recent scholarship has brought into focus how Pius employed histories, both ancient and medieval, when writing about the origins of the Turks and other Muslim kingdoms.⁶ The analysis here extends this important research in a new direction by exploring how Pius used the writings of a major ancient historian to construct his own identity as pope and to shape a narrative of his life and times.

At the same time, this study contributes on several levels to a broader understanding of Renaissance historiography. By analyzing a series of fifteenth-century historical texts, it hopes to clarify further the nature, appeal, and significance of Caesar as a model for humanist historians. Still more importantly, it aims to identify more clearly the position Pius's *Commentaries* occupy in the field of Renaissance papal historiography. It has been argued that in the mid-fifteenth century, as the papacy was consolidating its power in the Papal States, it also began drawing on the language, imagery, and ideals of temporal politics to shape its image.⁷ In both their literary and artistic representations, argues Paolo Prodi, the Renaissance popes began to assume the appearance of contemporary *signori*.⁸ In this way, the image of the papacy was becoming politicized: it was adopting and adapting the defining features of the Renaissance temporal prince. Scholars have inferred that Pius II's *Commentaries* were pivotal in this process of politicization, but they have left it to others to follow up their hypothesis with a close examination of the text.⁹ This article serves as the beginning of such an investigation. Its particular line of inquiry — the significance of Caesar's *Commentaries* to Pius's — affords the opportunity not simply to test this provocative claim but also to refine it.

As the following pages will argue, Caesar's histories represent critical sources for understanding both the apologetic form and the political significance of Pius II's *Commentaries*. In Caesar's works, and especially

⁶See especially Meserve, 2003 and 2008.

⁷Prodi, 83–126, especially 91–98.

⁸Ibid., 98.

⁹Ibid., 93, n. 16; 89, 95. See also *ibid.*, 13, 33–37, 92–93; Totaro, 9–10; Piccolomini, 1984, xiv–xvi.

his *Gallic War*, the pontiff found both a familiar narrative and valuable apologetic strategies for constructing key elements of his own self-defense as pope and prince. By borrowing and refashioning these Caesarean elements, Pius helped to cast himself in his *Commentaries* as a just, wise, and all-powerful monarch — temporal and spiritual alike — and as a trusted and talented commander in war. At the same time, he contributed significantly to the politicization of his self-portrait in this text: in both his choice of Caesar's *Commentaries* as models and the ways in which he engaged these ancient texts, Pius was following the example set by other Renaissance historians as they wrote about heroes of contemporary temporal politics.

2. PIUS'S *COMMENTARIES* AND CAESAR'S *COMMENTARIES*

At first glance, Pius's *Commentaries* seem to bear little resemblance to their Caesarean precedents. Perhaps most obvious are the structural differences. Whereas Caesar divided his *Gallic War* and *Civil War* into seven and three books respectively, Pius's *Commentaries* run to twelve.¹⁰ Moreover, rather than starting his narrative *in medias res*, as Caesar does, the pontiff begins his account with his family origins and his birth. The authors also diverge significantly on subject matter. While Caesar's *Commentaries* focus exclusively on military campaigns, Pius's range far more widely. Even at a rhetorical level, the ancient and Renaissance histories differ: Pius relies far more on direct speech than does Caesar, and he often eschews Caesar's plain, straightforward prose for a style that, in its richness and complexity, is at times more akin to Cicero.

But if Pius's *Commentaries* do not echo Caesar's at every level, they do at the most important one. Like Caesar, Pius wrote his work first and foremost as an apology. It was a vehicle through which the pontiff could promote his image, explain his decisions, and justify his actions to an important, select audience.¹¹ So far, scholarship has explained Pius's interest in adopting this

¹⁰Pius also began a thirteenth book: he was evidently planning to enlarge the *Commentaries*, but it is also clear from the finished nature of the manuscript — Corsini 147, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome — that he considered books 1–12 a distinct work that could stand on its own.

¹¹The intended audience for the *Commentaries* has been somewhat difficult to discern. Pius died only two months after the text was transcribed from its original drafts. The political climate at the papal court in the reign of his successor, Paul II (r. 1464–71), made its circulation almost impossible. Clearly, the text was never meant as propaganda according to the usual understanding of the term. It is likely that it was intended to have a controlled circulation, especially in high political circles at other Italian courts. For more on the manuscript tradition and the audiences that the text did reach, see Ceserani, 1964, 273–75; Bianca; Piccolomini, 1984, xxii–xxvii; Ianziti, 1988, 162–74.

particular model in terms of broader trends in Renaissance historiography: in the second half of the fifteenth century, Caesar's *Commentaries* offered humanist historians an attractive model for illustrating a protagonist's *virtus* through an account of his *res gestae*. They were particularly useful for defending military and political actions, especially those that were "otherwise unjustifiable."¹² Such an interpretation makes good sense in an age in which political power was often built on military conquest, and without regard for traditional legal sanction.

While it works in general terms, this explanation does not fully account for the case of Pius II. Indeed, the pontiff would have found far more than just the basic blueprint of an apology in Caesar's writings. Caesar's *Commentaries* portray a man who faces challenges strikingly similar to Pius's own, and in both military and political arenas. The *Gallic War* begins with the general rushing to the aid of Roman allies who have been threatened by hostile Gallic tribes. He is soon embroiled in a larger war of conquest directed against Gaul as a whole. In his other *Commentaries*, Caesar is engaged in a civil war with his political opponents — Pompey (106–48 BCE) foremost among them — who have challenged his claims to power in Rome. The war is fought in theaters across Italy and throughout the Roman world. When Pius began writing his own *Commentaries* in the spring of 1462, he was involved in similar wars. For the previous three years, papal troops had been fighting in defense of Rome's ally, King Ferrante of Naples (1423–94), who had been attacked by a Gallic enemy, René of Anjou (1409–80). Pius was also at war with the French over their stubborn support of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges and their refusal thereby to recognize papal supremacy.¹³ Thus, while Caesar had aimed to conquer Gaul for Rome, Pius sought its reconquest for the Roman Church. Pius also had reason to be deeply concerned about broader French ambitions to "establish a French hegemony" in Italy,¹⁴ to snatch the imperial crown from the weakened

¹²Ianziti, 1988, 176; see also Ianziti, 1992, 1058–60, 1032–33. Ianziti, 1992, 1059, suggests that part of the appeal of the Caesarean model was the very ambiguity of the term *commentaries*: by claiming their work fell into the tradition of commentaries "provisory in nature," historians could usefully free themselves from the strict requirements of *historia* — even though they fully intended their work to be permanent.

¹³The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges was a royal decree issued by King Charles VII in July 1438. It incorporated significant elements of the reform legislation passed at the Council of Basel (1431–49), including the council's reaffirmation of *Frequens* and *Haec Sancta*, two decrees originally promulgated at the Council of Constance (1414–18). The Pragmatic significantly restricted papal authority over the Church in France. For a discussion of the Pragmatic, see Stieber, 64–71. For its significance during Pius's pontificate, see Pastor, 3:129–57.

¹⁴Ilardi, 131.

Frederick III, and to restore the papacy to France.¹⁵ Like Caesar, moreover, Pius was also fighting a civil war and on various fronts. In the Papal States he was defending his authority as prince in a series of lengthy and costly campaigns against, among others, Jacopo Piccinino (1423–65) and Sigismondo Malatesta (1417–68). He also participated in longstanding ideological battles over the location of supreme spiritual authority in the Church. During his six years on the papal throne, Pius fought a fierce war of words in Germany and Bohemia, as well as in France, against supporters of the conciliarist cause.¹⁶

It was not simply the kinds of wars that connected these two figures, however: it was also the positions of vulnerability from which they both fought and wrote. Caesar penned his *Gallic War* in the midst of the war itself and while facing an uncertain future.¹⁷ An inexperienced general in an age in which political power and prestige hinged increasingly on high military command, Caesar recognized that his term as governor of Transalpine Gaul was his chance to prove his political worth.¹⁸ He also knew that to succeed he would have to communicate his skills and achievements on the battlefield in a clear and convincing way. If Caesar needed to strengthen his military reputation, he also needed to defend his integrity as a politician. Having already endured repeated accusations of unconstitutional behavior, he found himself again in both the Gallic and civil wars vulnerable to similar attacks. This was nowhere more true than when he crossed the Rubicon with his army in 49 BCE, thereby plunging Rome into a bloody civil war. It was thus more imperative than ever for Caesar to demonstrate that both his motives and his actions conformed to the laws, customs, policies, and values of the Roman Republic.¹⁹

Pius found himself in a similarly vulnerable position, though for different reasons. As in ancient Rome, one of the hallmarks of political power in Quattrocento Italy was outstanding military leadership. This was not a strong suit of the papacy, especially in its recent history. Indeed, when Pius began writing his *Commentaries*, the papal armies had been severely tested in the war over the Kingdom of Naples and in rebellions in the Papal States. Moreover, the promotion of the pontiff's military reputation was as important for his spiritual goals as it was for his temporal ones. Determined

¹⁵For France's imperial and papal ambitions, see especially Picotti, 1996, vii–xx (intro. by Riccardo Fubini). See also Pellegrini, 32–33; Baldi.

¹⁶Pastor, 3:129–239, remains the most detailed discussion of these events.

¹⁷There is some controversy over exactly when Caesar wrote his *Gallic War* and whether he circulated parts of it before the entire work was complete. For a review of scholarship on this issue, see Kagan, 109–10, 225.

¹⁸Gelzer, 84, 101; Adcock, 14, 22; Torigian, 70.

¹⁹Gelzer, 103, 112, 196, 245.

to lead a crusade against the Ottoman Turks, Pius needed to establish his credibility as a commander among rulers far more experienced on the battlefield than he. This need became particularly pressing in the wake of the Congress of Mantua (1459–60): collectively, the European princes had responded to Pius's military venture with considerable skepticism, and they had promised him support as leader in only the most ambiguous terms.²⁰ In the face of such disregard, Pius's zeal for battle and his determination to lead the troops himself became a source of public ridicule; as it had at Mantua, his plans for a crusade continued to be mocked by cardinals and princes alike as puerile, foolish, and wholly unrealistic.²¹

Like Caesar, moreover, Pius was dogged by accusations of inappropriate, unjust, and illegal behavior, both on and off the battlefield. Some of the harshest criticisms targeted his pre-papal years, in particular his notoriously vocal support of the conciliarist cause.²² Other attacks were directed at controversial moves he had made during his papacy, including his excommunication of Sigismund of Austria (1427–96), his expansion of the College of Cardinals, and his treatment of Sigismondo Malatesta.²³ Pius was particularly vulnerable when it came to the war over the Neapolitan throne. His plans for crusade had been delayed in part by his decision to back King Ferrante in his war against Anjou. Under these circumstances, Pius needed to offer a clear justification for taking up arms, especially since in making this decision he might well be accused of giving a costly temporal war priority over the spiritual mission of crusade.

Pius likely envisioned the larger goals of his apology differently from Caesar. Old, frail, and crippled by severe gout, he was less interested in advancing his future career than preserving his memory for posterity and protecting it in the face of the inevitable assault of competing accounts. If his

²⁰The most thorough discussion of the Congress of Mantua is Picotti, 1996. See also Calzona, Fiore, Tenenti, and Vasoli.

²¹Pellegrini, 58–63. Pius seems to acknowledge some of these criticisms in a climactic oration in book 12 of the *Commentaries*: see Piccolomini, 1984, 2:2438–40.

²²Pius (then Aeneas) held a series of positions at the Council of Basel and in 1439 was appointed secretary to antipope Felix V. In his service, Aeneas penned two works of conciliarist propaganda: a dialogue, the *Libellus Dialogorum de Generalis Concilii Auctoritate et Gestis Basiliensium*, and his first history of the Council of Basel, the *De Gestis Concilii Basiliensis Commentariorum Libri II*: see Piccolomini, 1743 and 1978. Pius began formally renouncing his conciliarist views in 1447: see Piccolomini, 2006, 274–86. In the face of continued criticism, he was still doing so well into his papacy. In 1463 he promulgated the bull *In minoribus*, in which he famously urged his audience to reject the misguided ecclesiastical writings of the youthful Aeneas and to embrace instead the position of the much wiser Pope Pius: see Piccolomini, 2006, 392–406.

²³Pastor, 3:185–95, 137–38, 126–27.

legacy represented one impetus for mounting such a defense, then so did his commitment to propping up the much-beleaguered image of the papacy and promoting the future interests of the Piccolomini family, whose power he had actively sought to expand throughout his pontificate. Despite these differences in audience and aim, however, Pius found considerable common ground with Caesar in the specific challenges he faced. For this reason, Pius would have benefited from the particular strategies Caesar had employed when constructing his own defense.

Caesar's strategies of self-defense have been documented by scholars of both ancient and Renaissance historiography. The most extensive, if at times overzealous, analysis can be found in Michel Rambaud's *L'Art de la déformation historique dans les "Commentaires" de César*. Recent studies have extended Rambaud's line of inquiry, while at the same time refining and tempering his claims: rather than accusing Caesar of "deforming" — to use Rambaud's term — history with deliberate lies, scholars now characterize his apologetic techniques as the work of an "artful reporter."²⁴ The value of Rambaud's work for scholarship on Renaissance historiography has already been illustrated in the case of Milan. Using Rambaud's analysis as his "interpretive grid," Gary Ianziti has shown convincingly how Cicco Simonetta's *De rebus gestis Francisci Sfortiae commentarii* (1470s) borrows particular Caesarean tactics in its defense of Francesco Sforza (1401–66).²⁵ Both explicitly and implicitly, Ianziti's work signals the value of exploring how and to what extent earlier Renaissance commentaries drew in turn on Caesar as models for their apologetic techniques.²⁶ It is with these important questions in mind that the following pages map out the debt Pius II owed this ancient historian when penning his own *Commentaries*. The pontiff adopted many of the same apologetic strategies that Caesar used to shape both his own portrait and that of his key enemy, the French.

In terms of their overarching narrative strategy, Pius's *Commentaries* have much in common with Caesar's. In both the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*, Caesar writes in a style that Rambaud characterizes as *récit justificatif*, a narrative form of apology focused on offering explanations for questioned and questionable actions.²⁷ Caesar communicates such justifications through detailed outlines of his reasoning process and, especially in the *Gallic War*, through addresses, conversations, and debates. Pius relies heavily

²⁴See especially the essays in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter*. See also Albrecht, 2:409–21. For an overview of Rambaud and his intellectual heirs, see Kagan, 109.

²⁵Ianziti, 1988, 176–209, quotation at 177.

²⁶Ianziti, 1983, 918; Ianziti, 1988, 176; Ianziti, 1992, 1032.

²⁷Rambaud, 111–51.

on the very same techniques. Indeed, much of his *Commentaries* reads less as a narrative and more as a collection of dialogues, both real and internal, and deliberative orations. The instances that Pius chooses to present in this way reveal how this strategy served him, as it did Caesar, as a critical form of self-defense in both his roles of pope and prince. The *Commentaries* show Pius reasoning through the difficult decisions of forging peace between Ferrante of Naples and Sigismondo Malatesta, of personally leading the Christian army on crusade, and of postponing justice in the case of several egregious crimes.²⁸ They record orations he delivered in defense of the crusade and of the wars that had delayed this venture;²⁹ they document his debates with French ambassadors about rights to the crown of Naples, and with several cardinals about expanding the college;³⁰ and they record his exchanges with numerous legates who seek personal and political favors.³¹ In each of these instances — and there are many others like them — Pius defends controversial decisions, including ones that had earned him considerable criticism and whose need for justification was particularly acute.

If Pius's *Commentaries* employ what might be described as Caesar's central narrative framework, they also draw on a range of his secondary apologetic devices. The use of the third person — a strategy that lends the work an aura of objectivity — is perhaps the most obvious parallel: indeed, it is the feature scholars traditionally point to when noting Pius's debt to Caesar.³² But Rambaud's analysis invites us to survey for still more common ground. In addition to casting himself in the third person, Rambaud notes, Caesar repeatedly identifies himself by his own name. Readers of the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War* are likely to notice this "hegemony" of Caesar's name, but they may not be conscious of its significance.³³ On the basis of his close textual analysis, Rambaud concludes that these repetitions play an important apologetic role in the text: by repeating his name, Caesar emphasizes the strength and scope of his command, claims sole credit for notable (and often collective) achievements, and generally enhances his importance in the momentous events he describes.³⁴ A similar effect is

²⁸Piccolomini, 1984, 1:368–74, 518–24, 2:1480–90, 1:474–76, 880.

²⁹Ibid., 1:424–26, 572, 854–74, 2:2422–54.

³⁰Ibid., 1:254–56, 604–08, 610–12, 666–76, 2:1418–44.

³¹Ibid., 2:1634–44, 1664–68, 1982–94, 2410–22.

³²Kramer, 79; Guglielminetti, 212; Van Heck, 125; Martels, 10–11. This tactic worked effectively: for years, Pius's *Commentaries* were often read as an objective account. Perhaps the most famous example of such a reading is the discussion of Sigismondo Malatesta in Burckhardt, 60, 99, 178–79, 319–20, 355.

³³Rambaud, 197.

³⁴Ibid., 196–98.

produced by repetition of a different kind: Rambaud notes Caesar's constant reliance on a set of verbs that emphasize his command, both literal — *imperare* (to command), *iubere* (to order), *ducere* (to lead), *mittere* (to send) — and intellectual — *intelligere* (to understand), *existimare* (to consider), *arbitrari* (to make a decision), *judicare* (to judge), *instituere* (to establish), *decernere* (to decide), *statuere* (to resolve).³⁵

A close study of the language in Pius's *Commentaries* reveals similar patterns, but ones shaped to Pius's own apologetic needs. He frequently identifies the third person at the center of his story as "Pius," as "praesul," as "vicarius Christi," and especially as "Pontifex." These repetitions do more than simply emphasize his prominence in the events of his day. At a time when papal sovereignty was being challenged in both theory and practice, these repeated references read as confident declarations of his supreme spiritual authority. *Pius*, *praesul*, *vicarius Christi*, and *pontifex* are repeated frequently in ceremonial expressions of his power: at the Congress of Mantua, at the Corpus Christi procession, at the celebration for the return of Saint Andrew's head, and in towns and cities Pius visits in Italy; in successful confrontations with cardinals and ambassadors; and at moments of significant spiritual triumphs: the election of new cardinals and the defeat of the Pragmatic — all instances in which, like Caesar, Pius claims sole credit for success.³⁶

Moreover, like Caesar, Pius also describes his thoughts and actions using words that draw particular attention to his prudence and judgment — *intelligere* (to understand), *existimare* (to consider), *censere* (to estimate), *meditari* (to think over), *animadvertere* (to perceive), and the expression *vicit pontificis sententia* (the pontiff's opinion triumphed) — and to his rule — *imperare* (to command), *statuere* (to resolve), *iubere* (to order), *monere* (to warn), *declarare* (to declare), *decernere* (to decide). Significantly, the verb used most often to characterize Pius's interactions with others is *iubere*: the *Commentaries* show him continually giving orders to his cardinals, his legates, his allies, and his enemies. As it would have for Caesar, this pronounced verbal emphasis on control and domination would have made a useful defense in the face of the serious challenges to his spiritual and temporal power.

Pius's judgment and command receive particular emphasis in the context of military leadership, and herein lie still other parallels with the

³⁵Ibid., 250.

³⁶Piccolomini, 1984, 1:422, 450, 464, 2:1594–1622, 1514, 1:288–90, 300, 308, 312, 316, 328–30, 662–64, 394–96, 406–08, 418–20, 786–88, 790, 800, 262–68, 598, 608, 666–80, 2:1418–44, 1446, 1462–66.

ancient *Commentaries*. Caesar's actions reflect a leader who is first and foremost a master of *scientia rei militaris* (knowledge of military matters), and one whose expertise clearly exceeds that of his officers, allies, and opponents.³⁷ This vision of martial acumen as “an exercise of the mind” more than a matter of battlefield heroism was ideally suited to Pius's own needs.³⁸ Both pope and priest, he had to demonstrate military expertise in a way that did not compromise his integrity as a spiritual authority. The *Commentaries* illustrate just such a delicate combination. Pius manages to maintain a dominating presence in his own accounts of war by presenting himself, like Caesar, as the foremost military mastermind. In documenting the papal army's campaigns against the Angevins and against Sigismondo Malatesta, Pius routinely records his direct involvement in important decisions about troop movements and command. When Piccinino invades the Kingdom of Naples, Pius writes, “the pontiff decided for this reason to send other troops into Campania. . . . And he increased the size of the army sent to the Abruzzi with reinforcements drawn from his own troops and those of the Milanese duke Francesco.”³⁹ Pius also showcases his detailed knowledge of both ancient and modern arms. The *Commentaries* record a conversation in which Pius teaches the learned general Federico da Montefeltro (1422–82) about the history of weaponry: “Federigo, who was well read, asked the pope whether ancient generals had been armed in the same way as those in our age. The pope replied that both in Homer and in Virgil every kind of weapon used today can be found described, as well as many others that have fallen into disuse.”⁴⁰ Pius also notes that at crucial turning points in the campaign his opinion prevailed over that of Federico and another veteran condottiere, Francesco Sforza. According to the *Commentaries*, when Sforza recommended making peace with Jacopo Savelli, a rebellious lord in papal territory, Pius successfully defended the opposite position: “The pontiff believed that Savelli, who had refused equitable offers of peace, had above all to be subdued. He did not believe it

³⁷See Hall, 20–21; Adcock, 52–54.

³⁸Adcock, 52.

³⁹Piccolomini, 1984, 1:690–92: “Statuit iccirco Pontifex alias copias in Campaniam mittere. . . . Exercitumque in Aprutios missum et suis et Francisci Mediolanensium ducis novis adauxit supplementis.” See also *ibid.*, 1:950–52, 2:1914–16, 2194.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 1:974: “Federicus, qui multa legisset, interrogare Pontificem an prisci duces aequae ac nostri temporis armati fuissent. Pontifex et in Homero et in Virgilio genus omne armorum inveniri descriptum dicere, quibus nostra utitur aetas, et alia multa quae obsoleverunt.” On two other occasions, Pius describes and analyzes weapons used by his own army: at *ibid.*, 1:954–56, he describes cannons; at *ibid.*, 1:742, he talks in detail about a particularly effective, though unnamed, weapon.

was right to fight outside one's borders unless there was peace at home, nor should it be tolerated that subjects lay down conditions of peace to their superiors."⁴¹ The *Commentaries* also credit the pontiff specifically with a string of important victories: Pius helps to orchestrate the capture of Roman rebel Tiburzio di Maso (d. 1460) and his companions, to thwart Jacopo Piccinino's carefully planned attack on the city, and to rescue Viterbo from Everso d'Anguillara (d. 1464).⁴²

Pius's influence appears still greater in the planning of the crusade. In his account of the Congress of Mantua, Pius does not just claim the title of supreme commander of the campaign against the Turks: he also begins to exercise this authority by dominating the discussion of military matters among the Italian powers and by underscoring his sophisticated knowledge and superior strategy when determining the number, distribution, and composition of the European forces.⁴³ Pius appears to understand the psychology of the Italian soldiers better than the veteran condottiere Sigismondo Malatesta. When Sigismondo argues that Italy should provide troops for the crusade "because Italians are very skilful by nature," Pius undermines his argument by pointing out that "our condottieri are not the type to like fighting outside of Italy."⁴⁴ He later corrects the Venetians on the number of troops and ships necessary to wage a successful battle against the Turks,⁴⁵ and he indirectly criticizes Sforza's leadership capacity in a polemic against mercenary armies: "[souls] are most precious to our soldiers when they are in the body, and are considered totally worthless when they depart it."⁴⁶ Of all the leaders in attendance, Pius emerges as the one most familiar with military tactics and equipment, with battleground geography on land and on sea, and with the political history of his opponents.

If Pius shares Caesar's emphasis on *scientia rei militaris*, then he also shares one of its defining elements. According to the pope's *Commentaries*,

⁴¹Ibid., 1:950: "Pontifex expugnandum ante omnia Sabellum censebat, qui leges pacis honestas respuisset, nec pugnandum foris nisi domi pax esset, neque ferendum ut subditi suis superioribus leges dicerent." Pius also rejects Federico da Montefeltro's advice not to enter a potentially rebellious Tivoli: *ibid.*, 1:970–72. He later points out another flaw in Sforza's military strategy: *ibid.*, 2:1930–32.

⁴²Ibid., 1:826–28, 868, 526.

⁴³Ibid., 1:576–92. For a general discussion of war in Pius's *Commentaries*, see Chambers, 53–59.

⁴⁴Piccolomini, 1984, 1:580: "dexterrima ingenia"; *ibid.*, 1:582: "Nec duces nostri sunt qui militare extra Italiam velint."

⁴⁵Ibid., 1:578–80, 584.

⁴⁶Ibid., 1:582: "[animae] nostris militibus in corpore carissimae sunt, extra corpus vilissimae."

the triumphs of the papal army repeatedly hinge on *celeritas* (swiftness), the very key to Caesar's success in the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*. The *Commentaries* note Pius's swift response when he learns of Tiburzio's conspiracy — “[t]he news convinced the pope more than ever to hasten his journey [to Rome]”⁴⁷ — and when the papal army foils Jacopo Piccinino's plans of attack, Pius chalks up their success explicitly to speed: “these things would have happened if our army, hurrying from the Abruzzi, had not come in the way of Jacopo and if we had not returned quickly to Rome.”⁴⁸ Speed is also specifically identified as the key to the fourth and final year of campaigning in the war over the Kingdom of Naples: “Pope Pius, Ferrante, and Francesco Sforza place all their hope for victory in the speed with which they can prepare their army.”⁴⁹

There are still other ways in which Caesar's image as a military commander seems to inform Pius's self-portrait in his *Commentaries*. In the *Civil War* especially, Caesar presents himself repeatedly as a reluctant warrior, pressing Pompey throughout his campaigns to put down arms and resolve their quarrel peacefully.⁵⁰ Pius casts himself in a similar role when discussing his involvement in the Neapolitan war. Throughout the *Commentaries*, his constant refrain is like Caesar's: one of unwavering willingness to seek a peaceful, legal resolution to the dispute. He is quick to point out how many times he has appealed to the French to make their case with the law, and how he has attempted to negotiate with his enemies at the eleventh hour.⁵¹ In short, like Caesar, Pius envisions himself as an advocate of peace.

The image of Caesar as general even seems to shape aspects of Pius's portrait that are not associated with war. The eighth and final book of the *Gallic War* describes Caesar's joyous welcome in Cisalpine Gaul as he celebrates a military triumph. The *Civil War* records his similarly enthusiastic reception in various towns on the peninsula after he crosses the Rubicon and makes his way south. Not only were the citizens of Italy

⁴⁷Ibid., 1:772: “Haec Pontifici relata maturandum iter magis ac magis suaserunt.”

⁴⁸Ibid., 1:866–68: “Quae procul dubio patrata fuissent, nisi noster exercitus ex Aprutio festinans, currenti occurrisset Iacobo, et nos Urbem celeri passu repetissemus.”

⁴⁹Ibid., 2:2194: “Pius pontifex et Ferdinandus et Franciscus Sfortia omnem in celeritate apparandorum exercitum spem victoriae collocant.” For other references to speed as the key to success in military ventures, see *ibid.*, 1:824, 930–32, 980, 1008, 1162, 2:1842, 1916, 2038. The urgency with which Pius approaches the crusade is yet another example of how speed informs his basic policy of war.

⁵⁰Caesar, 1914, 10, 16–18, 36–38, 40–41, 114–18, 208–10, 220–22 (1.5, 9, 24, 26, 85; 3.10, 18).

⁵¹Piccolomini, 1984, 1:750–52, 860–62, 2:1468–70, 1590, 2004.

willing to let him march through their towns and cities, but they also furnished him with troops and hailed him as their liberator.⁵² When reading Pius's *Commentaries* it is hard not to be reminded of these passages in Caesar's accounts. The parallels are most striking in Pius's own excursion up and down the peninsula to convene the Congress of Mantua.⁵³ The pontiff's journey, like Caesar's, took him through towns that had been hostile to his authority. But the account in Pius's *Commentaries*, like that in Caesar's, reveals nothing of popular resentment and rebellion. In reporting his journey, Pius pauses to describe the crowds of people who poured into the streets to greet him as pope and prince and to hold festivities in his honor at each of the places he stopped.⁵⁴ His arrival in Rome is marked by still greater celebration. When Pius's would-be assassins are led through the streets, the Romans are said to have shouted, "blessed be Pius, who has liberated us from such great danger."⁵⁵ And as he does earlier in the *Commentaries* when he describes his entry into Siena, Pius likens his return to Rome to a triumph: "the next day . . . leading a procession and almost in triumph . . . he arrived at St. Peter's."⁵⁶ While the itinerary of Pius's journey to Mantua bears the closest resemblance to Caesar's own travels, there are numerous other instances in the *Commentaries* where Pius emphasizes a similar reception at the hands of his subjects as he travels through the Papal States. He writes of the warm reception he receives as both pope and prince in, among other places, Tivoli, Subiaco, Cripta, Todi, Terni, and Genzano.⁵⁷ In these instances, Pius appears to adopt the image of Caesar as a victorious general to enhance his own reputation as a spiritual and temporal ruler.

While Pius's *Commentaries* recall strategies Caesar used both to justify and to characterize his own authority, they also echo Caesar's approach to portraying his enemies. Rambaud notes that in unfolding his narrative

⁵²Rambaud, 272–83; Caesar, 1917, 584 (8.51); Caesar, 1914, 22–24, 26 (1.15, 18).

⁵³See Guglielminetti, 215–16, who notes a parallel between the Romans' reaction to Pius's election and Caesar's reception in Cisalpine Gaul in the *Gallic War* (at Caesar, 1917, 584). Aside from this connection, Guglielminetti draws no other parallels between Caesar's and Pius's popular receptions.

⁵⁴Pius records a jubilant reception from the people of Cività Castellana (Piccolomini, 1984, 1:280–90); of Spoleto (ibid., 1:290); of Perugia (ibid., 1:300, 308); of Corsignano (ibid., 1:312); of Siena (ibid., 1:316, 328–30, 662–64); of Bologna (ibid., 1:394–96); of Ferrara (ibid., 1:406–08); of Mantua (ibid., 1:418–20); of Proceno (ibid., 1:786–88); of Orvieto and of Bagnoregio (ibid., 1:790, 800).

⁵⁵Ibid., 1:840: "Benedictus Pius, qui nos ex tanto periculo liberavit."

⁵⁶Ibid., 1:822: "Sequenti die . . . ducens et quasi triumphans . . . ad Sanctum Petrum pervenit." For more of Rome's reaction to Pius's return, see ibid., 1:804. For Pius's entry into Siena "quasi triumphans," see ibid., 1:662.

⁵⁷Ibid., 1:976, 1172–74, 2:1632, 1996, 2012, 2242–44.

Caesar creates favorable contrasts with his enemies and rivals so as to enhance his own image indirectly.⁵⁸ Pius's *Commentaries* unquestionably adopt the same epideictic technique, though given its widespread use in other histories, both Renaissance and ancient, it would be difficult to determine if Caesar was Pius's specific, or exclusive, model. It is when we look at the particular portraits of Caesar's enemies — specifically, those in the *Gallic War* — that we can identify a clear Caesarean influence. The first place where Pius draws specifically on Caesar is in his description of Scotland. Book 1 of the *Commentaries* records the excursion that Pius (then Aeneas) made to the Scottish King James I while serving as secretary to Cardinal Niccolo Albergati. Included in his account is a brief overview of Scotland's geography and the customs of its people.⁵⁹ Pius's description here bears a striking resemblance to Caesar's description of Britain in book 5 of the *Gallic War*.⁶⁰ While the particulars of the two sketches rarely correspond, the categories of discussion are almost identical: geographical location and

⁵⁸Rambaud, 214–21.

⁵⁹Piccolomini, 1984, 1:22–24: "It is an island joined to England, which extends to the north two hundred miles and is fifty miles wide. It is a cold land that produces little fruit and that, for the most part, is lacking in trees. Beneath the soil there is sulphurous rock, which the Scots dig up to make fire. The cities have no walls. The houses are for the most part built without mortar. Roofs of farms are made with turf and the doorways are closed with cowhides. The people, poor and unrefined, consume meat and fish in abundance but eat bread as a luxury. The men are short and bold; the women fair, attractive, and inclined to lust. Giving women kisses there means less than shaking someone's hand in Italy. They have no wine, except for what is imported. . . . Bigger oysters can be found here than in England, and in them, a greater quantity of pearls. From Scotland leather, wool, salt fish, and pearls are exported to Flanders. . . . [O]n the winter solstice — for Aeneas was there for it — the day lasts no more than four hours in Scotland."

⁶⁰The following is translated in Caesar, 1917, 250–52 (5.12–14): "The population is innumerable; the farm-buildings are found very close together, being very like those of the Gauls; and there is great store of cattle. . . . In the midland districts of Britain tin is produced, in the maritime iron, but of that there is only a small supply; the bronze they use is imported. There is timber of every kind, as in Gaul, save beech and pine. They account it wrong to eat of hare, fowl, and goose; but these they keep for pastime or pleasure. The climate is more temperate than in Gaul, the cold seasons more moderate. The natural shape of the island is triangular, and one side lies opposite to Gaul. Of this side one angle, which is in Kent (where almost all the ships from Gaul come in to land), faces the east, the lower angle faces south. This side stretches about five hundred miles. . . . Here in mid-channel is an island called Man; in addition, several smaller islands are supposed to lie close to land, as touching which some have written that in midwinter night there lasts for thirty whole days. . . . Of the inlanders most do not sow corn, but live on milk and flesh and clothe themselves in skins. . . . Groups of ten or twelve men have wives together in common, and particularly brothers along with brothers, and fathers with sons; but the children born of the unions are reckoned to belong to the particular house to which the maiden was first conducted."

size, climate, natural resources, economy, housing, diet, relations between men and women and their physical appearance, and rumors about unusually long winter nights. The nature of the similarities leaves the distinct impression that Pius used Caesar's description of Britain as a flexible template for his own portrayal of Scotland.⁶¹

Where Pius draws on Caesar most directly, however, is in his characterization of France. Throughout his *Commentaries*, the pontiff portrays the French as a dangerous threat to Rome's spiritual and temporal authority. Their support of the Pragmatic Sanction undermined papal claims to supremacy within the Church, while their territorial interests in the Kingdom of Naples and on the Italian peninsula more generally menaced the Papal States. Pius even frames the conclave of 1458 as a war with France. "A French pope will either go back to France and extinguish the splendor of our beloved *patria*," he writes, recounting his alleged conversation with a fellow cardinal, "or he will stay here. And Italy, queen of all nations, will serve a foreign master and we will become slaves of the French."⁶² Pius further magnifies this image of a French threat by offering throughout the *Commentaries* a sustained criticism of all things French. Again and again, Pius accuses both individual Frenchmen and the French in general of the same vices: arrogance,⁶³ lust for power,⁶⁴ cruelty,⁶⁵ and rashness.⁶⁶ The French are also notoriously inconstant: Pius speaks of

⁶¹On the formulaic nature of classical ethnographic descriptions, see Thomas.

⁶²Piccolomini, 1984, 1:208–10. For the entire account of the conclave, see *ibid.*, 1:194–226.

⁶³On French arrogance, see the examples of the Bishop of Chartres (*ibid.*, 1:594); King Charles VII (*ibid.*, 1:594–96); the legates at the Congress of Mantua (*ibid.*, 1:608); the French at war with the English (*ibid.*, 1:1068–70); the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (*ibid.*, 1:1118); and French ambassadors discussing the throne of Naples (*ibid.*, 2:1468–70). Pius also describes "arrogance," "haughtiness," and "pride" as qualities typical of the French people more generally: *ibid.*, 1:600, 1112, 2:2054.

⁶⁴See especially the account of the conclave, where two French cardinals and France in general are presented in this light (*ibid.*, 1:198–200, 208–10). On French interest in Italy, see *ibid.*, 1:658. On French thirst for power in the Church, see *ibid.*, 2:1564. On Louis XI, see *ibid.*, 2:2382, 2476.

⁶⁵Envisioning the French domination of Italy, Pius describes the French as "cruel rulers": *ibid.*, 1:750. For other references to French cruelty in war, see *ibid.*, 1:894, 1076, 2:1346, 1352–54.

⁶⁶See, for example, his description of the Cardinal of Avignon (*ibid.*, 1:200); of the French in the curia (*ibid.*, 1:750); of French laymen interfering in the Church (*ibid.*, 1:1124–26); of the Bretons (*ibid.*, 1:1142); of French ambassadors (*ibid.*, 2:1470); of the French fighting for Charles Duke of Bourbon, whom Pius even identifies as possible descendants of the Boii tribe that Caesar discusses (*ibid.*, 2:1732); of Louis XI (*ibid.*, 2:2380); and of the Cardinal of Arras (*ibid.*, 2:2480–82).

“typical French deceit” and “the fickleness of [the French] people, who keep no promises.”⁶⁷ They are also, he often observes, thirsty for war — “a savage people who attack with sword and fire.”⁶⁸ They routinely play tricks, set traps, and tell lies — Pius refers frequently to the “Gallic art” of lying⁶⁹ — and they rush to embrace rumor — “they take whatever they hear as a certainty.”⁷⁰ Pius frames French participation in the Council of Basel, and especially their support of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, as their “lust for unbridled liberty.”⁷¹ He further suggests that the French misunderstand obedience to the Roman Church as slavery: “as a result of [the Pragmatic Sanction] the French prelates, who thought they would become free, were reduced to the greatest servitude.”⁷² He also repeatedly emphasizes French ingratitude for the many favors bestowed on them by the Roman Church and draws particular attention to how little they seem to appreciate the papacy’s crucial role in bringing an end to the Hundred Years’ War.⁷³

Pius found in Caesar more than simply inspiration for this unflattering portrait: in both their character and their conduct, Pius’s Frenchmen appear to be direct descendants of the Gallic tribes in the *Gallic War*.⁷⁴ As it did for Pius, what made Gaul so dangerous in Caesar’s eyes was that it posed a threat to the security and peace of Rome. Moreover, when describing the Gauls

⁶⁷Ibid., 2:1956, elaborates on his criticism still further: “Pius recognized the typical French deceit and ridiculed the fickleness of that people, who keep no promises, and their shameless mouths through which they are very quick to deny promises they have made and to claim as spoken things that have not been said.” See also *ibid.*, 2:2476–78. Later, at *ibid.*, 2:2194, Pius writes: “nothing is easier to find than a French promise, and nothing is more difficult to keep.” The French cardinals in the curia are also constantly betraying him: *ibid.*, 1:340–42, 426–28, 2:1958. See also his description of French ambassadors: *ibid.*, 2:1470.

⁶⁸Ibid., 2:1348: “*efferata gens quae ferro et igne grassatur.*” Books 6 and 7, moreover, record the chronic wars that the French were involved in over the course of the fifteenth century.

⁶⁹For references to the “*ars gallica*” of lying, see *ibid.*, 1:594, 2:1956, 2194, 2472. For specific examples of this kind of behavior, see especially *ibid.*, 1:212, for the “Gallic conspiracy” of the conclave; *ibid.*, 1:194–226 for the alleged antics of the Cardinal of Rouen. There are also references to French deceit in Pius’s discussion of other figures: the Bishop of Alet (*ibid.*, 1:712, 720); Louis XI (*ibid.*, 2:1464, 2380); French ambassadors (*ibid.*, 2:1470–72, 2004–06); French cardinals in general (*ibid.*, 2:1592); and the Cardinal of Arras (*ibid.*, 2:2470–82).

⁷⁰Ibid., 1:1110: “*res auditas pro compertis habent.*” Louis XI is also described as “credulous”: *ibid.*, 2:1586.

⁷¹Ibid., 1:1122: “*effrenatae libertatis cupiditate.*” See also *ibid.*, 1:1120.

⁷²Ibid., 1:1124: “*Ob hanc legem praelati Galliarum, qui se futuros liberos arbitrabantur, in servitutem maximam redacti sunt.*”

⁷³Ibid., 1:606–08, 1112–18, 1124. On how Pius’s anti-French attitude informs all of his writings, see Gilli, 1994, who does not, however, note any significant parallels between Caesar’s and Pius’s portraits of the Gauls.

⁷⁴On Caesar’s portraits of the Gauls, see Barlow; Rawlings.

whom he encounters and against whom he fights, Caesar emphasizes the very same attributes and behaviors that Pius does — and uses many of the same terms: *arrogantia* (arrogance), *cupiditas* (avarice), *temeritas* (temerity), *audacia* (audacity), *levitas* (fickleness), *dolus* (deceit), *fraus* (fraud), *imprudencia* (imprudence).⁷⁵ As do Pius's, Caesar's Gauls envision themselves fighting to preserve their "liberty" in the face of sure "servitude" under Roman rule.⁷⁶ They are also portrayed displaying a similar disrespect to Rome, despite the many benefits they are shown to have received from generous Roman hands.⁷⁷ Caesar and Pius adopt a similar narrative strategy to emphasize this Gallic ingratitude. Both begin by presenting a sketch of the devastation the Gauls suffered at the hands of their enemies,⁷⁸ and then both go on to credit Roman leaders — Caesar and the papacy, respectively — for coming to their aid and helping to restore their strength.⁷⁹ In short, in both language and tone, the Gallia in Pius's *Commentaries* and the one he battles in his clashes with French royal ambassadors, with French cardinals, and in the war over Naples, is consistently Caesarean.⁸⁰ Given the level of similarity between these two Gallic portraits, it is hard not to conclude that Pius modeled his damning image of the French on Caesar's negative impressions, while at the same time adapting them to his own particular needs.

⁷⁵For Caesar's description of Gallic arrogance, see Caesar, 1917, 4, 6, 20, 22, 24 (1.2, 3, 13, 14, 15). On their lust for power, see *ibid.*, 4, 28, 44, 240, 384–86, 440–42 (1.2, 18, 30; 5.6; 7.4, 42). On their cruelty, see *ibid.*, 38, 434–36, 490–94 (7.4, 38, 77). On their rashness, see *ibid.*, 26, 216, 380, 440 (1.18; 4.27; 7.1, 42). On their inconstancy, see *ibid.*, 90, 180 (2.1; 4.5). On their deceitful nature, see *ibid.*, 26, 194, 195, 386–88, 402–04, 434–36, 456 (1.17; 4.13, 14; 7.5, 17, 38, 54). On their passion for war, see *ibid.*, 4, 14, 28, 150–52, 164, 240, 338 (1.2, 9, 18; 3.10, 19; 5.6; 6.15). On their gullibility, see *ibid.*, 186, 440 (4.5; 7.42). Even Caesar's closest Gallic allies, the Aedui, eventually betray him: *ibid.*, 402–04, 424–26, 432–36, 440–42, 456 (7.17, 32, 37–39, 42, 54).

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 188, 268, 272, 306, 380–82, 398–400, 432, 470, 480, 490–94, 508 (4.8; 5.27, 29, 54; 7.1, 14, 37, 64, 71, 76, 77, 89).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 16–18, 24–32, 46–50, 56–58, 402–04, 424–26, 432–36, 440–42, 456 (1.11, 16–20, 31–32, 37; 7.17, 32, 37–39, 42, 54).

⁷⁸For Caesar, it is the Aedui suffering at the hands of the Helvetii and Ariovistus: *ibid.*, 456 (7.54). For Pius, it is the French devastated by the Hundred Years' War: Piccolomini, 1984, 1:1112.

⁷⁹Caesar, 1917, 456 (7.54); Piccolomini, 1984, 1:1118.

⁸⁰It should also be noted that Pius routinely uses *Gallia* and *Galli* when talking about France and the French, even though he notes that *Francia* is the term for Gaul in his day: *ibid.*, 1:1048. For more on the political significance of this terminology, see Gilli, 1997, 115–33. When talking about French geography, Pius sometimes notes the ancient Gallic tribes that lived there, including the Morini, Veneti, and Aedui: see Piccolomini, 1984, 1:1050, 2:1732.

While Caesar's ethnographic sketch of England adds little to the apologetic dimension of Pius's *Commentaries*, his image of the Gauls contributes much. By using Caesar's language to characterize the French, Pius gives added authority to the disparaging portrait of his enemy. He also sharpens the nature of his criticism. Equated with a nation of barbarians, the France of Pius's *Commentaries* is effectively stripped of its status both as a formidable European power and as a sophisticated civilization. At the same time, the pontiff's allusions to Caesar's Gauls work to enhance his own image in the text. By defending Rome against a similarly barbaric enemy, Pius in the *Commentaries* effectively plays the role of a second Caesar, an equation that would have ennobled both his spiritual and his temporal wars with the French. At the same time, he also suggests the desired outcome of these struggles. The Gauls in the *Gallic War* suffer a resounding defeat at the hands of Caesar and submit completely to Roman rule. In a sense, then, by setting up Caesar's Gauls as his opponents, Pius signals that his Rome will eventually triumph over its French enemy. For Pius, such reassurances would have had particular appeal as he began writing his *Commentaries*, at a time when his Gallic victory was anything but secure.

The above analysis helps to clarify how Pius's *Commentaries* engaged with Caesar's. More than simply a title, the two texts share a set of common apologetic strategies that are well matched to their similar needs. Pius typically adapted Caesar's rhetorical techniques to the particulars of his own circumstances and to his dual role of pope and prince. When drawing on Caesar's content, however, his approach might be better described as wholesale adoption: Pius's fifteenth-century portrait of the French is almost an exact reproduction of the ancient one in the *Gallic War*.

The close relationship between Caesar and Pius makes sense in the context of the pontiff's own intellectual biography as much as it does against the historical backdrop of his papacy. Pius's interest in Caesar's histories is well documented. He owned at least two manuscripts of the *Commentaries*.⁸¹ He also mentions Caesar's writings several times in his letters and poetry. These references confirm that, among other things, he knew the particular circumstances under which the *Gallic War* was composed. In a poem to one friend and in a letter to another, Pius notes that while campaigning in Gaul,

⁸¹The two mss. are Caesar, *Opera Omnia*, London, British Library, Harley 2683; Caesar, *Opera Omnia*, Vatican Library, Chig. Lat. H. VII. 214. For a description of the first of these manuscripts, see Brown, 1981, 335.

Caesar would fight during the day and devote his nights to writing.⁸² In this brief reference may lie yet another reason why Pius found Caesar's *Commentaries* an attractive model: like Caesar, he too was writing an account of his deeds almost as they were happening.⁸³ There are also clues in Pius's writings that tell us how he read the *Commentaries*. In a letter to the young Duke Sigismund of Austria, for example, he recommends studying Caesar for "military instruction."⁸⁴ In another addressed to the Archbishop of Cracow, he hints that the *Commentaries* served as a model for his own literary style.⁸⁵

Admittedly, Pius's comments here and elsewhere do not explicitly confirm his interest in these ancient works as apologies; most of them focus instead on Caesar's eloquence and on his pairing of politics with intellectual endeavors.⁸⁶ But what he does not say outright here he implies elsewhere. Scholarship on Pius's historical writings has demonstrated convincingly how he routinely read his sources with an eye to political advantage. Drawing on a range of ancient and medieval sources, he shaped unflattering histories of the Turks and other Islamic kingdoms in a way that helped make the case for a very contemporary cause: a crusade against Mehmet II.⁸⁷ In other words, when writing his *Commentaries*, Pius not only had good reason to turn to the writings of an ancient historian as a way to defend his own interests in the present: he also had the means and the experience to do so.

Pius's writings shed light on still another important issue: the significance this historiographical model held for the pontiff himself. Like many in his age, Pius considered Caesar to be the founder of the Roman Empire.⁸⁸ By modeling his own *Commentaries* after Caesar's, therefore, the

⁸²Piccolomini, 1994, 116: "Night gives you muses, and the day returns the war. / Caesar did the same thing, while encamped in Gaul." Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:226: "For, while waging war in Gaul, he gave over the day to fighting and the night to writing."

⁸³Pius also must have felt a kinship with Caesar on account of his writing habits: both men chose to sacrifice sleep in order to pen their works. Pius defends this pattern of nocturnal writing in the preface of another work, the *Asia*: see Piccolomini, 1551, 281–82.

⁸⁴Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:229.

⁸⁵Pius describes his own writing style in *ibid.*, 68:319, in these terms: "I am simple, I speak straightforwardly, I do not use rhetorical ornaments. I cast off all clothing." His words echo Cicero's description of Caesar's writings as "simple, plain, and beautiful, stripped of all rhetorical ornaments as if of a garment." See Cicero, 1962, 226 (75.262). Elsewhere Pius writes: "What can be written more elegantly, more eloquently than those commentaries, which Julius Caesar composed about himself?": see Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:226.

⁸⁶There is little in the margins of Pius's manuscripts of Caesar to indicate how he might have read these texts.

⁸⁷Meserve, 2003 and 2008.

⁸⁸See, for example, Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:330, 67:10. On the view of Caesar as the founder of the Roman Empire, see Baron, 61–62.

pontiff was casting his *res gestae* in a distinctly imperial mold. Such an association would have been valuable to Pius in various ways. At a time when his power as both spiritual and temporal prince continued to suffer attacks, this parallel would have helped to enforce his authority as the supreme monarch of Rome. Moreover, given France's ambition to assume the imperial crown, it seems more than a coincidence that Pius chose to identify his *Commentaries* with a man whom he considered an emperor. In so doing, he was in a sense claiming for himself the title coveted by one of his most dangerous enemies.

If Pius acknowledges Caesar as the first emperor, he praises him most for a different kind of achievement: marrying military and political duties with intellectual pursuits. In a letter he penned in defense of the art of poetry, Pius holds up Julius Caesar, ruler and poet, as an example of how essential the *studia humanitatis* are to good ruling. In the aforementioned letter to Duke Sigismund, he again turns to Caesar as an example. The study of letters, he argues, is not just important to a ruler: it is what makes a ruler "the best."⁸⁹ Pius expands the same argument in an undated poem that laments that arms and letters are in his age rarely paired. Literary pursuits, he maintains, are what made the military leaders of the past, like Julius Caesar, so great.⁹⁰

In all three of these examples, Pius ranks Caesar among the elite of these lettered leaders because he not only studied, but also tried his own hand at writing. He "wanted to become a poet and to be called one,"⁹¹ and he himself wrote accounts of his own deeds.⁹² To Pius, Julius Caesar represented the best kind of ruler because he paired leadership with authorship. Thus, by penning his own *Commentaries*, Pius was doing more than following in the footsteps of a skilled ancient historian: in his eyes, he was molding himself into what he perceived to be the ideal of temporal and military leadership.

If Pius's own views on Caesar gave the pontiff's *Commentaries* a distinctly political charge, so did the broader intellectual climate into which his text emerged. Beginning in the fourteenth century, the figure of Caesar had become a battleground of political ideology for Renaissance humanists, and especially for those debating the politics of contemporary Italy. To those defending republican principles — the young Petrarch (1304–74), Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444), and Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), among others — he was an unlawful tyrant who invaded

⁸⁹Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:231; *ibid.*, 226.

⁹⁰Piccolomini, 1994, 22–24.

⁹¹Piccolomini, 1909–18, 61:330.

⁹²Piccolomini, 1994, 24.

his own *patria*, destroyed its precious liberties, and ushered in a period of cultural stagnation. To others, however, including Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), Guarino da Verona (1374–1460), and the older Petrarch, Caesar was both a hero of the past and a model for the contemporary Italian prince.⁹³ In the context of these intellectual currents, Pius's *Commentaries* would have carried with them an inevitable political resonance simply because of their association with Caesar.

The relationship between Pius's *Commentaries* and humanist conceptions of Caesar more broadly is an issue worth further investigation. In this paper, however, the focus is necessarily limited to the Renaissance reception of Caesar's *Commentaries* as historiographical models. Before Pius had taken up his own pen, the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War* had served as models for several other Renaissance historians engaged in writing about figures in contemporary politics. By analyzing how these authors drew on Caesar to shape the histories of their protagonists, and by comparing their approach with Pius's, the next section of this paper aims to refine the claim that Pius politicizes his image in the *Commentaries*. He does so, I will argue, by aligning his self-portrait not only with images of Renaissance temporal monarchs, but also with those of contemporary military figures.

3. PIUS'S *COMMENTARIES* AND THE RENAISSANCE CAESAR

Having virtually fallen off the historiographical map in the Middle Ages, the *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar were fast developing a humanist following at precisely the time that Pius II penned his own. The 240 extant codices dating to the Quattrocento, most of them Italian in origin, are the clearest testament to the growing appeal of Caesar's historical works, especially on the peninsula.⁹⁴ The text seems to have attracted interest for a variety of reasons. Like Pius, many humanists praised Caesar's style and recommended that his histories be studied as models of eloquence.⁹⁵ Moreover, it is clear from the few existing sixteenth-century commentaries on these texts that

⁹³See especially Baron, 37, 49–57, 66–70, 76–77, 119–21, 123–25, 146–50, 152–63, 243, 396, 407–08. See also Canfora, 2001.

⁹⁴Brown, 1981, 320. For a full discussion of the manuscript tradition of Caesar's *Commentaries*, see Brown, 1976 and 1979. For centuries, Caesar's writings had been misattributed to Julius Celsus. By the fifteenth century, however, it was well known that Caesar had authored the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War*. See Brown, 1981, 321–23, 327, n. 33, 331.

⁹⁵Among them were Leonardo Bruni, Ciriaco d'Ancona, Flavio Biondo, and Vittorino da Feltre. See Grendler, 256; Brown, 1981, 325; Bruni, 108; Biondo, 211.

Caesar's writings were also valued for their historical and geographical content.⁹⁶ For some, Caesar also offered valuable lessons in the art of war: textbook versions of his *Commentaries* elaborate on the machinery he used in battle.⁹⁷ According to humanist Antonio Beccadelli, better known as Panormita (1394–1471), Alfonso of Naples (1395–1458) so admired Caesar's military skill that he would consult the *Commentaries* daily when on campaign.⁹⁸ For others, Caesar's histories offered valuable advice of still another kind. Guarino da Verona commended them to his student, the young Leonello d'Este, as the illustration of a virtuous prince.⁹⁹

By the mid-fifteenth century, Caesar's *Commentaries* were also coming into their own as a historiographical model. Their influence was never as significant as that of Livy or Sallust, but they did develop a following among humanist historians, especially in Naples and Venice.¹⁰⁰ Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454) seems to have been the first fifteenth-century humanist to consider writing a history "according to the example of divine Caesar," an account of his role in defending Brescia from siege by Milanese forces.¹⁰¹ In the end, Barbaro never followed through on his idea, and it was another Venetian war that became the subject of the first Renaissance commentaries. In 1452, Alfonso of Naples sent poet Giannantonio de' Pandoni, known as Porcellio (b. 1405), to the camp of condottiere Jacopo Piccinino, who was then engaged on behalf of Naples's ally, Venice, in a war against Milan. Porcellio composed his *Commentaria comitis Jacobis Picininis* (*The Commentaries on Lord Jacopo Piccinino*) as a report from the front lines of battle. He dedicated the first ten books, which cover the campaigns of 1452, to Alfonso.¹⁰² He addressed the next nine — on the second year of war and the peace that eventually halted combat — to Doge Francesco Foscari

⁹⁶Grendler, 259–60.

⁹⁷Ibid., 259.

⁹⁸Panormita, 40: "[Alfonso] brought Caesar's *Commentaries* with him on every expedition, never missing a day when he would read them very carefully and praise both their elegant style and their practical knowledge about waging war."

⁹⁹Pade, 76–79. Portraits of Caesar in many illuminated manuscripts of his *Commentaries* seem to reflect this interest in his princely powers as well as his military prowess: see Brown, 1981, 327–37.

¹⁰⁰Gilbert, 206–07. Panormita ranks Caesar third in his list of the most talented ancient historians, after Livy and Sallust, but before Tacitus, Curtius, and Suetonius: see Tateo, 171–72. Caesar is one of several ancient historians against whom court historian Bartolomeo Facio measured the quality of Valla's work: see Ferraù, 76, n. 3.

¹⁰¹Ianziti, 1992, 1040, n. 21. See also *ibid.*, 1040–43.

¹⁰²The full title is *Commentaria comitis Jacobi Picinini vocati Scipionis Aemiliani edita per P. Porcellium et missa Alphonso Regi Aragonum*.

(1373–1457).¹⁰³ It is unclear why Porcellio dedicated the second installment of his work to Foscari, though Alfonso's lukewarm reception of the first seems the most likely explanation.¹⁰⁴ A few years later, Venetian humanist Francesco Contarini (b. 1421) penned another history in Caesarean tradition and one that chronologically follows on the heels of Porcellio's. The focus of the *Commentarii Rerum in Hetruria Gestarum* (*Commentaries on Matters Accomplished in Tuscany*), however, is considerably different. Contarini writes about his mission as Venetian ambassador to Siena (from February 1453 to September 1455), and the central role he allegedly played in Siennese affairs; while he, too, discusses a war involving Venice and Piccinino, in this conflict the condottiere and the republic were fighting on opposite sides.¹⁰⁵

There is yet a third text that must be considered alongside the histories of Porcellio and Contarini, Bartolomeo Facio's *Rerum gestarum Alfonsi regis libri*.¹⁰⁶ Facio (1400–57), who completed the work as Alfonso's official court historian, takes as his timeframe a period of several decades, from 1420 to 1455. The first seven books recount Alfonso's conquest of the Kingdom of Naples, while the remaining three narrate his involvement in subsequent wars on the peninsula up to the Peace of Lodi. On the surface, the *Gesta* seems an odd addition to the discussion at hand in that Facio did not identify it explicitly with Caesar's works. But what justifies its inclusion here is that Pius II did: when describing Facio's history, he notes that it imitated

¹⁰³The full title is *Commentaria secundi anni de gestis Scipionis Picinini in Annibalem Sfortiam ad Serenissimum Principem Franciscum Foscari Venetorum Ducem per Porcellium*.

¹⁰⁴Porcellio's *Commentaries* diverge in significant ways from some of the historiographical ideals promoted by Facio and Panormita, the leading court historians of Naples. It is also possible that Alfonso's apparent indifference to the work stemmed from the realization that he had little to gain from the war about which Porcellio was writing: see Ryder, 288. For a discussion of Porcellio's *Commentaries*, see Frittelli, 104–10; Picotti, 1955, 179–203.

¹⁰⁵The complete title is *Historia Etruriae seu Commentariorum de rebus in Hetruria a Senensibus gestis cum adversus Florentinos, tum adversus Ildebrandinum Ursinum Petilianensium comitem libri tres*. For a modern edition of book 3, see Fabbri, 1988, 75–137. This is the only reliable printed edition of any part of Contarini's text. For a discussion of the severe contamination of books 1 and 2 in the sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century editions, see *ibid.*, 65–67. On Contarini and his *Commentaries*, see *ibid.*, 1–26, 41–67; Fabbri, 1992, 371–73. See also Pertusi, 304–05; and in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, s.v. "Francesco Contarini." For an account of the events of this war, see Ferente, 45–55. According to Pertusi, 305, Contarini began his *Commentaries* in 1457. An expert on the text, Fabbri, 1992, 371, says simply that Contarini penned it shortly after the events it describes.

¹⁰⁶Facio spent a decade writing the *Gesta*. He completed the work by 1456, but it was not formally presented to Alfonso until 1457: see Facio, xx.

Caesar “in his manner of speaking.”¹⁰⁷ Pius, moreover, was not alone in finding connections between Caesar’s and Facio’s works: not only did his fellow humanists draw such parallels, but so have modern historians, and on a variety of levels.¹⁰⁸ Together, these individuals make a compelling case for including Facio’s text in the analysis that follows.

These three Renaissance histories reveal something important about the *Commentaries* of Pius II. By choosing to model his work on Caesar’s, the pontiff was not just imitating an ancient precedent, he was also following a more recent one set by a series of humanist historians. More importantly, these humanists had found in Caesar a guide for writing histories about leaders of contemporary temporal politics. Thus, by adopting the same model when shaping his own image as pope, Pius was effectively politicizing his textual self-portrait.

To understand both the nature and full extent of this politicization, however, requires moving beyond the mere recognition of this basic common ground. Did Caesar serve as a guide for Porcellio, Facio, and Contarini in the same ways that he did for Pius? Answering this question will do more than simply clarify the historiographical significance of Pius’s text. It also promises to elucidate further exactly how, why, and to what extent Caesar represented an attractive model for Renaissance historians more generally and for these four in particular. There is no consensus on such questions in current scholarship, but there has also been no systematic comparison of these works and Caesar’s.¹⁰⁹ The following pages offer such a comparative analysis, drawing once again on the works of Rambaud and others to identify Caesar’s apologetic techniques. The results reveal that while Pius does not completely duplicate Porcellio, Facio, and Contarini in their approach to Caesar’s histories, he does draw on many of the same Caesarean strategies of self-defense that they do, and to similar ends.

¹⁰⁷Piccolomini, 1551, 480: “Bartolomeo Facio, who wrote about the deeds of the king, imitated C. Caesar no less in his compositional style, since [Caesar’s] *Commentaries* were so pleasing to the king.”

¹⁰⁸According to Kristeller, 274, Facio was “known to his contemporaries as an imitator of Caesar.” Panormita in *Epistolae Campanae* notes that Facio’s *Gesta* “followed Caesar’s style of eloquence”: see Dall’Oco, 1995, 247. On Panormita’s remarks, see also Tateo, 152.

¹⁰⁹For assessments of how Caesar’s *Commentaries* influenced Facio’s *Gesta*, see Ianziti, 1992, 1049–50; Dall’Oco, 1996, 218; Dall’Oco, 1995, 247; Tateo, 144, 152; Facio, 561, 564, 566 (editor’s notes). On Porcellio’s *Commentaries*, see Frittelli, 105; Ianziti, 1992, 1054–55. Fabbri, 1988, 8, suggests that Caesar offered specific apologetic strategies to Renaissance historians: “Caesar’s text served as a model not simply in its capacity as propagandistic history: it also served on a technical level as an example of a text in which stylistic and rhetorical tricks worked to give credibility to the deformation — if not the falsification — of history.”

Of the three Renaissance precursors to Pius's *Commentaries*, Porcellio's bears the faintest imprint of Caesar's apologies and the least resemblance to Pius's. Aside from his very un-Caesarean prose style, scholars point most often to how Porcellio blurs reality with ancient history: rather than simply suggesting that Piccinino and his enemy, the Milanese Francesco Sforza, are like another Scipio and Hannibal, he gives his protagonists these very names.¹¹⁰ There are also significant divergences between the two authors on the level of apologetic technique. Rather than detaching himself from the events he discusses by using the third person, Porcellio presents his account from the perspective of an eyewitness. Furthermore, while there are moments in the *Commentaries* when Piccinino explicitly defends his actions and decisions, the text is not written as a sustained *récit justificatif*, as are those of Pius and Caesar. Finally, while Caesar depends exclusively on narrative to make his case, Porcellio interrupts his with frequent and effusive authorial asides in praise of his hero's admirable traits.¹¹¹ The Piccinino in Porcellio's account boasts many of the same military strengths evident in Caesar's self-image in his *Commentaries* — including exceptional *scientia rei militaris* — but because of their very different presentation the condottiere does not seem particularly Caesarean. Distilled into a list of abstract qualities, these features seem to bear a closer resemblance to the Renaissance ideal of condottiere and contemporary discussions of the ancient Scipio than they do the image of Caesar in the *Commentaries*.¹¹²

There are, however, two elements of Porcellio's military portrait that seem to be specifically inspired by Caesar's histories and that on an important level also recall Pius's own image in his *Commentaries*. Throughout his text, Porcellio notes how Piccinino acts with Caesar's trademark *celeritas*, and he often attributes the condottiere's success on the battlefield to this remarkable swiftness.¹¹³ Porcellio also characterizes

¹¹⁰Frittelli, 104, 109; Ianziti, 1992, 1055; Ferente, 39.

¹¹¹For example, De' Pandoni, 1731, 73: "It is incredible to say, o most Serene King, how much Scipio excelled other commanders in virtue and reputation"; *ibid.*, 101: "Oh the great clemency of the general! Oh his renowned magnanimity! Oh the faithfulness and constancy of this great man!"

¹¹²The features were drawn from Cicero's description of a good general in Cicero, 1927, 38 (*Pro lege Manilia*, 10.28): "For in my opinion, four qualities are to be found in the ideal general: knowledge of military matters, virtue, reputation, and good fortune." See Crevatin, 2002, 241; Albanese, especially 100–01; Viti, 87. On fifteenth-century views of Scipio Africanus, see Crevatin, 1992.

¹¹³See, for example, De' Pandoni, 1731, 114, 116, 119, 124, 153, 154. Piccinino sometimes describes Porcellio with the phrase *incredibili celeritate*, one which Caesar uses four times in the *Gallie War*: Caesar, 1917, 114, 176, 284, 302 (2.19, 3.28, 5.40, 5.53).

Piccinino's rapport with troops in distinctly Caesarean fashion. With just a few words, Porcellio relates, Piccinino can instill in his weary soldiers renewed courage and zeal for battle. Indeed, simply standing in their midst has the effect of wiping away their anxiety and fear. The condottiere also inspires a loyalty in his soldiers so fierce that they will fight on his behalf under any conditions. And the respect is mutual: Piccinino demonstrates to his troops that he values their safety and welfare as much as his own.¹¹⁴

According to his *Commentaries*, Pius II shares only Piccinino's penchant for *celeritas*, but more important are the parallels in these authors' apologetic approaches. Both Pius and Porcellio found in Caesar not just the general model of an apology: they also found specific strategies for promoting and defending their protagonists' military reputations. Just as many of Pius's Caesarean features help to shore up his vulnerabilities in this area, so do Piccinino's. When the condottiere entered their service, the Venetians were not fully convinced of his loyalty, and their wariness continued even after he was appointed captain general of the republic's army in May 1453.¹¹⁵ By choosing to emphasize the speed and efficiency with which the condottiere discharged his duties, Porcellio was effectively challenging such concerns. His characterization of Piccinino's relationship with his troops served a similar purpose. Like many bands of mercenary soldiers, Piccinino's had earned the reputation for being unruly and poorly controlled.¹¹⁶ In this context, the image of Piccinino commanding with authority and winning his troops' undying loyalty would have been particularly valuable. Thus, in emphasizing these Caesarean features, Porcellio was doing for Piccinino what Pius went on to do for himself. Both drew on specific Caesarean strategies to enhance the military reputation of their protagonists, and in places where such buttressing was needed the most. Given these parallels, it is fair to conclude that in this way, too, Pius was politicizing his own self-portrait in his *Commentaries*: to shape this image, he drew on a historiographical language already adapted to describe figures from contemporary temporal politics.

The argument for politicization is further strengthened through an examination of Bartolomeo Facio's history of Alfonso of Naples. The connections between Caesar and Alfonso are common in scholarship on the *Gesta*, as well as in other literary and artistic portraits of the king produced at the Neapolitan court. In discussions of Facio's text, attention has focused

¹¹⁴De' Pandoni, 1731, 105–06, 115–16, 146–47; De' Pandoni, 1751, 28. For similar descriptions of Caesar, see Caesar, 1917, 122, 222–24, 372, 406, 466, 504–08 (2.25, 4.34, 6.41, 7.19, 62, 86–88); and Caesar, 1914, 324, 330–32, 334 (3.90, 95, 97).

¹¹⁵Mallett and Hale, 42, 44, 156.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 44, 183.

both on the general imperial veneer of Alfonso's image and on its resemblance to representations of Caesar in the works of other Roman historians.¹¹⁷ Several scholars have also noted the influence of Caesar's own histories on various dimensions of Facio's work; one likens both his prose and his geographical descriptions to Caesar's.¹¹⁸ Others have noted structural and thematic parallels between the two authors: the seven books on Alfonso's wars against Anjou match the seven Caesar wrote about his own Gallic war, and the three books detailing the king's campaigns in war-torn Italy and against rebels in his own state in turn match Caesar's three-book *Civil War*.¹¹⁹ Similarities in the texts' narrative structures have also been noted at the level of individual books.¹²⁰

Facio's image of Alfonso also recalls Caesar's self-portrait as a military commander, and on several levels. Like Caesar in the *Civil War*, Alfonso appears in the *Gesta* as a reluctant warrior, one who exhausts every avenue of peaceful negotiation with his enemies before he takes up arms against them.¹²¹ Once on the battlefield, the parallels continue. According to Facio's account, Alfonso adopted some of the same military tactics that Caesar did when fighting his Gallic enemy.¹²² Like Piccinino's, moreover, his relationship with his troops follows the example of Caesar,¹²³ and as in Pius's text, there are

¹¹⁷Tateo, 63, 142–54; Dall'Oco, 1995, 247; Albanese, Pietragalla, Bulleri, and Tangheroni, 69–70, 91; Canfora, 2005, 108–14; Stacey, 185. For a discussion of Sallust's influence on Facio's portrait of Alfonso, see Albanese, Pietragalla, Bulleri, and Tangheroni, especially 62–63, 77; Facio, 583 (editor's notes).

¹¹⁸Facio, 561, 564, 566, 571 (editor's notes).

¹¹⁹Dall'Oco, 1995, 247.

¹²⁰Tateo, 153.

¹²¹Ibid., 152.

¹²²Dall'Oco, 1996, 218. Given that Alfonso was a diligent student of Caesar's military expertise, these similarities cannot be automatically interpreted as mere literary allusions.

¹²³Ibid., 216. There are even more parallels than Dall'Oco points out. See, for example, Facio, 68, 80, 168–70, 268, 332, 436–38. Even the language of the two historians is similar. Facio's description of Alfonso's soldiers in battle at *ibid.*, 438: "They fought fiercely and on all sides and many were turned back several times from the walls. After they had collected themselves, they hurried back and waged battle more fiercely because they were fighting in view of the king" ("Pugnabatur acriter undique multisque saepius a muro repulsis, eodem postquam se collegerant contendebant atque eo acrius rem gerebant, quod in conspectu regis dimicabant") follows closely on Caesar's description of his own army in Caesar, 1917, 158 (3.14): "The rest of the conflict was a question of courage, in which our own troops easily had the advantage — the more so because the engagement took place in the sight of Caesar and of the whole army, so that no exploit a little more gallant than the rest could escape notice" ("Reliquum erat certamen positum in virtute, qua nostri milites facile superabant, atque eo magis, quod in conspectu Caesaris atque omnis exercitus res gerebatur, ut nullum paulo fortius factum latere posset"). Translation from Caesar, 1917, 158.

echoes of Caesar's triumph in the *Gallic War* in Alfonso's portrait.¹²⁴ Finally, in keeping with the images of both Pius and Piccinino, Alfonso's actions are constantly defined by Caesar's signature *celeritas*.

There are, however, still other important parallels among Caesar, Facio, and Pius that have so far gone unnoticed. Like Pius, Facio also constructs his history as Caesar did, as a *récit justificatif*. From the beginning of the narrative to the end, he focuses as much on the reasons for Alfonso's actions as on the reporting of those actions. There are numerous examples of Alfonso carefully working through decisions and then laying out his reasoning to others. Facio takes this narrative approach when describing actions both large and small: repeatedly Alfonso is shown to justify his decision to defend Queen Joanna II of Naples (1373–1435) against Louis III of Anjou (1403–34); and at the same time, he is shown to plan tactical maneuvers on the battlefield.¹²⁵ Throughout his account, moreover, Facio relies heavily on the same verbs of intellectual and literal command that characterize the actions of Caesar and Pius. Facio typically places these verbs in clear sequence in his narrative of the king's actions: Alfonso first learns, perceives, or decides something — *cernere* (to determine), *animadvertere* (to perceive), *existimare* (to consider), *convertere animum* (to direct attention), *cognoscere* (to notice), *intelligere* (to understand) — and on the basis of this information he takes command — *instituere* (to establish), *constituere* (to arrange), *iubere* (to order), *mittere* (to send), *obducere* (to lead against), *mandare* (to deliver), *imperare* (to command), *decernere* (to decide).¹²⁶ Thanks in part to this narrative pattern, the king emerges from the text the way Caesar and Pius do, as a sophisticated strategist and as a conscientious, informed, and decisive leader.

Facio and Pius did not just draw from Caesar's *Commentaries* a similar set of features. In some cases, they also borrowed them for similar reasons. Like Pius, Facio would have seen in Caesar's narratives the framework of a familiar tale: a long war of conquest against a Gallic enemy, internal rebellions, and Italian campaigns. More importantly, in the narrative style of these ancient works, the *récit justificatif*, he would have found exactly what Pius did — an effective way of defending his protagonist's involvement in

¹²⁴Tateo, 144.

¹²⁵For Alfonso's justification for defending Joanna, see, for example, Facio, 12, 18, 30, 34, 42. For examples of Alfonso's *scientia rei militaris*, see *ibid.*, 174, 246, 288, 306. At times, Facio characterizes Alfonso as *diligens* while deliberating his decisions on the battlefield, a term that Caesar had used to describe himself in similar circumstances: see Welch, 89.

¹²⁶See Dall'Oco, 1996, 239, who notes a similar pattern in verbs of command but not their connection to Caesar's *Commentaries*.

more than one war and in the face of serious questions and criticisms. Though for reasons different from Pius, he also would have benefited from a history that cast his deeds in the mold of a Roman hero who was considered an imperial power.¹²⁷ But there is still another level on which Caesar's *Commentaries* would have had common appeal. Like Pius, Facio wrote his history at a time when his protagonist's military reputation was vulnerable to attack. Documents reveal that in the wake of his conquest of Naples, Alfonso was perceived by other Italian states as a "king of war" who had disrupted the peninsula's delicate equilibrium. Moreover, while recognized as a skilled condottiere, he was known for his own recklessness on the battlefield. He was also not considered much of a military mind.¹²⁸ Facio's portrayal of Alfonso in the *Gesta* responds to these criticisms and does so in part by drawing on Caesar's own carefully crafted self-portrait as a thoughtful and sophisticated strategist and a reluctant warrior. The image of Pius in the *Commentaries* bears these same Caesarean markings, and it does so to a similar end, that of defending his military reputation. If Pius was following in the footsteps of Caesar when shaping the details of his textual self-portrait, Bartolomeo Facio had already paved the way in his account of King Alfonso. Because this historiographical precedent, like Porcellio's *Commentaries*, celebrated a figure on the contemporary political stage, Pius's *Commentaries* can for yet another reason be read as a politicization of the pontiff's image.

If Facio's *Gesta* represent further support for an argument of politicization, Francesco Contarini's *Commentariorum Rerum in Hetruria Gestarum* provides what is perhaps the most convincing evidence of all. Of the three texts under examination here, it is Contarini's that bears the closest resemblance to Caesar's. It is also his work that in its Caesarean features bears the closest resemblance to Pius's. These parallels are particularly evident in book 3, an account of Siena's war with Jacopo Piccinino and Contarini's role therein. Like Pius, Contarini employs the Caesarean tactic of writing in the third person, thereby infusing an air of objectivity into his autobiographical narrative. But if this is the most obvious link to the apologetic form among the three authors, it is hardly the only one.¹²⁹

¹²⁷On the value of constructing a Roman mythology for Alfonso, see especially Tateo, 63–64, 142–47, 155.

¹²⁸Ferrà, 101–04.

¹²⁹Fabbri, 1988, 59–60; Fabbri, 1992, 372. While Fabbri, 1988, 59–60, notes several parallels between Contarini's *Commentaries* and Caesar's *Commentaries* — the third-person voice, the division into three books, the presence of Caesarean expressions, the composition of the text shortly after the events it relates, the lack of a dedication, the quick pace of the narrative — she refers only in general terms to the "propagandistic and apologetic intent" of the text.

Throughout his account, Contarini is at pains to point out the motives behind his actions in the same way that Pius and Caesar are.¹³⁰ His *Commentaries*, in short, are as much a justification of what he did as they are a report of these actions. Moreover, and again in the same way as Caesar and Pius, Contarini consistently underscores his own prominence in Sienese affairs. While his name surfaces only a few times in the text, the title of *legatus* (legate) appears frequently and at the center of all the significant actions and decisions of the war.¹³¹ Contarini emphasizes more than his mere presence here: by routinely employing verbs of judgment — *intelligere* (to understand), *adhibere* (to summon), *cernere* (to determine), *deprehendere* (to observe) — and verbs of command — *iubere* (to order), *mandare* (to deliver), *prohibere* (to prohibit), *statuere* (to resolve), *suadere* (to persuade), *inducere* (to lead into) — to characterize his thoughts and actions, he creates the impression that he masterminded the course of the entire campaign at all levels. Readers of the *Commentaries* learn that it was the *legatus* who cleverly persuaded Piccinino's allies to fight on the side of Venice, who uncovered treachery in the Sienese government, who orchestrated the victory at Savona, who single-handedly brokered Sienese foreign policy, who recognized how to rebuild siege engines from a heap of scraps, and who plotted to poison Piccinino's wells.¹³² Moreover, like Caesar before him and Pius after him, Contarini writes that he completed all these tasks with Caesarean speed.¹³³ Contarini was not the commander of Venetian forces, and yet from this account he seems as indispensable for his *scientia ars militaris* as he is for his diplomatic skills. As does Pius, Contarini clearly finds in Caesar's intellectual approach to war a useful model for someone who was not primarily a military figure.

Contarini's reasons for adopting these particular apologetic techniques deserve additional investigation, but it is possible at this point to offer some conclusions — and ones that again suggest common ground with Pius. Contarini wrote his *Commentaries* shortly after the formation of the Italian League, when both the memories and wounds of Venice's policy of territorial expansion were still fresh. Venice's reputation on the Italian stage, especially as a military power, was in need of some repair. Contarini achieved this rehabilitation in part with the help of a Caesarean *récit justificatif*: again and again, Contarini casts Venice — and himself as her

¹³⁰See, for example, Fabbri, 1988, 83, 84, 88, 92, 98, 101, 132–33.

¹³¹In book 3, the word *legatus* appears more than 125 times.

¹³²Fabbri, 1988, 86–87, 101–13, 116, 92, 97–98, 82–83, 128–29, 123–24, 130.

¹³³Verbs and adverbs of speed are everywhere in book 3: see, for example, *ibid.*, 82, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 100, 101, 103, 108, 109, 115, 120, 123, 124, 132.

legate — as the foremost defenders of the League and of Italy as a whole. According to his account, Venice came to the aid of her ally Siena with speed, selflessness, and compassion, and sought thereby to preserve the peace of all of Italy.¹³⁴ Contarini paints what to other Italian states would have been a reassuring picture of Venetian military ambitions: the formerly menacing aggressor had transformed into a dutiful protector of peace.

But if Contarini needed to enhance the military reputation of his state in his *Commentaries*, he also needed to defend his personal reputation. There are passages in the text that suggest that some of his wartime decisions had met with challenges — even from the Venetian Senate — and where he seems aware of an alternative, critical account of his actions.¹³⁵ There were also larger, political reasons for shaping such a personal apology. Contarini had enjoyed significant influence in Siennese affairs before he left his ambassadorial position in 1455. As he penned his *Commentaries*, however, Venetian influence over Siena had given way to Florentine, and Contarini's own reputation was being eclipsed by that of Milanese ambassador Nicodemo da Pontremoli.¹³⁶ Given this shift of political winds, it would have been in Contarini's best interest to present his Siennese mission in a way that emphasized, not just Venice's role in defending the Siennese, but also his own personal contribution as their foremost protector. By adopting from Caesar many of the same apologetic features that Pius did, Contarini helped memorialize such an image.

There is still another reason why Contarini might have turned to Caesar's histories for guidance, and here, too, there are links to Pius. One of the central storylines in the *Gallic War* is strikingly similar to the situation facing Contarini in Siena: the defense of vulnerable allies in the face of a menacing enemy. Caesar's account begins with his rushing to the defense of the Aedui, Gallic allies of Rome who were unable to defend their lands from the invading Helvetii. Like Caesar, Contarini also found himself rallying on behalf of his state to the defense of a vulnerable ally.¹³⁷ That Contarini recognized these parallels is suggested by how he framed his account. The same features that Caesar emphasized when characterizing himself, the Roman state, and the Aedui are at the center of Contarini's

¹³⁴Ibid., 83, 84, 88, 92–93, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 108, 115, 132, 136. See also Fabbri, 1992, 373, n. 80: “The *Commentaria*, I would argue, should be read in the context of [Venice] strengthening or defending its power on the mainland.”

¹³⁵See, for example, Fabbri, 1988, 92, 96, 135–36. See also *ibid.*, 60 (editor's notes).

¹³⁶Ferente, 55, describes how Pontremoli effectively took the place of the “powerful and respected” Contarini. He also helped to consolidate the pro-Florentine factions in Siena and to steer Siena away from the sphere of Venetian influence.

¹³⁷Siena and Venice had formed an alliance in 1451: Fabbri, 1988, 50, n. 50.

portraits of himself, Venice, and the Sieneſe. Both historians repeatedly paint themſelves as loyal defenders of their allies, both emphasize the utter helplessness of their beleaguered friends, and both imply that theſe allies were ultimately unworthy of their aſſiſtance on account of their miſtruſtful and at times treacherous attitude to their reſcuers.¹³⁸ By giving prominence in his narrative to theſe details, Contarini ſeems to uſe the *Gallic War* as a kind of blueprint for this central relationship, and in a way that would ſerve a uſeful apoſtrophic purpoſe. Thus, what Pius did by modeling his French enemies on Caſar’s Gauls, Contarini does on a much ſmaller ſcale with the Aedui.

While it is impoſſible to know if Pius was deliberately imitating the histories of Contarini, Facio, and Porcellio when he wrote his *Commentaries*, he was certainly in a poſition to know all of theſe works. Pius had direct connections with all three of theſe historians. Porcellio was one of the firſt humaniſts to ſeek his patronage after his election in 1458. While the pontiff did not reward Porcellio financially in the way that the poet had hoped, he both knew and admired Porcellio’s talents: ſeventeen of his poems are included in the *Epaenetica*, a collection of poetry in celebration of Pius’s papacy that the pontiff himſelf allegedly compiled.¹³⁹ Pius’s relationship with Bartolomeo Facio dates to 1456 when he (then Aeneas) was on a diplomatic miſſion to Naples at the time that Facio was completing his *Gesta*. During his Neapolitan ſojourn, Aeneas became familiar with official court histories of Alfonſo and formed a frienſhip with Facio.¹⁴⁰ The brief correſpondence between them that followed indicates not only that Facio ſhared his historical writings with Aeneas but alſo that Aeneas was one of the ſeveral humaniſts to whom Facio circulated ſections of his unfinished

¹³⁸For Contarini’s portrayal of Venice and Contarini as conſcientious allies, ſee above, n. 134. His portrayal of the Sieneſe is overwhelmingly unflattering. See eſpecially Fabbri, 1998, 84, 88, 90, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 106, 109, 120, 125, 127, 135. For Caſar’s ſelf-portrayal as the unqueſtioned ally of the Aedui, ſee Caſar, 1917, 16–18, 20–22, 24–26, 50–52, 54, 56–58, 68–70, 74–76, 426–28, 438, 442, 456 (1.11, 14, 16, 33, 35, 37, 43, 45; 7.33, 40, 43, 54). For the Aedui, ſee *ibid.*, 16–18, 24–32, 46–50, 56–58, 402–04, 424–26, 432–36, 440–42, 456 (1.11, 16–20, 31, 32, 37; 7.17, 32, 37–39, 42, 54). The Aedui and the Sieneſe are helpless in ſimilar ways: they both have difficulty governing themſelves and they both ſtruggle to make important deciſions.

¹³⁹For Pandoni’s contributions to the *Epaenetica*, ſee Avesani.

¹⁴⁰Ady, 134–35; Kriſteller, 271. For other connections between Pius and the humaniſts at the Neapolitan court, ſee *ibid.*, 275. In the ſeveral months he ſpent in Naples, Pius wrote a commentary on Panormita’s *De dictis et factis Alphonsi Regis Aragonum libri quatuor*: for the text, ſee Piccolomini, 1551, 472–98; on this work and its relationship to Panormita, ſee Tateo, 121–35.

Gesta.¹⁴¹ Pius knew Francesco Contarini as a prominent figure in Venetian politics during his pontificate, and as one who played a central role in determining the republic's position on the crusade at the Congress of Mantua.¹⁴² Contarini would have been familiar to Pius for other reasons too. Pius had been Bishop of Siena in the years that Contarini had served as the city's ambassador. Although he had been away from Siena during Contarini's mission, he had been deeply involved in the negotiations that eventually put an end to the war with Piccinino: the official purpose of his visit to Naples in 1456 was to negotiate peace with Siena, Piccinino, and the condottiere's protector, King Alfonso.¹⁴³

Given his encounters and intellectual connections with these historians, it is very likely that Pius had knowledge of all three of their histories. At the very least, he would have been aware that Caesar's *Commentaries* had become models for historians recording the deeds of contemporary political leaders. With this in mind, it seems fair to conclude that Pius must have recognized the political significance of taking Caesar as a model for his own self-portrait in his *Commentaries*.

4. CONCLUSION

For Renaissance humanists, the appeal of classical literature lay largely in its relevance to their own world. To them, the authors of ancient Greece and Rome seemed to speak directly to the values, ideas, questions, and experiences of contemporary society. Pius II was no different. Indeed, when he wrote his *Commentaries*, he must have heard the author of the *Gallic War* and the *Civil War* speaking to him on several levels. The preceding analysis has sought both to listen to this Caesarean voice as Pius would have heard it and to determine its larger historical significance. It has argued that in Caesar's narratives, Pius discerned far more than the basic blueprint for an apologetic history. He heard the triumphant tale of a man who had shared similar challenges and aims, he saw useful strategies that he could adapt to the defense of his spiritual as well as his temporal interests, and he perceived an appealing political resonance: in his eyes, Caesar's *Commentaries* were the mark of the greatest kind of temporal ruler, one who led, read, and wrote. More than just giving his text a political charge, the Caesarean dimensions of

¹⁴¹For this correspondence, see Piccolomini, 1551, 778; Kristeller, 517. On Pius's access to the *Gesta*, see Albanese, Pietragalla, Bulleri, and Tangheroni, 52.

¹⁴²Fabbri, 1988, 47–48. For Contarini's role at the Congress of Mantua, see especially Picotti, 1996.

¹⁴³Ferente, 53; Ady, 134–35.

Pius's *Commentaries* also served to politicize his image therein: both in the apologetic techniques they borrowed from Caesar and in the larger purpose those strategies served, Pius's *Commentaries* resemble a series of fifteenth-century precedents that celebrate the heroes of contemporary Italian politics and especially their exploits in war.

If the argument in this paper confirms the hypothesis that Pius's *Commentaries* contributed to a politicization of papal imagery, then it also refines that claim. Scholarship has so far defined this politicization in terms of the Renaissance popes' increasing resemblance in literary and artistic portrayals to images of contemporary Italian princes. Pius's *Commentaries* illustrate such parallels insofar as the pontiff engages with Caesar's writings in ways similar to those Bartolomeo Facio had in his history of King Alfonso. But Caesar had also been used as a historiographical model in the defense of those who did not have princely power, a condottiere and an ambassador. What unites these figures with the protagonists of Facio's and Pius's histories is their common claim to excellence in military leadership. With this in mind, the very definition of politicization must be revised. Through his use of Caesar's histories, Pius politicized his portrait not just by shaping it in the image of temporal monarchs, but also by aligning it with a broad spectrum of contemporary military heroes. Traditionally it is a different Renaissance pope, Julius II, who has been associated with Julius Caesar and with the imagery of war.¹⁴⁴ In a very different way, though, Pius seems to have been politicizing his image along these lines at a much earlier date.

The analysis here also contributes to a clearer understanding of how Caesar's *Commentaries* influenced Renaissance historiography. By providing details and offering explanations of a broad scholarly claim — that Renaissance historians drew on Caesar's *Commentaries* to differing degrees¹⁴⁵ — it has pointed up the richness, flexibility, and therein the appeal of Caesar's texts as historiographical models. At the same time, it has identified two new patterns in these four fifteenth-century texts: the first is that Porcellio, Facio, Contarini, and Pius all adopted specific apologetic strategies of Caesar's to enhance the military reputations of their protagonists; second, that from the time Porcellio began his commentaries to when Pius II completed his, humanist historians appear to have developed a closer, more complex relationship with Caesar's texts. Thus, the pontiff's *Commentaries* are best viewed as part of what might be termed a Caesarean

¹⁴⁴Stinger, 12, 91, 236–38, 242, 245, 269–70. For the very limited way in which Julius II modelled himself on Julius Caesar, see Shaw, 204–07.

¹⁴⁵Ianziti, 1992, 1032.

crescendo, one whose consistency, continuation, and conclusion have yet to be fully explored.¹⁴⁶

While some conclusions from this study speak to Renaissance historiography more generally, others advance our understanding of one of its foremost practitioners, Pius II. In part, the argument here confirms what scholarship has previously said about Pius's approach to classical histories: that he read them and mined them selectively and for apologetic and political purposes, and that he used historical images of ancient peoples to shape textual portraits of their contemporary descendents.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, this paper builds on these claims by arguing that Pius read the writings of at least one ancient historian for how he wrote as much as for what he wrote, and by contending that the apologetic strategies he borrowed played a crucial role in shaping his own image in his *Commentaries*. It further concludes that Pius's relationship to ancient histories was shaped to some degree by how his fellow humanist historians received them. Indeed, it is likely that Pius was drawn in part to Caesar's *Commentaries* as a model because of their contemporary political currency. Finally, this study has suggested that the first of Caesar's histories held Pius's particular attention. Whether it was the only work of Caesar's that he drew on is probably impossible to tell; but given the number of allusions to this text, it can be argued that one of the primary historical models for Pius's self-portrait in his *Commentaries* was the *Gallic War*.

With this last remark, we return to the beginning of this paper: the title Pius gave to his work. The primacy of the *Gallic War* in Pius's *Commentaries* requires that the title's significance be reconsidered. Rather than as a reference to both of Caesar's histories, it is at least possible that Pius instead meant it as an allusion to this particular text: in other words, that he was framing the account of his papacy as another *bellum gallicum*. If true, such a claim would bring with it significant implications. For one, it would underscore just how seriously Pius viewed the temporal and spiritual threats posed by France. It would also complicate traditional interpretations of the central focus of the *Commentaries*: Pius's persistent efforts to launch

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 1057, hypothesizes that between ca. 1462 and 1482, "commentaries [represented] the historiographical form par excellence in Italy," and especially in Milan, Urbino, and Rome. In addition to Cicco Simonetta's *De rebus gestis Francisci Sfortiae commentarii*, *ibid.*, 1056–59, notes Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini's continuation of Pius II's *Commentaries* (1506) and Francesco Filelfo's *Commentarii de vita et rebus gestis Federici Comitis urbinatis* (1470s). It would also be worth investigating whether Pius II's biographers, Giannantonio Campano and Bartolomeo Platina, followed the pontiff's historiographical lead by adopting Caesar's apologetic strategies in their own works.

¹⁴⁷Meserve, 2003 and 2008.

a crusade. If the twelve books of Pius's *Commentaries* center on a planned campaign against the Ottoman Turks, then on another level — that of classical allusion and rhetorical strategy, as well as narrative proper — they might just as easily be read as the pontiff's sustained campaign against his archenemy on the European stage.

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