

5-1-2021

Construction of a Man Nationalism, Identity, Vercingetorix and the Gauls

Martin B. McKew
University of Dayton

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses



Part of the [History Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

McKew, Martin B., "Construction of a Man Nationalism, Identity, Vercingetorix and the Gauls" (2021).
Honors Theses. 326.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses/326

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlengen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

Construction of a Man

Nationalism, Identity, Vercingetorix and the Gauls



Honors Thesis

Martin McKew

Department: History

Advisor: Dorian Borbonus, Ph.D.

April 2021

Construction of a Man

Nationalism, Identity, Vercingetorix and the Gauls

Honors Thesis

Martin McKew

Department: History

Advisor: Dorian Borbonus, Ph.D.

April 2021

Abstract

This paper intends to explore the past representations of Vercingetorix and the Gauls as defined by Julius Caesar and connect them to significant French events throughout the long nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to establish a link between the Gauls, French nationalism, and French identity.

Acknowledgements

Great thanks to my parents and roommates for putting up with this extensive project, to Dr. Darrow for his encouragement to undertake the Honors Thesis in the first place, to Dr. Work and Dr. Sextro for their support, and especially to my Thesis Advisor, Dr. Borbonus, for his constant constructive criticism and suggestions which have undoubtedly strengthened both this paper, and my writing overall.



**University of
Dayton**

Table of Contents

Abstract	Title Page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2	12
Chapter 3	24
Conclusion	38
Bibliography	39

Introduction

Throughout history there have been a number of notable figures who have left a palpable legacy behind. Without even mentioning a name, perhaps one of them has already come to mind. Their acts, whether for better or worse, have left a mark on the culture of the world as we know it. But what of those people who went under history's radar for a time? What happens when they are rediscovered? The interpretations of their legacies often find their place on the world's stage. One such example would be that of Vercingetorix.

A Gallic chieftain of the 1st century BCE, Vercingetorix is best known for his failed revolt against the forces of Rome led by Julius Caesar. Unlike most famous historical figures, this is the relative extent of what is known about him and his life. Due to this, Vercingetorix was largely overlooked for many centuries by those who would have normally taken on his historical legacy. However, he was pulled back out from obscurity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in order to do just that; establish a historical legacy.

In the hands of intellectuals inspired by Napoleon Bonaparte, the figure and heritage of Vercingetorix quickly became a staple of budding French nationalism. As the many states of Europe vied for influence and power in the long nineteenth century, the French became especially enamored with their past. Functioning as a tool of political justification, public morale, and national pride all at once, Vercingetorix and his Gallic heritage bolstered the foundations of French nationalism even as his legend grew alongside it.

As the 19th century moved along, Napoleon III was not one to avoid an opportunity so easily given. He expanded on the traditions of archaeology, bankrolling dig sites across France that would anchor the legend (and the subsequent political ramifications) to the country's soil. These samples of physical evidence, coupled with a sudden explosion of relevant paintings, literary pieces, and sculptures placed in key locations, helped to forge a deeper, more personal connection between the French people and the Gauls.

The unspoken battle of cultural identification was thus won for the French. Despite the people's acceptance of the necessity of Roman conquest and civilization, the Gallic defenders won over the hearts of the modern plebs. However, this connection of the French to Gallic culture was not just cemented by art and archaeology. Perhaps most strongly, it was made possible through a personal affinity felt towards the Gauls. This affinity was found in the one realm Vercingetorix was most widely known for: defeat. After the War of 1870 left France devastated morally, it was much easier for the populace to empathize with their defeated Gallic ancestors. The ideals of pride and resistance even when faced with overwhelming odds became ingrained in the national French psyche. When defeated themselves, Vercingetorix and the Gauls suddenly became much more relatable heroes.

Even as the War of 1870 ended, its effects lingered and festered. Revanchism rose in popularity throughout France, as they began to view the Germans and Italians as not just their modern rivals, but their foes since antiquity. Associations of the Italians with the Romans and the Germans with Ariovistus and the various Germanic tribes grew. As World War I and World War II began, these feelings only intensified themselves in the national French consciousness. Likewise, Gallic national pride was recognizable in both wars. Associations of French soldiers to Gauls during World War I were commonplace, even as the winged helmets carved in their graves were perhaps more easily recognizable. In another fashion, it would be hard to imagine French resistance fighters in World War II not looking back with pride to their Gallic tradition of stubborn resistance to foreign occupation.

French nationalism grew alongside its ethnic associations to the Gauls. Throughout the rest of the 20th century, French culture completed its assimilation of the Gauls. After passing through the forges of war, both national and personal identification of the French with their Gallic ancestors was assured. As the Gallic national image entered into modernity, it was modified to fit into the new soft power politicking of the era: media. Gallic names and symbols were plastered onto the sides of products and buildings, fulfilling the same purpose as the statues of Vercingetorix that had been placed in town squares. Asterix swept the Francophone world by storm, becoming an international figure as recognizable as Mickey Mouse.

Indeed, the political influence that France gained from Vercingetorix and the Gauls was not limited to the French mainland. Their legacy has been used by both the French and their colonies as evidence for and against French hegemony. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these examples has to do with Abd-El-Kader of Algeria and comparisons both positive and negative between him and Vercingetorix. Nonetheless, as literature and popular media continued the legacy of the 19th century Gauls in populating France and its colonies with Gallic culture, archaeology was not to be left behind. In 2012, a new museum was opened on the site of Vercingetorix's defeat, Alésia. This museum shows that the French government is still in the business of constructing and glorifying a nationalistic cultural identity for its people even today.

Vercingetorix is a complicated figure in French history. The only information available on his life was written by his opponent and comes with its own complexities and shortcomings. After years of obscurity, Vercingetorix was reborn by French leaders as a political morale booster, and a focus figure for national pride. Throughout the long nineteenth century and into the World Wars, Vercingetorix and his ideals were absorbed into the French zeitgeist, and in no small part have helped to form their modern cultural identity. French leaders consistently presented him and the Gauls in such a way that they eventually became national icons of lasting pride. Vercingetorix has been the most significant symbol in the development of modern French nationalism and identity.

Chapter 1

Vercingetorix's history is intertwined with that of another figure who has also been utilized as a symbol throughout the 19th and 20th centuries: Julius Caesar. In fact, nearly all of our knowledge on Vercingetorix comes from Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, or *The Gallic War*. The fact that our understanding of Vercingetorix is derived entirely from the perspective of his adversary presents a number of issues. The largest of these is that the line between fact and fiction itself becomes blurred. Through his retelling of historical events, Caesar becomes the first figure to twist the image of Vercingetorix to his own end.

In order to understand why Caesar would misrepresent certain events in the first place, one must appreciate the reasoning behind his actions. During the time period of *The Gallic War*, Caesar was the governor of the Roman provinces of Cisalpine Gaul, Illyricum, and Transalpine Gaul. These provinces were "a massive fief and the perfect springboard for expansion and personal enrichment."¹ Besides being economically significant, they were also important militarily, as they essentially consisted of the overland entrance into central Italy, and the city of Rome itself. These significant provinces were surrounded by unconquered lands, and 'barbarian allies.' As such, "any threat to the province would be taken very seriously indeed and it would be just such a perceived threat that would provide Caesar with his pretext for war in 58 BC."² Caesar thus began his campaigns against the Germanic and Gallic tribes in the region.

Throughout his political career, Caesar had also made a number of powerful enemies, in positions of power much like his own. Caesar's campaigns in Gaul were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Caesar needed to boost his popular image and his political influence. Indeed, in *The Gallic War*'s eighth book, written by Aulus Hirtius rather than Caesar, Hirtius states how Caesar's influence did not discourage these enemies, but rather made them "aware of the need for more favourable circumstances in which the Senate could be forced to give its approval to their decisions."³ In order to ensure that his enemies never had a favorable opportunity, Caesar needed to continually present victories and spoils of war back to the people of Rome. While Caesar often justified the Gallic wars as "being more of a preemptive or defensive action," it is not very difficult to see them as being "fought primarily to boost Caesar's political career and to pay off his more insistent creditors."⁴ Caesar knew that his biggest source of support in Rome consisted of the plebeians, the common Roman people. In order to keep himself in positive political standing with the plebs, to justify his military actions to the Senate, and to indirectly boast of his victories, Caesar wrote the commentaries that make up *The Gallic War*.

¹ John Sadler and Rosie Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory: The Battle of Alesia, 52 BC* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2016), 84.

² Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 40.

³ Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 222.

⁴ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 5.

Unfortunately for historians (and Vercingetorix), Caesar did not need to report everything back accurately. The plebs were essentially “a popular ‘dime novel’ audience,” who were not “interested in detailed topographical descriptions. His readers wanted action, drama, and deeds of glory.”⁵ An excellent example of this is Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine and invasion of Britain in the same summer.⁶ While his rivals were still in Rome and had all of the political influence that followed, Caesar was able to make “some spectacular PR of his own...[turning] Germany and Britain into his stage.”⁷ In the end, the “whole show, rather pointless as it was in strategic terms...caught imaginations in Rome and [Caesar] was awarded twenty days of thanksgiving.”⁸ This would be the second summer in which the Senate awarded Caesar thanksgiving, the first fifteen days of thanksgiving two summers prior having “never been granted to anyone before.”⁹ It is not much of a stretch to imagine that the plebs were pleased with Caesar’s performance, and especially the festival that followed.

Caesar was performing a delicate balancing act with his campaigns in Gaul. He needed to retain the popular support he enjoyed in Rome while also maintaining his military dominance of his conquests. Caesar was essentially “fighting on two fronts, only one in Gaul, the other, just as deadly, in Rome. A constant string of victories and rewards were needed from one to keep the other quiescent.”¹⁰ Caesar himself is aware of the tightrope that he is constantly walking by pressing his luck in Gaul. In his written reports, “self-justification is a major theme,”¹¹ “often put into the mouths of others, a method typical of Caesar---from which he can pick and choose as he likes.”¹² Creating justification for his actions was one of the most important factors for Caesar, enabling him to continue walking the tightrope in the first place. As his campaigns resolved and his opponents in Gaul submitted, Caesar risked losing his entire momentum. Without an opponent, he would lose his excuses for maintaining such a large army and exerting what influence he had on Pompey and the Senate. Fortunately, an excellent opportunity arises, as Vercingetorix emerges onto the stage.

Vercingetorix’s revolt becomes the perfect tool for Caesar to tie off his series of campaigns with a bang. At the moment, Caesar “was campaigning beyond any remit he might have enjoyed at the outset. The longer the war dragged on, the more his enemies would focus.”¹³ Caesar was already a target of envy¹⁴ and fear in the Senate, and his growing military reputation and the loyalty of his legions only served to increase this feeling among his adversaries. Caesar needed a devastating victory to close the

⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁶ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 77-88.

⁷ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 90-91.

⁸ Ibid, 91.

⁹ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 53.

¹⁰ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 90.

¹¹ Ibid, 87.

¹² Ibid, 165.

¹³ Ibid, 90.

¹⁴ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 222.

campaigns in Gaul for good and ensure the arrival of the political and economic prizes he had endeavored to build across his previous years of conquest. In order to build towards this victory, Caesar needed to present an appropriately challenging opponent for his audience in Rome. It was common practice that “Roman literature [would magnify] the person and power of significant enemies so as to magnify the Roman victories over them: so Sallust on Jugurtha, Horace on Cleopatra, Livy on Hannibal, Tacitus on Arminius... That modality is certainly operative here: the more Vercingetorix resembles Caesar, the more difficult and hence glorious Caesar’s victory will seem.”¹⁵ Defeating another tribe of savages wouldn’t win him recognition. In order to receive greater acknowledgement from his Roman audience, Caesar had to present Vercingetorix as a worthy opponent.

To defer for a moment, some context on the Gauls is necessary. First of all, an important fact to remember throughout *The Gallic War* is that “Gaul... was not a homogenous state in any nationalist sense. No Gallic leaders would have viewed themselves as part of a distinct cultural and geographical entity... Gaul was merely a *geographical expression*.”¹⁶ Despite some cultural similarities, there was no grand overarching identification of the Gallic tribes with one another. Caesar had alliances with some of the tribes that bordered or lived in the provinces that he governed. Eventually, he justified invasions and subjugations of other tribes on the basis of their threatening the tribes he had allied himself with. There was no love lost between the different groups living in Gaul. Gallic tribes in the area were only unique in that they were not the “more distinctly Germanic peoples to the east.”¹⁷ It is also notable that there “was never any attempt at political cohesion” in the first place, “at least not until Vercingetorix.”¹⁸

It is thus surprising that Vercingetorix is presented as having so much weight among the Gallic tribes out of nowhere. The significance of Caesar acknowledging Vercingetorix and deeming this as information necessary to record in his journals only at this specific point is quite telling. The fact that Caesar neglects to mention Vercingetorix before his revolt is misleading, and out of line with Caesar’s tradition in *The Gallic War* of giving extensive context. This is especially important given the fact that Vercingetorix is immediately “proclaimed king by his supporters”¹⁹ and that “the supreme command was conferred onto him with unanimous approval.”²⁰ This implies that Vercingetorix had already been a significant figure in the Gallic tribes who had been given the time to gain support. That Vercingetorix manages to make alliances with so many of the different Gallic tribes,²¹ despite there being a lack of cohesion between them beforehand is

¹⁵ Christina S Kraus, “Divide and conquer: Caesar, De bello gallico 7,” in *Ancient Historiography and its Contexts: Studies in Honour of A. J. Woodman*, (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010), 58.

¹⁶ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 84.

¹⁷ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

¹⁹ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 143.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 146.

²¹ *Ibid*, 146.

especially noteworthy. Even throughout the fighting, when Vercingetorix calls for changes in strategy from his supporters, he constantly gains their “unanimous support.”²² Even when Vercingetorix is defeated at Avaricum, he is able to speak to his supporters in defense of his actions, which “found favor with the Gauls.”²³ The Gallic tribes saw “foresight and perspicacity” in Vercingetorix’s defensive speech, which then, “although defeat diminishes the authority of other commanders,” saw “the prestige of Vercingetorix [growing] daily.”²⁴ What must be remembered however, is that the relaying of this speech is done by Vercingetorix’s enemy. Caesar, “as ever...tells us what he thinks his audience wants to hear and only that which shows him in a favourable light.”²⁵ This rhetorical tool was commonly used and accepted in ancient times. Exact quotations were unlikely to occur, and the relator was often reliable enough to not be questioned. However, while this rhetorical tool may have been innocently used by Thucydides and others to create a compelling narrative, it is used by Caesar to instead build up Vercingetorix into what he needed him to be. If questioned, Thucydides’ own statement on the matter could be used in Caesar’s defense, stating that “my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.”²⁶ After all, what better way to bolster the reputation of an enemy than by showing the wisdom of their speeches (which cannot be proved to have happened anyway)?

In *The Gallic War*, Caesar initially gives Vercingetorix a brief background as the son of a warmonger but makes the statement that Vercingetorix was “a young man whose abilities were second to none.”²⁷ Throughout the rest of the book, Caesar “does not admit to knowing Vercingetorix or suggest they ever met until the very end,” even though it “is tempting to think he is being disingenuous and that they had certainly crossed paths.”²⁸ While every little chieftain’s son may have had some form of local support or prestige, not all of them began a revolt against Rome. Vercingetorix is portrayed by Caesar as having “[erupted] from virtual obscurity onto the stage as a major player...of considerable talent,”²⁹ who is already on par with Caesar’s own military experience. The arrival of a unifier in the enemies’ ranks out of nowhere, just when their defeat seems inevitable, is an inept but nonetheless common literary strategy when one has already defeated all other contenders.

Vercingetorix, whether by his own merit, or through the literary magnification he is given from Caesar, is immediately recognized in *The Gallic War* as a rival to Caesar in Gaul. Now the question becomes, to *what* extent is Caesar magnifying Vercingetorix’s

²² Ibid, 151.

²³ Ibid, 160.

²⁴ Ibid, 160.

²⁵ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 94-95.

²⁶ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, London, J.M. Dent; New York, E.P. Dutton. (1910), 1.22. <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0003.tlg001.perseus-eng3:1.22>.

²⁷ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 143.

²⁸ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 95.

²⁹ Ibid, 95.

prohess in order to present a worthy rival to Rome. To what degree does Caesar wish to bolster his rival? On these grounds, one could question the inclusion of Caesar's defeat at Gergovia, which "he could have easily presented as a minor skirmish at an unknown *oppidum*, or indeed left out altogether."³⁰ However, this inclusion speaks to Caesar's literary expertise, and the narrative that he is fastidiously crafting, where "a defeat in the middle of the book sets up and acts as a foil to the greater victory at the end."³¹ A struggle, whether real or fictional, always adds to the drama of the story, and pulls the reader in. Caesar shows his experience throughout *The Gallic War* as "a first story-teller. He knew his audience and his measured account, always in the third person, is dryly under-stated, the boasting discreet and inferred."³² Every word in *The Gallic War* is purposefully placed by Caesar in order to build up his construction of the Gauls and of Vercingetorix as a worthy enemy, refraining from "[disparaging] or [demeaning] the enemy" while still giving "credit to his men."³³

The inclusion of Caesar's defeat at Gergovia pushes the danger presented by the Gauls into the forefront of the reader's mind. The ante would be raised for any citizen back in Rome by a considerable amount, considering how the Gauls were "generally perceived as barbarians, viewed with a mix of fear, grudging fascination and contempt. Nonetheless, it was these same unkempt savages who had occupied Rome in 390 BC and humiliated the Republic."³⁴ Caesar, as usual, understands the implications his defeat would invoke. Because of this, he then puts the same realization into Vercingetorix's words, where the chieftain tells his supporters that "the fact that the Romans were running away to the Province and leaving Gaul... was insufficient to secure peace and tranquility permanently. The Romans would surely gather a larger force and return to prolong the war indefinitely."³⁵ Too often, it seems like Caesar is playing chess against himself in *De Bello Gallico*, putting words into the mouth of his enemy and then anticipating his own constructed counters, all in twenty-twenty vision. The speeches that Caesar writes, both for himself and for others, thus "function on the level of the narrator and his narratees."³⁶ Whenever Caesar presents the 'thoughts' of a character, they are his own construction, "a literary tool put to use in Caesar's commentaries to persuade the narratees that war, and battles within war, are predictable and controllable procedures."³⁷ Procedures which, of course, Caesar anticipates and comes out on top of.

Caesar defends his reputation of military prescience through the battle of Gergovia. To realize this, one must recognize the similarities between his pre-battle

³⁰ Kraus, "Divide and conquer," 58.

³¹ Ibid, 58.

³² Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 2.

³³ Ibid, 2.

³⁴ Ibid, 38.

³⁵ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 180.

³⁶ Suzanne M. Adema, "Encouraging Troops, Persuading Narratees: Pre-Battle Exhortations in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* as a Narrative Device," in *The Art of History. Literary Perspectives on Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. V. Liotsakis and S. Farrington (Berlin, 2016), 236.

³⁷ Adema, "Encouraging Troops, Persuading Narratees," 236-237.

exhortation and the results of the battle that Caesar deems necessary to record. In his speech to his troops before the fighting begins, Caesar states that the legates must “keep their soldiers under control and prevent them advancing too far...this was a moment for seizing an opportunity, not fighting a full-scale battle.”³⁸ As the fighting occurs, the Roman’s fateful defeat at Gergovia seems set in stone through Caesar’s inclusion of a specific set of anecdotes. The first about a centurion who was too foolhardy, and the other about a centurion who managed to save his men by sacrificing himself, after also pushing too far forward.³⁹ Through his miraculous ‘foresight’, Caesar is able to shift the blame onto his men, given that those very things he warned them about occurred.⁴⁰ Indeed, the aftermath of the battle of Gergovia leaves “forty-six centurions [dead], along with seven hundred ORs. These are the casualties Caesar admits to but we must wonder if they were, in fact, much worse.”⁴¹ Perhaps more importantly than his physical losses however, is the fact that “Vercingetorix had beaten Caesar. And while Caesar might win a hundred battles, he could not afford a single defeat. Compared to the ferocity of his enemies in Rome, the Gauls were almost benign.”⁴² Caesar knew that his enemies in the Senate would be more than eager to capitalize on any weakness he allowed to occur. In response to his defeat at Vercingetorix’s hands, the “next day Caesar paraded his men and harangued them over their recklessness the day before. Ramming home the point, he blamed the fiasco on their negligence rather than his. How convincing this performance sounded, he wisely doesn’t say.”⁴³ Caesar, through the battle of Gergovia, is able to address two issues at once. First, he manages to lessen the negative feedback from Rome regarding his defeat by pushing the blame onto his soldier’s recklessness. Second, he is able to put the defeat to use, utilizing it to strengthen the reputation and threat presented by his rival, Vercingetorix. The Gauls emerged victorious, proving to themselves and the reader that they are able to best the legions of Rome if Caesar’s orders are not followed. In a somewhat interesting parallel, Vercingetorix’s only personal appearance during the battle involves him pulling his troops back from pursuing Caesar’s legions, putting Caesar’s own unfollowed advice to use.⁴⁴ This strengthens the similarity that Caesar attempts to build between the two leaders, praising Vercingetorix’s military intelligence to a degree, but being sure to make it obvious that the orders Vercingetorix issued were the same ones Caesar had attempted to command earlier.

In this specific instance, and elsewhere in *The Gallic War*, Caesar often plays both sides of an issue. Throughout his reports Caesar likes to stress both the similarities and differences the Gauls have to the Romans. Once again he calls attention to, and finds advantages from, both sides by using his literary skill. To begin this line of thought, one must understand that Caesar, “had difficulty in seeing alien cultural norms in their own

³⁸ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 169.

³⁹ Ibid, 170-172.

⁴⁰ Adema, “Encouraging Troops, Persuading Narratees,” 233.

⁴¹ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 116.

⁴² Ibid, 116.

⁴³ Ibid, 116.

⁴⁴ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 172.

terms.”⁴⁵ Throughout his retelling of his conquests, Caesar is not interested “in an objective, stand-alone assessment of the Northerners on scientific terms” or as “a device for analyzing the Romans themselves. Caesar the general and **politician** has a much more immediate goal in mind. He needs a somewhat level playing-field so that he can be compared to those he is defeating.”⁴⁶ He is solely concerned with the native population through their capacity to add on to his constructions. Thus, in order to maintain the reputation he has built up throughout his campaigns in Gaul, Caesar decides to develop certain positive and negative comparisons for the Gallic tribes in his writings. Positives in order to raise their reputation and his own by default when he wins, and negatives so that the violence against them is justified.

Through his comparisons, Caesar writes back to Rome with an image of the Gauls as uncivilized, bloodthirsty savages, and yet still an intelligent enough people to fight on equal terms with Caesar. With Vercingetorix’s emergence, there is an excellent example of this. The first paragraph explaining Vercingetorix’s actions after coming to power states that after he formed alliances with many of the other tribes, he:

demanded hostages from all these peoples, and ordered them to send him a specified number of soldiers at once. He decreed that each state must produce a given number of weapons before a certain date, and paid particular attention to the cavalry. In his command he combined extreme conscientiousness with extreme severity. He used harsh punishments to bring waverers into line. For the more serious offences, death was inflicted by burning and all kinds of torture, while for lesser faults the offender’s ears were cut off or one of his eyes gouged out. He was then sent home as an example to others, to strike fear into them by the severity of the punishment. By such penalties as these Vercingetorix quickly gathered an army.⁴⁷

Despite the cruel nature of the punishments, Caesar is sure to point out the effectiveness of Vercingetorix’s methods on his own people. The ‘harsh’ punishments of the Gauls do not even seem to be necessarily extreme for the time period, when one considers that the Roman army had the tradition of decimation (systematic execution of every tenth member of a cohort). Nonetheless, Caesar doesn’t neglect to include Vercingetorix’s military competence, demonstrated through his insistence on the production of weapons and especially cavalry, a valuable and important feature in armies of the time. So, in the same paragraph, Caesar is once again able to present two sides of his opposition: that of violent savage, and that of competent warrior.

The inclusion of comparisons between the Gauls and the Romans is especially important to Caesar’s construction. Throughout *The Gallic War*, “digressions on the characteristics of the Gauls and Germans are essential to Caesar’s account. They justify

⁴⁵ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 43.

⁴⁶ Andrew Riggsby, “In a Different Voice? Speech and Agency in *de Bello Gallico*” colloquium on “Representations of the Alien,” Getty Villa, Mar. 2008; University of Georgia, July 2012, 20-21.

⁴⁷ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 146.

his conquests by encouraging the reader to draw comparisons between Roman ideals of nationhood and the ways of these foreign nations...They are less developed than the civilized Romans: they make human sacrifices; they treat the common people like slaves; they do not have democracy.”⁴⁸ All of these things are essential to the construction that Caesar is trying to create. For Roman readers, the Gauls were neighbors and ancestral enemies. While they were seen as backwards in certain ways, they were nonetheless more ‘civilized’ to Romans than other neighboring peoples and were able to successfully engage in diplomacy. However, the possibility of a civilized rival is more threatening than that of a barbarian neighbor that can be parleyed with only in terms of violence. Inevitably, Caesar must push the image of the Gauls as barbarians, given that it has been his ally throughout his campaigns:

Caesar presents real or imagined threats to explain away his intervention in Gaul. For example, Caesar claims that the Helvetii threaten the Roman province and promote anti-Roman sentiment. Four times he recalls their annihilation of the Roman army of L. Cassius Longinus in 107 BCE. Also his reports always portray the enemy as the aggressor, even when his troops plunder Gallic lands or he sells a population into slavery. Caesar compares and contrasts the civilized ways of Rome to the barbarism of those he conquers. He portrays the Gauls as deserving to be subjugated because they lack Roman qualities. They are fickle and undetermined, rash and frenzied, greedy and lazy. Caesar’s men defend their nation with discipline, hard work, and traditional virtue.⁴⁹

Caesar consistently utilizes the perceived threat of the Gauls as justification for his military endeavours. The comparison of the Romans to the Gauls mentioned here shows how Caesar strives to portray his men in a better light than their enemies. Since his construction is our only source of the events relayed, “there is no ‘outside-the-text’...Caesar creates both the speeches and the action in narrative...Caesar is not constrained by the actual identity of...Vercingetorix. This allows Caesar to make the Gauls complicit in the judgement of themselves.”⁵⁰ When he decides to let Vercingetorix or other Gallic leaders speak, they are doing so under his literary influence, and are thus being molded to Caesar’s purpose. In this way, he is able to portray them under a certain negative light when the words and actions he has them perform “fail to live up to whatever standards Caesar chooses to set for them.”⁵¹ While he gives the enemy leader recognition and acknowledgement through speech, Caesar is still able to derail their image at the same time.

Caesar is not so modest as to neglect including his own self in these comparisons. While he must throughout be “the disinterested servant of the *populus Romanus*,”⁵² the

⁴⁸ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 101.

⁴⁹ Alex Nice, “Caesar, Julius. Commentaries on the Gallic War,” in *Classical Literature and Its Times*, ed. J. Moss (Los Angeles: Moss Publishing, 2006), 100-101.

⁵⁰ Riggsby, “In a Different Voice? Speech and Agency in *de Bello Gallico*,” 18-19.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 19.

⁵² C. E. Stevens, “The « Bellum Gallicum » as a Work of Propaganda,” *Latomus* 11, no. 2 (1952): 179.

purpose of Caesar's writing of *The Gallic War* in the first place is to bolster his prestige in Rome. As the author, therefore:

Despite the use of the third person for his account, Caesar himself is ever present. Often he appears suddenly and dramatically: to save the Seventh Legion in Britain, to rescue Quintus Cicero, at the forefront of the battle, robed in his general's red cloak at the siege of Alesia. As appropriate, Caesar metes out pardon or punishment. He takes care to mention individual officers, centurions, and even slaves. In the account and through the account, Caesar emerges as a model of Roman virtue *par excellence*. He is the diplomat, general, warrior... He encourages his Roman audience to believe in his actions and in himself.⁵³

One must again remember that the writings of *The Gallic War* were being sent back to Rome for the public and the Senate to be updated on his campaigns. What better way to build up recognition than by presenting heroic and notable images of yourself to your supporters? Once again, Caesar's construction is built up on the basis of two somewhat conflicting factors. First being his purposeful humility, shown by how he "famously never speaks directly"⁵⁴. Second, that he is still involved in the forefront of the action, where "even if Caesar is not physically present, his gaze must be internalized."⁵⁵ In this way, he presents a humble image of self-removal from direct praise, but is still indirectly linked to any instance deserving of recognition.

In comparison to Caesar, the reader is constantly presented with the parallel of Vercingetorix. In his own way, "Vercingetorix is the Gallic equivalent of Caesar: a capable orator, strategist, and warrior."⁵⁶ Even though Caesar presents himself as being one step ahead of Vercingetorix throughout his writings,⁵⁷ Caesar consistently notes Vercingetorix's "tactical genius," which "clearly shows him to be a young man of high intelligence, strategic nous and exceptional dynamism."⁵⁸ While Vercingetorix is clearly magnified by Caesar at certain points, there is still quite a bit of importance aligned with his person that Caesar is unable to diminish or alter. Chief among these is his prominence within the Gallic tribes. Given that "Vercingetorix was always at pains to stress he was acting for the greater good rather than from personal ambition, an ostensible humility Caesar records,"⁵⁹ it is unsurprising that he benefits from the faith of his supporters. The relief force sent to Vercingetorix when he was trapped at Alesia is proof enough of this. Indeed, "the accumulation of the relief amounts to a unique and monumental effort and speaks volumes about Vercingetorix' prestige. No leader before could call into being such a colossal effort. The idea of a national *levée en masse* doesn't really recur till the

⁵³ Nice, "Caesar, Julius. Commentaries on the Gallic War," 101.

⁵⁴ Riggsby, "In a Different Voice? Speech and Agency in *de Bello Gallico*," 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵⁶ Nice, "Caesar, Julius. Commentaries on the Gallic War," 101.

⁵⁷ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 148, 150, 235.

⁵⁸ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 96.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 96.

dark days after the Revolution of 1789.”⁶⁰ The amount of people rallying to his aid certainly puts evidence behind Vercingetorix’s cultural prominence. Caesar understands this as well, given that he “is tantalizingly brief in describing this great relief army. He gives us tribes and numbers but nothing else...it is frustrating that Caesar doesn’t explain more, but of course his commentary isn’t about the Gauls, it’s all about him.”⁶¹ It returns again in the end to Caesar’s presentation of events. To his supporters back in Rome, all that matters is that Caesar comes up victorious, even against the huge numbers practically all Gaul raises against him at Alesia. The comparison between them ends with Vercingetorix’s surrender at Alesia. In his final historical act, Vercingetorix is used once again by Caesar in order to fuel his purposes. Presenting proof of the events of *The Gallic War* to his readers, Vercingetorix’s “captivity lasted for six dismal years till he made his final public appearance as star exhibit in one of Caesar’s triumphal shows. That complete, he was quietly strangled in the Tullianum jail.”⁶² Vercingetorix had completed his role in Caesar’s construction.

The image of Vercingetorix is utilized by Caesar to present a worthy adversary to the Roman people. Through his writings in *The Gallic War*, Caesar portrays Vercingetorix and the Gauls as noble savages, barbarians threatening Rome who retain enough civilization to rally and face the Romans with skill on the battlefield. The issues that arise for historians involve the number of facts that Caesar presents which are problematic. First, that the Gauls are barbarian threats to Roman provinces. Second, that Vercingetorix emerged and managed to rally an entire people (who had never before created a major alliance) behind him within a summer, with no prior support. Third, that Caesar managed to defeat a force many times larger than his own at Alesia. These facts are modified by Caesar in order to paint the picture he wanted his rivals in Rome to see. The Gauls being a threat to the province justifies his campaigning and his standing legions. The emergence of Vercingetorix as a significant rival justifies his large-scale campaign which ends in his pacification of Gaul. His victory at Alesia paves the way for the Romanization of the region. Through Caesar and *The Gallic War*, Vercingetorix is first presented as a significant roadblock, but a roadblock which manages to hold against the might of Rome through the tenacity and support of his people.

Chapter 2

Roman Gaul was broken and reforged multiple times during the time between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages. The monarchy of France was eventually established with a clear connection calling on the family line of Clovis. Thus, the legacy of Vercingetorix and the Gauls became overshadowed due to the Franks’ popularity with French royalty. Eventually, through his connection to Caesar, Vercingetorix and the Gauls found themselves the subject of new fascination and controversy in the beginning of the long nineteenth century, around 1,800 years after the

⁶⁰ Ibid, 142.

⁶¹ Ibid, 142.

⁶² Ibid, 164.

conclusion of the Gallic Wars. But in much the same manner as before, Vercingetorix was brought to light by Napoleon III in order to serve as a symbol with a purpose, not just as historical fact. He intended to forge Vercingetorix into a national symbol, one associated with his own rule, which would bolster national pride and encourage the idea of a common French origin. While Napoleon III found himself unable to harvest the fruit of his labors, the idea of a common Gallic ancestry, Vercingetorix's presence and his new symbolic meaning would find themselves embedded into the minds of the people.

To begin describing Vercingetorix's re-emergence, it is necessary to make note of the various minor ways his existence was noted in France before he found himself in the hands of Napoleon III. The person who would begin this process of reintroducing Vercingetorix to the national consciousness was a prosecutor of the Paris Parliament, Jean Villevault. A supporter of local patriotism, he wrote a work on Vercingetorix because of his legendary victory over Caesar at Gergovia, Villevault's modern hometown of Clermont-Ferrand.⁶³ Written in 1589, the book inspired further praise from other writers in the area, until it eventually attracted royal attention. Most likely born out of a desire to garner royal favor, Vercingetorix's first usage after hundreds of years consisted of a book written by a jurist named Jacques Cassan, who attempted to connect Caesar's "mythical genealogy"⁶⁴ of the Gauls to the royal line of Louis XIII. A textbook example of the royalty connecting themselves, falsely or not, to the ancestry of the land, Vercingetorix's family reunion was unfortunately cut short due to one fact; he was pagan. Clovis, the current patron of the royal family, was "the origin of Christian France, of France eldest daughter of the Church, of the monarchy invested with power through that same God."⁶⁵ Vercingetorix's inclusion was unnecessary and likely troublesome to aristocratic, Christian France. However, the perfect chance was waiting just around the corner.

The French Revolution and its subsequent ideological shifts opened the doors to yet another re-evaluation of Vercingetorix's legacy. First, and perhaps worst, there was some justification implied in the comparison between Vercingetorix's scorched earth policy against Caesar and the Terror of 1793.⁶⁶ Vercingetorix had committed all of his Gallic allies to a scorched earth policy, devastating the countryside as they retreated, denying Caesar's troops any possibility of foraged supplies or shelter.⁶⁷ The proponents of the French Revolution believed that the violence of the Terror was a necessary sacrifice in the same manner, in order to see the realization of their ideals. Perhaps the most problematic comparison of all, it certainly remains the most striking. Comparing the

⁶³ [son œuvre relève du patriotisme local car il est clermontois] André Simon, *Vercingétorix et l'idéologie Française*, self-translated (Paris: Éditions Imago, 1989), 13.

⁶⁴ [généalogie mythique] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 15.

⁶⁵ [l'origine de la France chrétienne, de la France fille aînée de l'Eglise, de la monarchie investie du pouvoir par Dieu même] Ibid, 15.

⁶⁶ [la justification des mesures de terreur prises par le chef arverne pour la défense contre César par les 'coutumes' du pays semble, par analogie, justifier la Terreur de 1793] Ibid, 27.

⁶⁷ Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 151.

scorching of crops to the execution of an entire class is a stretch, but one which can show the degree of desperation the leaders of the Revolution found themselves when trying to claim historical justification for their violence.

These leaders of the Revolution who were enamored with the image of the Gauls as the true ancestors of the French people were the Jacobins. The Jacobins were proponents of patriotism, liberty, populism, and republicanism. This patriotic and populist mindset contributed to their desire to associate Vercingetorix with the common people. In their precarious situation, after having ousted a longstanding government, the Jacobins found that it was to their advantage to “forge a sense of national identity for an invented community of people who had little in common except a political bond and who did not even speak the same language.”⁶⁸ In the eyes of the revolutionaries, the Gauls could be brothers-in-arms to the people of France in this new age, ancestors who had revolted against the forces of Rome just as the people of France revolted against the royalty; “nationalism and the inheritance of revolution would bring them together.”⁶⁹

Nonetheless, the largest result of the Revolution regarding heritage involved the changes in association connected to the different groups of ancestors; the Franks and the Gauls. Clovis and his Franks had often been associated as a symbol of the nobility, with the aforementioned connections to both the church and the aristocratic family lines. With the Revolution’s prejudice towards both religion and status, there was a push to “[craft] a new popular tradition out of the heritage of the ambivalent relationship between the ancient Celts[Gauls] and their Roman conquerors.”⁷⁰ In this way, Rome would serve as a model of limited Republicanism and Democracy, while the Gauls could provide “a better potential foundation for an emotionally charged sense of ethnic community.”⁷¹ Vercingetorix and the Gauls’ association as heroes had begun, and through the pushing of their revolutionary status by the Jacobins, they slowly began to find themselves connected to the common people.⁷²

As Napoleon I took power following the Revolution, he was aware of the potential the Gauls could grant his budding empire. He began by “[furthering] the popular republican tradition of Gallic identity by founding the *Académie Celtique* in 1805... The task of this body of scholars was to exhaustively research Celtic antiquities and languages in order to ‘avenge our ancestors’ for the neglect they had suffered... and to restore to the Celts the glory they deserved.”⁷³ The political purpose of the *Académie* is easy enough to guess at, and the tone in their chartered purpose makes it clear that they are looking to

⁶⁸ Michael Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls’: Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 96, no. 3 (September 1994): 587, www.jstor.org/stable/682302.

⁶⁹ [Nationalisme et héritage de la Révolution s’y allient] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 66.

⁷⁰ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls’,” 587.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 588.

⁷² [L’image du héros s’était lentement formée dans les premières décennies du XIXe siècle] Jean-Louis Brunaux, *Alésia*, self-translated (Éditions Gallimard, 2012), 300.

⁷³ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls’,” 588.

inflate the Gallic legend by granting it scholarly backing. Given that, as the academy stated, “nearly all the peoples of Europe are descendants of the Celts”, it was easy for Napoleon I to claim “ideological justification of the military expansion of the boundaries of the French Empire” in order to “[reclaim] all the ancient territory of the Gauls’.”⁷⁴ While the Gauls served as glue to the cultural community of Revolution, Napoleon I used these newly recognized ancestors as justification for the beginning of his military campaigns with the support of his own academies.

However, Napoleon I would find defeat, just like his newly claimed ancestors. In this way, the French people had their first direct parallel with Vercingetorix and the Gauls. They were able to feel a distinct connection with Vercingetorix and began to picture him as a “symbolic figure of the struggle against the invader”⁷⁵ as the Prussians occupied Paris in 1815. This feeling of connection based on defeat would re-emerge in a stronger sense multiple times throughout the history of the French. Nevertheless, in the downtime following the fall of the French Empire, the Gauls would not have to take a step backwards for long. The initial Revolution at the end of the 18th century had given the Gauls the push that they needed to remain established in the thoughts and beliefs of the French people. When the next Revolution came in 1830, it “permanently established the Celts as a primary ethnic foundation for the modern French nation.”⁷⁶ The Revolution of 1830 reinvigorated those previous associations and introduced the Gauls into the national consciousness in a significant way, thus allowing the further developments that would occur to their legacy throughout the rest of the long nineteenth century.

“United Gaul, Forming a single nation, Animated by the same spirit, Can defy the Universe.”⁷⁷ This is the inscription embedded into the base of the statue of Vercingetorix at the site of Alésia, placed there by Napoleon III, nephew of Bonaparte, first French president, and emperor of the Second French Empire. In many ways, it serves to define the entire construction surrounding Vercingetorix and the Gauls which is created by Napoleon III during the second half of the long nineteenth century. The statue’s inscription ends up “[telling] us rather more about 19th-century French nationalism than it does about the 1st century BC.”⁷⁸ It articulates the growing sense of national pride that built up around the legacy of the Gauls and Vercingetorix, rather than simply being a plaque commemorating the site of their defeat. Viollet-le-Duc, the creator of the base and the writer of the inscription, is commenting on this change in popular French belief and cultural identity which was spurred on by his patron, Napoleon III.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ibid, 588.

⁷⁵ [Vercingétorix devient une figure symbolique de la lutte contre l’envahisseur] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 27.

⁷⁶ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls’,” 588.

⁷⁷ [La Gaule unie Formant une seule nation Animée d’un même esprit, Peut défier l’Univers] Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Monument à Vercingétorix*, self-translated, (Alise-Sainte-Reine, Côte-d’Or, Burgundy, France, 1865), inscription carving.

⁷⁸ John Sadler and Rosie Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory: The Battle of Alesia, 52 BC* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2016), 94.

⁷⁹ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 94.

Napoleon III found himself in a unique situation after the Revolution of 1830. Claiming power after his presidency ended in 1851, he established the Second French Empire. Napoleon I, Caesar, and Vercingetorix are all possible symbols of legitimacy for his new reign. However, they are rather contradictory figures, especially that of Caesar, whose French legacy is directly tied to his defeat of Vercingetorix, himself “elevated to semi-legendary status on the wave of Celtomania of earlier decades.”⁸⁰ Here is presented the problem of the continuous debate in France between holding either Rome or the Gauls in higher esteem. For most of the populace during the 19th century, “when leaders such as Vercingetorix...had been adopted as nationalist icons, the Romans were seen as conquerors---bloodthirsty oppressors. Those who resisted were elevated to totemic status.”⁸¹ Those who saw otherwise were mostly intellectuals who praised the lasting contributions of Roman civilization.

In the end, Napoleon III took a note from his uncle’s legacy as he built his own. Both Napoleon III and Napoleon I “wrote commentaries on Caesar’s wars, and both in their way used Caesar as a means of bolstering their personal sense of Empire.”⁸² Napoleon I had “clearly pitted himself as the equal of Caesar and his worthy modern equivalent”⁸³, and had viewed Rome as the ancestor “of his aspirations for French military conquest and the legitimacy of his own rule as emperor.”⁸⁴ In line with this Napoleonic imperial tradition, Napoleon III also wrote extensive histories of Caesar’s life “as a means of making him the patron of his emperorship.”⁸⁵ Despite this attempt to channel his uncle’s legacy, there are clear differences to be seen in the relationships that the two Napoleons held with Caesar. Generally, Napoleon III treats Caesar as a muse and intellectual model, and instead utilizes Vercingetorix as his national hero and military rallying point. It is not a stretch to claim that Napoleon III “celebrated Caesar...by his quill, Vercingetorix by a statue” when one reads his devotion to Caesar’s history, noted on the side of Vercingetorix’s statue at Alésia.⁸⁶

It was common in France for the upper class to see the Roman invasion as beneficial overall. Napoleon III states it himself as a benefit which arrived “through waves of blood, it is true”, but which nonetheless “delivered the people to a better future...not [forgetting] that it is due to the triumph of the roman armies that [the French] have [their] civilization; institutions, traditions, language, all this comes from the

⁸⁰ Anthony King, “Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls: the use of Gallic national symbols in 19th- and 20th- century French politics and culture,” (Winchester, Hampshire: University of Winchester, 2015), 6.

⁸¹ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 4.

⁸² King, “Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls,” 5.

⁸³ Ibid, 5.

⁸⁴ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 588.

⁸⁵ King, “Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls,” 5.

⁸⁶ [l’empereur appose sa signature sur un Histoire de Jules César en trois volumes...l’empereur célèbre...César par la plume, Vercingétorix par la statue] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 43.

conquest.”⁸⁷ Many public works followed the style of the Romans, perhaps in order to channel some measure of their reputation.⁸⁸ This practice initially began in France during Napoleon I’s empire, but it was easily continued when Napoleon III came to power. Channeling the legacy of the Romans in art and intellect certainly never fell out of fashion.

Now that Napoleon III’s personal conflicts of interest are established, how exactly did he develop his construction of Vercingetorix? He needed Vercingetorix to serve as an icon for his Second French Empire, uniting the French and presenting a strong patriotic front to the world at the same time. Caesar had presented Vercingetorix as the uniter of the various Gallic tribes,⁸⁹ and Napoleon III intended to make the most out of this aspect of Vercingetorix’s legacy. This method of fulfilling the purposes which the Second French Empire needed was not so uncommon at the time, as multiple nations sought to establish a sense of national pride. Indeed, “when a nation seeks to shore up a flagging national image, it understandably canvasses the annals of its past for inspiration.”⁹⁰ It is especially necessary for Napoleon III once one considers the reputation France found itself carrying in the second half of the long nineteenth century: the defeated and humbled ex-empire. Yet, one soon realizes the odd coincidence that has thus taken place. The Vercingetorix that Napoleon III is enamored with, his “appealing emotional focus for an emerging sense of unified nationality and class coherence”,⁹¹ is an image of Vercingetorix that arises from Caesar’s construction, built from Caesar’s writing. Whether realized by Napoleon III or not, the construction of Vercingetorix as the uniter of the Gauls comes from the Romans; this cultural veneer, in many ways, is a necessary part of the construction. It obscures the Roman influence on Vercingetorix’s legacy, and allows Napoleon III to have a French hero who models his cultural ideal of unity, as written on the statue at Alesia.⁹²

Vercingetorix had entered the general awareness of the French populace during the Revolution. His legend, however, was still very impressionable. Perhaps as a way in which to help mold Vercingetorix’s legacy to be more welcome and closely connected to the populace, “in 1864, the Académie française, the great national and official institution, proposed a prize for poetry on the gallic hero.”⁹³ After this initial spark of interest during the Second French Empire, there is little doubt that these works of art continued to enlarge and influence Vercingetorix’s legacy. Not just in poetry and prose either, the

⁸⁷ [à travers des flots de sang, il est vrai, conduisait les peuples à un meilleur avenir...mais n’oublions pas que c’est au triomphe des armées romaines qu’est due notre civilisation ; institutions, mœurs, langage, tout nous vient de la conquête] Ibid, 44.

⁸⁸ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 588.

⁸⁹ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 146.

⁹⁰ Janice Gross, “Revisiting ‘nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois’: Scripting and Postscripting Francophone Identity,” *The French Review* 78, no. 5 (2005): 948, www.jstor.org/stable/25479983.

⁹¹ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 173.

⁹² Viollet-le-Duc, *Monument à Vercingétorix*, inscription carving.

⁹³ [en 1864, l’Académie française, grande institution nationale et officielle, propose un prix de poésie sur le héros gaulois.] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 49.

artistic fields in general gradually became flooded with works dealing with Vercingetorix and the Gauls following the initial burst. In sculpture alone, there were “over 200 sculptures of Gallic themes by over 130 artists during this period.”⁹⁴ Napoleon III’s support of this goal is seen at the very least in his personal funding of the statue of Vercingetorix at Alésia. The aforementioned inscription of the statue, as well as the “distinct likeness”⁹⁵ its anachronistic features hold towards the young emperor certainly affirm the direction which Napoleon III desired the artistic movement to take. This time period in French art marked a popular “frenzy of Celtic identity and the rise of Vercingetorix from” relative “obscurity to the status of a preeminent national hero.”⁹⁶ The success of the movement regarding Vercingetorix’s popularity became undoubtable as artists likened him to other famous French icons.

Joan of Arc reigned as the most famous French hero for centuries. Holy martyr and popular symbol of resistance to the age-old rival of Britain, she had long celebrated a favorite spot in the hearts of the people. Now, as Vercingetorix rose to fame, she would learn to share her celebrity, especially as many of her symbolic usages became more strongly associated with the Gallic leader. Martyr, defender, stubborn resistance fighter, Vercingetorix was quickly reaching the next level of popular recognition, his name becoming “symbolic of patriotism, of indomitable courage, of heroic devotion.”⁹⁷ Do not be mistaken, however. While they learned to share certain associations, Joan of Arc was still a significant figure in the French mythology. The fact that the two were associated so closely in this manner, often idealized in art and sculpture “[advancing] side by side, hand in hand”, exemplifies the similar ideals they exemplified. While showing Vercingetorix as an equal of the revered saint, this serves to also show them in a kind of mentoring relationship,⁹⁸ where Joan of Arc is guiding the new hero on how to properly execute his newfound role. It is extremely significant to Vercingetorix’s developing mythos that he is counted alongside Joan of Arc, as it showcases his rising popularity and place in the cultural zeitgeist of France. Soon enough, he would find himself “installed solidly amongst the icons of the homeland, especially those future defenders and saviors, Du Guesclin, Joan of Arc, the heroes of the Revolution and even Adolphe Thiers,”⁹⁹ and

⁹⁴ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 590.

⁹⁵ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar’s Greatest Victory*, 8.

⁹⁶ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 590.

⁹⁷ [ce nom symbole du patriotisme, du courage indomptable, du dévouement héroïque] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 58.

⁹⁸ [le héros et l’héroïne s’avancent côte à côte, la main dans la main...le ‘compagnonnage’ entre les deux héros] Christian Goudineau, « La Gaule, les Gaulois, Vercingétorix et le sentiment national au XIXe siècle, », self-translated, *Beihefte der Francia*, Bd. 66 (2008): 68.

⁹⁹ [la figure de Vercingetorix s’installa solidement parmi les icônes de la patrie, et plus particulièrement ses futurs défenseurs et saveurs, les Du Guesclin, Jeanne d’Arc, les héros de la Révolution et jusqu’à Adolphe Thiers] Brunaux, *Alésia*, 310.

those associated closely with war, “grand patriotic figures” such as “le Grand Ferré or Jeanne Hachette”¹⁰⁰ as the War of 1870 would show.

The War of 1870 brought Napoleon III to his knees. A decisive defeat at Sedan and the subsequent occupation by the Prussians lead to a huge loss of public morale. In order to understand the significance these events would have on Vercingetorix’s legacy, one must first understand the parallels which are created by these events. Much as Alesia fell before the Romans, leading to their occupation of Gaul, the defeat at Sedan and the subsequent Siege of Paris gave the Prussians victory and led to their occupation of France. Léon Gambetta, the French defender of Paris following Napoleon III’s capture at Sedan, could be compared favorably to Vercingetorix, as he worked to maintain and organize the French troops and administration that remained after Sedan into a somewhat worthy national defense which faced their own Alesia-esque last stand in Paris.¹⁰¹ These parallels hit close to home, as popular opinion thought of Caesar more and more as a “precursor to Moltke and Bismarck.”¹⁰² In this way, “Alesia was assimilated into the defeat of 1870,”¹⁰³ and became personally relatable to the French on the level of the current defeats at Sedan and Paris. After all, it becomes much easier to connect to defeat and occupation in one’s history when defeated and occupied oneself.

Before this had even happened, the French had always juggled their national identity with their complicated history. The most important moments of their cultural history are

divided into three well defined periods; and at the summit of each there appears a grand figure who dominates all the others: ---In Antiquity, Vercingetorix; in the Middle Ages, Joan of Arc; in modern times, Napoleon. ---Patriotism, faith, glory--and just as all those who are great are completed by adversity, like all the stories with their ordeal---to Vercingetorix, a barbaric death in the dungeons of Rome; ---to Joan of Arc the pyre at Rouen; ---to Napoleon, captivity at St. Helena.¹⁰⁴

Together, these three figures and the virtues they represent to the French people form the most important building blocks of French cultural identity and national pride. French nationalism undoubtedly is constructed through a combination of the three

¹⁰⁰ [le plus célèbre adversaire de César pouvait prendre place aux côtés des grandes figures patriotiques, Jeanne d’Arc, le Grand Ferré ou Jeanne Hachette] Ibid, 302.

¹⁰¹ [Les historiens ont vu dans l’invasion prussienne une répétition de l’histoire...il n’est dès lors pas étonnant que le siège du Paris fût comparé à celui d’Alésia et la figure de Gambetta à celle de Vercingétorix] Ibid, 302.

¹⁰² King, “Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls,” 7.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 7.

¹⁰⁴ [se divise en trois époques bien distinctes; et au sommet de chacune d’elles apparaît une grande figure qui domine toutes les autres : ---Dans l’Antiquité, Vercingétorix ; au Moyen Age, Jeanne d’Arc ; dans les temps modernes, Napoléon. ---Le patriotisme, la foi, la gloire---Et comme tout ce qui est grand se complète par l’adversité, comme toute illustration a son calvaire---à Vercingétorix, une mort barbare dans les cachots de Rome ; ---à Jeanne d’Arc le bûcher de Rouen ; ---à Napoléon, la captivité à Sainte-Hélène] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 50.

aforementioned virtues: patriotism, faith, glory. Yet as one can clearly see, the French have a complex relationship with defeat at the same time. In one way, it acts as a morale booster, that despite the setbacks and hardships present in the country's history, France still remains. Even after their defeat in the War of 1870, "republican intellectuals saw in Vercingetorix the preservation of an essential element of national sentiment"¹⁰⁵; namely, patriotism even in the face of defeat---a stubborn resistance against shame and supplication.

The War of 1870 represents a sort of breaking point for the French as a people, where they ultimately decide to pursue Napoleon III's construction of Vercingetorix on another level. Rather than succumb to defeat, they take inspiration from their national history, and the legacy of their heroes. Their growing national sentiment of resistance, and stubborn refusal to let it happen again leads to a new level in their proud identification with those who resisted in the past, as "the Third Republic that was established after this sees the further rise of Vercingetorix as a national symbol for the French."¹⁰⁶ Due to the French people's newfound connection with the Gauls, their opinion of Caesar and Rome in general became even more strained than before. To the French, "Vercingetorix was the hero because he never submitted to Rome's civilization but preferred death instead. To have accepted submission to Rome's benefits of civilization would clearly have...implied that they should accept the shame of 1870."¹⁰⁷ Caesar's legacy gradually became diminished to only that of an invader, which helped to disparage Rome's connection to civilization in France.¹⁰⁸ France's persistent will to identify with their brave resistance fighter led to France finding "solace in Vercingetorix's profile of valor and dignity even in defeat"¹⁰⁹ as it emerged into the 20th century. The Third French Republic would arrive back onto the world stage with a new national self-image of defiance and resistance which would define the French zeitgeist in the World Wars to come.

Thus, the French connection to Roman civilization begins to break down. This is especially significant, and in some part is due, to the increase in German sentiment regarding Rome. During the same period of time as France came to view Rome in a different light, Germany had begun "championing...Roman aims and achievements. As exemplification of this, Kaiser Wilhelm II encouraged the *Limeskommission* (1892), the Saalburg reconstruction (1897-1907) and the *Römisch-Germanische Kommission* (1902)."¹¹⁰ These projects consisted of Roman excavations and research projects undertaken by Germany in a similar manner to those undertaken at Alésia by Napoleon

¹⁰⁵ King, "Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls," 6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 7.

¹⁰⁸ [César sont un 'factum émanant de l'envahisseur, tissu de mensonges aussi outrageants qu'injurieux pour les vaillants mais infortunés Gaulois, nos ancêtres'...'Notre devoir, à nous descendants des défenseurs d'Alésia, est de maudire César et d'exalter Vercingétorix.' D'une façon plus fondamentale c'est tout l'héritage de Rome qui est rejeté] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 68.

¹⁰⁹ Gross, "Revisiting 'nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois'," 948-949.

¹¹⁰ King, "Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls," 9.

III under the Second French Empire. Both projects, but especially the *Limeskommission*, which sought to determine the location of the northern Roman border, indicated the “geographical determinist streak in nationalist thinking,” which soon would become “particularly strong in relation to the Rhineland.”¹¹¹ As a response, the French sought to diminish the legacy of the German ancestors who could be presented as equals to Vercingetorix, such as Arminius and Tetricus.¹¹² Arminius especially was used by Germany as a historical figure in a similar manner to Vercingetorix, having been reintroduced to the populace as a model ancestor in order to strengthen national morale and justify militaristic goals. National borders began to be attached to nation’s histories more and more as they attempted to find justification for military actions or political leverage. The idea of a larger Celtic nation especially attracted attention in France, as it could “[legitimize] the drive to reestablish the ‘natural’ borders of France.”¹¹³ These arguments would escalate and eventually become a factor contributing to the causes of World War 1.

Yet, the French did not only find cause for concern with their German neighbors, but also with the direct descendants of Rome: the Italians. The low opinion the French had fomented for Rome was easily transferrable to their direct descendants. Many of the developments before and during the World Wars contributed to this as well. At the beginning of World War 1, the entry of Italy into the Triple Alliance “aroused a lively anti-roman reaction” as it brought together the cultural and ideological descendants of Rome, which would be to the French “the worst European duplicity, the alliance of Germany with Rome.”¹¹⁴ The French people’s newfound disdain for Caesar and the Romans developed into a general prejudice against Italians, which only “grew with the addition of Italy to the Triple Alliance.”¹¹⁵ All in all, the stance France took towards Italy during the time is best summarized by French intellectual of the time, Emile Lambin; “Republican Rome crushed us, Imperial Rome ruined us, Pontificate Rome betrayed us, Royal Rome today has allied with our worst enemies.”¹¹⁶ Even as they became eventual allies in WW1, the re-alliance of Italy with Germany in WW2 likely reignited these feelings in the French populace, especially as Mussolini celebrated Rome’s imperial legacy.

While the connections between anti-Roman and anti-Italian sentiment in France ought to be clear enough, the vehement stance the French take towards the Germans may seem more unreasonable, thus requiring further explanation. As a recap, the French had been defeated and occupied by the German’s recent ancestors, the Prussians, twice in the

¹¹¹ Ibid, 11.

¹¹² Ibid, 9-10.

¹¹³ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls’,” 592.

¹¹⁴ [la pire duplicité européenne, l’alliance de la Germanie avec Rome...la Triplice, qui suscite une vive réaction antiromaine] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 113.

¹¹⁵ [A cette époque se développe en France un certain racisme anti-Italien...qui va évidemment croître avec l’adhésion de l’Italie à la Triplice] Ibid, 69.

¹¹⁶ [La Rome républicaine nous a écrasés, la Rome impériale ruinés, la Rome pontificale trahis, la Rome royale aujourd’hui s’allie à nos pires ennemies] Ibid, 70.

last century. As the French struggled to come to terms with these defeats and occupations in the second half of the long nineteenth century, they leaned more heavily on identification with the Gauls and Vercingetorix, who had exemplified resistance in the face of the invader. Now, rather than Rome, the face of the invader was to be updated and associated with the recent rivals of the French, the Germans. The French people's identification with Alésia and Vercingetorix came to be connected with "resistance to invaders" in general, "be they Roman or German."¹¹⁷ Thus, in the larger scheme as World War 1 began, Vercingetorix suddenly "stood for resistance to the new Germany."¹¹⁸ Based on this "national aspect of Vercingetorix that [France] insisted to renew," Vercingetorix would find himself in a position like Joan of Arc once again, having become like a patron saint, the ancestor of the French infantrymen fighting a battle of resistance against the invader.¹¹⁹ In France, this identification between French infantrymen and the Gauls was a welcome one.

World War 2 presents many of the same parallels as World War 1. Fascists in Germany and Italy alike welcomed identification with their Roman ancestry and glorified those imperial roots. Swiftly after the war began, France found itself on the other side of that Italian-German alliance once again. Besides these similarities, the country faced a difficult reality and a national feeling it had not been forced to deal with since the War of 1870: defeat and occupation. After World War 1 had left France on the side of victory, occupation especially came as a great shock and national cause of shame. Vercingetorix, national hero, symbol of resistance to the invader, would not find himself on the sidelines of the ideological war that raged on in occupied France. Vercingetorix would instead:

[continue] to be used as a national symbol, but in different ways by the radically divided French political groupings. For Pétain and the Vichy government, Vercingetorix was the hero who had sacrificed himself for Gaul –the hero in defeat. Wartime propaganda put him at the head of a line of heroes, followed by Joan of Arc, Henri IV, Napoleon – ending with Pétain. For the resistance and De Gaulle on the other hand, Vercingetorix was 'the first resistance fighter in our history', a national hero symbolising the throwing off of the German yoke.¹²⁰

Vichy and Free France represented two aspects of Vercingetorix, and of French history, which had come to a head. Vichy France and their leader Pétain pushed the necessity of maintaining French pride even in defeat and accepting occupation as a necessary sacrifice. On the other hand, Free France and the French Résistance would continue to push Vercingetorix's aspect of defiance even in the face of overwhelming odds which had placed him in the forefront of so many French hearts during World War 1. It is thus no surprise that this is the side which won the ideological war in the end.

¹¹⁷ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 175.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 175.

¹¹⁹ [les Gaulois et Vercingétorix vont devenir les ancêtres des Poilus de la grande Guerre...c'est sur l'aspect national de Vercingétorix que l'on insiste à nouveau] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 110.

¹²⁰ King, "Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls," 11.

Vichy France's ideology of Vercingetorix pushed forward the spirit of martyrdom; occupation as a necessary evil that had to be endured in order for France to survive. Pétain, Vichy's Chief of State and former World War 1 Marshal pushed the ideals of "the necessity of sacrifice and underlined the permanence of the nation despite some setbacks."¹²¹ The traditions of the myth of Vercingetorix could easily be aligned by Vichy France to their purposes, twisting valorous defiance into apathetic martyrdom. Throughout this period, notable sites in the mythology of Vercingetorix, such as Gergovia, were especially popular with the leaders of these competing modern ideologies. Rallies held there by Vichy France even "suggested Pétain as 'nearly a reincarnation of Vercingetorix'."¹²² The two leaders could indeed be compared by a singular, important similarity. The connection that was pushed the most between Pétain and Vercingetorix "had sacrificed himself to save the nation."¹²³ Pétain was simply emulating his Gallic ancestor, recognizing the wisdom of surrender for survival rather than total annihilation for nothing. In this way, Pétain made his own attempt to craft Vercingetorix's legacy to his own purposes.

Free France and the French Résistance would offer their own interpretation at the same time. Rather than his aspect of martyr, they pulled from his legacy of resistance. With examples as close at hand as World War 1, they "exalted the will of fighting until the end for national independence."¹²⁴ Their image of Vercingetorix pressed for action, even against overwhelming odds:

'He dared to defy the enemy. This spirit of resistance to all oppression---that is found in Joan of Arc as in the shadow of our combatants in the years 1940-1945--he is the distant promoter. He would chronologically be the first of the resistance fighters of France'... Vercingetorix is evoked like a 'hero who personifies resistance' to the 'roman occupation' and 'the guerrilla wars of resistance fighters harassing the baggage of the enemy'.¹²⁵

This image of resistance stands proud, with examples that parallel the realities that the French Résistance would be facing. The legacy of guerrilla warfare and the harassment of

¹²¹ [les autres mettaient en avant le courage et la lucidité devant la défaite. Il n'est donc pas étonnant de retrouver la trace de Vercingétorix et des Gaulois dans l'idéologie du régime de Vichy. Le mythe enseigne la nécessité du sacrifice et souligne la permanence de la nation en dépit des revers] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 115.

¹²² [presque une incarnation de Vercingétorix] Gross, "Revisiting 'nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois'," self-translated, 949.

¹²³ Dietler, "'Our Ancestors the Gauls'," 592.

¹²⁴ [Les uns exaltaient la volonté de lutter jusqu'au bout pour l'indépendance nationale] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 115.

¹²⁵ ['Il a osé défier l'ennemi. Cet esprit de résistance à toute oppression --- que l'on retrouve en Jeanne d'Arc comme en nos combattants de l'ombre des années 1940-1945 --- il en est le promoteur lointain. Il fut chronologiquement le premier des résistants de France'... Vercingétorix est évoqué comme le 'héros qui a incarné la résistance' à l' 'occupant romain' et 'les guérillas de partisans harcèlent les bagages de l'ennemi'] Ibid, 118.

baggage against a foreign occupier was an easy parallel to pull against Vichy France and the Nazis.

Even so far as Gergovia is concerned, Pétain was not the only one to use the site as a rallying point for their ideological goals. In fact, the irony of the site may not have crossed Pétain's mind. Gergovia was in fact "where Vercingetorix and the Gauls had inflicted a defeat on the...invaders."¹²⁶ Alésia, site of Vercingetorix's defeat, may have served Pétain's purpose better. The site also served the French Résistance in their own way, as "an archaeological dig there in 1940 provided cover for a resistance cell."¹²⁷ Eventually, Pétain even laid off on his comparisons with Vercingetorix, given the French Résistance's success in utilizing his legacy. Some concrete evidence to this point lies in "the fact that many of the 19th-century monumental bronze statues of Vercingetorix were later melted down by the Vichy government, whereas those of Joan of Arc were not touched, [which] suggests that Pétain eventually came to regard the symbol of Vercingetorix as a threat."¹²⁸ As the war came to a close, the image that prospered was that which had been kept alive by the French Résistance, and which once again gave the French people some mental protection from the shame that followed occupation.

In the years that followed, Vercingetorix would continue to serve as a national icon and point of pride. Numerous politicians would continue to utilize the same historic sites of memory as touchpoints through which they could attempt to channel the feelings that had been gradually built into Vercingetorix's legacy. Re-emerging onto the world stage through the tumultuous changes wrought in the Revolution, molded in the hands of two Napoleons in the afterimage of Caesar, and forged in the fires of the largest wars the world had ever seen, Vercingetorix had finally reached the apex of heroism: unconscious cultural identification.

Chapter 3

At the end of the World Wars, Vercingetorix's legacy had become established in the minds of the French people as an important part of their cultural identification. In the years to come, this legacy would continue to be used in both well-worn and novel arenas. On the traditional track, French politicians throughout the 21st century continued to call back to the Gauls in similar ways as before the World Wars, using Vercingetorix's postwar cultural status in order to appeal to the general populace. On the other hand, with the rise of decolonization and France's imperial past, the legacy of the Gauls came to be a significant part of ideological movements for colonial independence before, during, and after the war, despite French attempts to establish a common Gallic heritage amongst all their territories. This is particularly notable as Vercingetorix would be used on both sides of these movements even before the postwar era, both as evidence for the 'necessary civilization' of imperialism and said reinvigorated independence movements.

¹²⁶ Dietler, "Our Ancestors the Gauls," 592.

¹²⁷ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 175.

¹²⁸ Dietler, "Our Ancestors the Gauls," 592.

Even past these complex usages, Vercingetorix's legacy would find the most recognition in the general cultural zeitgeist of France. His newfound heroic status, won in the fires of the World Wars, placed the Gauls as the firm ancestors of the common Frenchman. The educational system would further cement Vercingetorix's mythos as *the* French ancestor, implanting the notion into children at a young age. In both conscious and unconscious examples, images and items relating to Vercingetorix were thus plastered onto a variety of multimedia. Besides products and street titles, the *bandes dessinées* (BD/'comics') which were created in his image proved to be the most influential method of keeping his legacy alive in the minds of the people. *Astérix*, the most famous of these, is a cultural icon on par with Mickey Mouse in the Francophone world. Vercingetorix's influence has not stopped since. In 2012, a new museum dealing with Alesia and the Gauls was opened at the site, which has encouraged and maintained a large re-enactment culture, which in itself is telling. The impact of Vercingetorix's French collective memory was not slowed down in the slightest by the end of the World Wars, and continues to heavily influence French politics, media, and both personal and national cultural identification.

As the World Wars came to an end, De Gaulle was the first French politician in the postwar era to directly recognize Vercingetorix. The leader of the Free French Forces during World War II and first President of the Fifth French Republic afterwards, De Gaulle had more than enough comparisons in his life to liken himself to Vercingetorix. Like Napoleon I, Napoleon III, and Pétain before him, he made the effort to do so at specific and meaningful locations. Of three sites which have been utilized by French politicians, Bibracte, Gergovia, and Alesia, De Gaulle chose Alesia. Perhaps he felt a kinship with Vercingetorix, having himself been the leader of French resistance until only recently. Or perhaps he felt a certain connection to the site of Vercingetorix's defeat, which could have been another possible parallel to his own story, given that Vichy France was established almost immediately after the start of the war. Alesia remains the site of the three which is identified with the least because of its association with defeat; in general, politicians seem more willing to utilize sites of victory when running for office themselves. Nonetheless, De Gaulle began a faithful pilgrimage to the site, "for many years [visiting] the site on the anniversary of the battle."¹²⁹ Like those before him, and those that would come after, De Gaulle continued the trend of "[rooting] constructed traditions of national collective imagination" at these sites, which would grant them "special symbolic value."¹³⁰ This practice allows them to channel certain historical figures of their choice at a specific site, and attempt to convey "a sense of authenticity and continuity"¹³¹ through them.

¹²⁹ John Sadler and Rosie Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory: The Battle of Alesia, 52 BC* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2016), 175.

¹³⁰ Michael Dietler, "A Tale of Three Sites: The Monumentalization of Celtic Oppida and the Politics of Collective Memory and Identity," *World Archaeology* 30, no. 1 (Jun 1998): 72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/125010>.

¹³¹ Dietler, "A Tale of Three Sites," 72.

Alesia itself had been an important site in the Vercingetorix mythos for years since Napoleon III's initial archaeological interest. In fact, the statue which Napoleon III had commissioned for the site went on a national tour when it was completed. As it passed through French towns and reached its final exhibition at Alesia, "crowds flocked to watch it pass, some apparently even genuflecting before it."¹³² The process almost seems like a mock funeral for the Gallic leader. It certainly mirrors the public exhibitions and final internment of the American presidential funeral trains of Lincoln and Eisenhower, also popular and military leaders. The fact that Lincoln's funeral train and the exhibition train of Vercingetorix's statue take place in the same year, 1865, is an amusing coincidence. These exhibitions allowed many people in their individual countries to personally identify with and remember these figures. But more importantly in France's case, it began the work which De Gaulle would continue, of connecting the site of Alesia to French popular memory.

The second site which was chosen by postwar French politicians was Gergovia. Known in the Vercingetorix mythos as the site of his victory over the forces of Caesar, Gergovia is the site which carries the most positive connotation. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac, both President of France during different periods, 1974-81 and 1995-2007 respectively, came together in 1989 at the site in order to campaign for Chirac's run against the then-current President, François Mitterrand. Their speech consisted of a call for "the continuance of French identity."¹³³ Chirac perhaps unabashedly attempted to accuse Mitterrand, placing him in the same general category as the rest of his socialist party, which routinely calls for the reduction of nationalism. Yet, this trait of his party was not completely followed by Mitterrand.

François Mitterrand called on his Gallic ancestors many times himself, at the third site of political importance connected to Vercingetorix, Bibracte. While no battle had taken place here, it was noted by Caesar as the site where Vercingetorix had united the Gallic tribes and been declared leader of their armies.¹³⁴ It is thus not surprising that Mitterrand used Bibracte over the other sites as he called for national unity in 1985,¹³⁵ just before the French institution of 'cohabitation' came into use; cohabitation is the term for periods of time in which the president represents a different political party than the majority of their parliament, and thus appoints a prime minister from the opposition. Since Mitterrand's example, it has become a common occurrence in French politics, and a useful tool for French presidents. An effective method of splitting power between two parties, its roots can be found in Mitterrand's call for a France "of tolerance, of republican democracy."¹³⁶ Perhaps in light of the success he found there, Mitterrand

¹³² Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 174.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 176.

¹³⁴ Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 143-146.

¹³⁵ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 176.

¹³⁶ [image 'construite autour de l'idée d'indépendance, de tolérance, de démocratie républicaine'] André Simon, *Vercingétorix et l'idéologie Française*, self-translated (Paris: Éditions Imago, 1989), 7-8.

would continue to strengthen Bibracte's link to the national mythos. Over the years, he would sponsor the creation of a museum and research facility at the site, along with a footpath connecting the site to Alesia.¹³⁷ Mitterrand would even take the steps to state that "Bibracte was the place where the 'first act of our history took place'" as he "declared it a 'national site.'"¹³⁸ As the original site of the unification of the Gallic tribes, this might not be such a stretch of a claim, but nonetheless carries quite a lot of importance in this continuing age of nationalism and nation-state justification.

As nation-states continue to value sites and feelings which contribute to their national mythos, these three sites are all significant not just to Vercingetorix, but to modern France. Just as in the long nineteenth century with Napoleon III, nationalism becomes connected to the land. Leaders throughout the world especially love to spur on these connections through archaeological digs, which serve to produce material evidence backing their claims. In the example of Napoleon III, who instituted the first archaeological digs at Alesia among other sites, Mitterrand also provided funding for archaeological research at Bibracte.¹³⁹ The importance of these projects were acknowledged throughout French history. Mitterrand's predecessor, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, stated in 1981, the last year of his presidency, that "today the French people increasingly want to renew their individual or collective memory. And archaeology, with its material and concrete evidence, constitutes an 'objective memory' of the life of a people or civilization."¹⁴⁰ When connecting these ancient peoples of Gaul to their own realities through physical evidence, Vercingetorix truly comes full circle, in the words of Albert Réville, 19th century intellectual, as the cultural hero who "fought and died not for a canton, not for a petty realm, not for a dynasty, but *pro patria*, for the Gallic fatherland which is still ours."¹⁴¹ Archaeological digs based in such sites of import lend credence to these politician's efforts to strengthen the connection of the land to the Gallic national mythos.

What then of connecting people to the legend of the Gauls when the land they live in is not part of continental, European France, and never once saw a Gaul set foot there in the first place? Then one comes to the problems of pre-war imperialism, the post-war struggles of independence and France's post-colonial legacy. While America is most used to discussing the 'white man's burden,' one might be tempted to name French colonialism the 'Gallic burden,' given that while the French certainly viewed imperialism as a civilizing mission, they primarily did so in reference to their own past. Given that the Romans had conquered them and brought to the Gauls certain 'necessary' aspects of civilization, the French viewed their own conquests in the same light. During the era of

¹³⁷ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 176.

¹³⁸ Michael Dietler, "'Our Ancestors the Gauls': Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 96, no. 3 (September 1994): 584, www.jstor.org/stable/682302.

¹³⁹ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 176.

¹⁴⁰ Dietler, "A Tale of Three Sites," 85.

¹⁴¹ Dietler, "'Our Ancestors the Gauls'," 591.

Napoleon III, who himself believed in the benefits of Roman civilization, this idea of Rome improving Gaul by conquering it “served as a subtle and convenient rationalization for expanding French hegemony in Indochina, North Africa, and other overseas locations, while at the same time emphasizing, on the model of the Gauls, the wisdom and benefits of native submission to this heir of the Roman Empire.”¹⁴² Much like Gaul had done in the past, it was in their best interest for colonies to submit to French conquest. France thus gladly took up the mantle of bearer of civilization and thrust itself onto its colonies with a personal image of undertaking “an educational role, a political role of integration of all ethnic, regional and social minorities through the proclamation of their common ancestors, who likewise justified this colonial conquest.”¹⁴³ The French colonies would thus learn from the Gauls, their common ancestors in the line of succession of civilization. As the Romans had passed it to the Gauls, the French now brought it to their colonies, thinking that these colonies might “through [France] attain an even higher status in the future.”¹⁴⁴ By imitating their cultural forebears, the French desired to bring in a new wave of civilized peoples, but most importantly, a wave of francophone and gallicized peoples. This colonial wave of gallicization is most commonly referred to by the most paradoxical phrase included in its curriculum: “nos ancêtres les Gaulois” (our ancestors the Gauls).

Perhaps one of the most interesting and unique situations that arises from this unconscious gallicization involving the phrase “nos ancêtres les Gaulois” occurs in pre-war Algeria. French Algeria had long been a colony of France, and its territory was even considered to be multiple official French départements (the closest comparison for Americans might be counties). Algeria’s location directly across the Mediterranean also contributed to a large number of French immigrants to the colony, whose descendants are referred to as ‘Pieds-noirs’ (blackfeet). When the country was initially conquered by the French at the beginning of the 19th century, the primary leader of resistance to the French military was Emir Abdelkader (also written as Abd al-Qādir/Abd el-Kader/Abdul Kader). He united a number of tribes in the area and conducted a successful campaign which saw him the winner of a treaty which granted him control of a sizeable inland area of Algeria, so long as he acknowledged French sovereignty. When the French inevitably broke off the treaty, Abdelkader resumed hostilities by relying on guerrilla tactics, and was eventually forced to surrender due to waning local support. Transported to France in exile, he unexpectedly found a warm welcome at the hands of Napoleon III, and eventually would live the rest of his life on French pension in Damascus.¹⁴⁵ As one might

¹⁴² Ibid, 590.

¹⁴³ [un rôle pédagogique, un rôle politique d’intégration de toutes les minorités ethniques, régionales ou sociales par la proclamation d’ancêtres communs. Elle justifiait aussi la conquête coloniale.] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 118-119.

¹⁴⁴ [Les colonisés pourront par là atteindre au statut supérieur dans l’avenir.] Ibid, 119.

¹⁴⁵ Jan C. Jansen, “Creating National Heroes: Colonial Rule, Anticolonial Politics and Conflicting Memories of Emir ‘Abd al-Qadir in Algeria, 1900–1960s,” *History and Memory* 28, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2016): 8-9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/histmemo.28.2.0003>.

already be gleaned from this short summarization of Abdelkader's life, here begins a number of parallels and problems that shall be addressed.

However, context is necessary in order to understand the rise of Algeria's nationalist movements. The Algerian desire for independence, and their own national pride, had risen in the beginning of the 20th century, especially as France undertook their own various defeats in the War of 1870 and WW1. Even as WW2 loomed over the horizon, Algerian nationalists began to find interest in the specific figure of Abdelkader once again. In the first parallel to Vercingetorix, he re-emerged into the historical limelight as an ancestor whose heritage might be venerated and treated as an example.¹⁴⁶ However, De Gaulle's cabinet decided to adopt the legacy of Abdelkader at the same time, in order to adopt him as a pro-French reconciliatory symbol to their most important colony before his figure became fully integrated into the ideology of a resistance movement.¹⁴⁷ This of course calls back to the previous discussion with some parallels as to Pétain's usage of Vercingetorix's legacy in Vichy France versus those usages of the French Résistance. It is nonetheless a unique situation which shows how both sides "endeavored to use him as an important source of legitimacy in their struggles over colonial rule...the emir was increasingly subject to competing claims that cast him either as an Algerian national hero or a French one."¹⁴⁸ Colonizer and colonized grappling for ideological supremacy, their justification riding at least partly on the legacy of one dead human, truly showcases the importance that is placed on historical background. For both the French and the Algerians, the legacy of Abdelkader becomes "a symbolic resource or 'semiotic weapon' in the social and political conflicts within [their] society."¹⁴⁹ Regarding the construction of a hero, one certainly begins to wonder whether Vercingetorix's or Abdelkader's case is the path which is more likely to be expected.

The Algerian side of resistance had been raised in a French system, and it is likely that they had been unconsciously gallicized themselves. This unconscious bias, this influence on their thoughts, can be seen most evidently through the statements of one of the leading activists, Ferhat Abbas, who called for "a statue of the emir, taking as his model the veneration in metropolitan France of the ancient Gallic resistance leader Vercingetorix."¹⁵⁰ The Algerians were able to recognize the parallels presented by this French ancestor which likely occupied a large part of their education, and apply it to their own ancestral figure. Just as they learned of Vercingetorix's defeat leading to the benefits of Roman civilization, they could recognize that Abdelkader's defeat "had paved the way for the reinvigoration of Algeria," and called out that they must, in the same manner, "recognize the glory of our defeated ancestors."¹⁵¹ And, in a similar conclusion, they must be honored through a permanent reminder of their presence and influence, a statue.

¹⁴⁶ Jansen, "Creating National Heroes," 23.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 15-16.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 16.

While a fitting parallel to Vercingetorix's own rise to national prominence, a key issue remains. The Romans were not still around and in control of France as Napoleon III began to venerate Vercingetorix. Whereas in Algeria, the French colonial government was fully aware of the feelings of resistance stirring in the region and understood that symbolic warfare might be a necessary step. They acted on this, quickly approving and beginning the construction of a monument fitting their purposes¹⁵² before the independence movement could fully integrate Abdelkader into their ideological pool. Their goals included co-opting Abdelkader "from resistance leader to friend of France to exemplify how the colonized could eventually identify with the colonizing power."¹⁵³ Abdelkader's history of making treaties with the French for the survival of Algeria, along with his period of exile in France lent some credence to these arguments, which the colonial government gladly made use of. The monument that ended up being constructed was intellectually strategic, "an eight-meter tower with a crescent on top, it bore the Arabic and French inscription of what Azan (a pro-French scholar) had earlier called [Abdelkader's] political legacy: 'If the Muslims and the Christians lent me an ear, I would put a stop to their differences and they would become brothers again, inwardly and outwardly.'"¹⁵⁴ This inscription is placed here purposefully by the colonial government in order to quell certain aspects of resistance ideology by making Abdelkader a symbol of pro-French reconciliation. It unconsciously calls back to the likely gallicized aspects of the Algerian's historical education by illustrating the two groups, Algerians and French, 'Muslims and Christians', as 'brothers'. This continuing thread regarding the idea of homogeneous French identification and ancestry was one which the French colonizers especially wanted to keep intact. So much so that they even arranged for Abdelkader's grandson, Emir Sehel, to speak at the statue's inauguration to the effect of "his grandfather's visions of a peaceful coexistence of the two religions, which contained 'the seeds of a Gallo-Islamic nation.'"¹⁵⁵ One of the French speakers even stated that many in mainland France recognized Abdelkader as a "French 'national hero.'"¹⁵⁶ Indeed, Gabriel Hanotaux, French historian and statesman, wrote that he saw in Abdelkader "a new Vercingetorix," who "like the Gauls of the old times, fought for his home, for his religion, for his homeland."¹⁵⁷ Comparisons of the two ancestors were not limited to just the Algerians, and the colonial government was fully aware of the import that historical figures can grant to ideological movements. While further research is necessary, it is likely that the unconsciously gallic educational systems instituted by the French colonial government in Algeria served to strengthen these pro-French propaganda efforts.

¹⁵² Ibid, 28-30.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁷ [G. Hanotaux, reprenant ces arguments en 1929 dans son Introduction à l'Empire colonial français, célèbre dans la France l'héritière de Rome, tout en voyant dans Abd-el-Kader un nouveau Vercingétorix... 'n'oublions pas que lui aussi comme les Gaulois du vieux temps, combattait pour son foyer, pour sa religion, pour sa patrie.'] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 119.

The French colonial government's strategy to co-opt Abdelkader as a pro-French figure of Gallo-Algerian reconciliation was a stretch of a position to take, but it hit home. They correctly assumed that the Algerian resistance movement understood that "commemorating the history of the 'Algerian nation' and its 'heroes' would be vital for the success of Algerian nationalism" and that "the construction of a national martyrology" was one of the movement's "central elements."¹⁵⁸ Of course, Abdelkader was central to this construction due to his position as the first leader of Algerian resistance against the French colonizer.¹⁵⁹ In the resistance movement's ideological structure, his heroic legacy was "coming to embody a tradition of anticolonial resistance that the emerging national movement wanted to take up."¹⁶⁰ Thus, while their intent and strategy was spot on, the colonial monument of reconciliation did not boost the feelings they wanted it to, and ended up being treated as equivalent to "a declaration of war on their newfound national hero."¹⁶¹ The significance of national heroes such as Vercingetorix and Abdelkader can be seen in this war of symbols which took place in Algeria. Both sides understand the impact that historical legacies can have on the sides people take in movements such as these, especially when they are connected to the past and future of the nation itself.

In the aftermath of the statue's inauguration, it could be said that its creation spurred on Algerian resistance leaders to new heights in their efforts to align Abdelkader with the Algerian people. The same figure who had compared him to Vercingetorix, Ferhat Abbas, led the protestation in his newspaper, stating the "'hypocrisy, 'falsehood' and 'bluff' of the ceremony...[countering] the official representation of [Abdelkader] as a French patriot with an image of the emir as an unambiguous and inalterable Algerian patriot."¹⁶² He took his arguments to such heights that his newspapers were confiscated by the French and had to be given out in secret.¹⁶³ Along with their rhetoric of resistance, and calls regarding their own movements, the creation of the colonial, pro-French statue pushed Abdelkader to the forefront of arguments based on a new ideological soapbox; the seizing of their heritage by the French colonial government:

Let us tell them (the colonizers and collaborators): the memory of [Abdelkader] does not belong to you. By trying to appropriate it, you are committing a new sacrilege, but one that will not stand. For one cannot seize a hero as one seizes the land of the Mitidja or Sétif, or as one falsifies elections or kills innocent people. The memory of [Abdelkader] belongs to the people. It belongs to those who suffer and fight for the people as [Abdelkader] fought for them.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Jansen, "Creating National Heroes," 24.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 23.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

As shown in Abbas' newspaper, the adoption of Abdelkader in relation to Algerian heritage and people in general is another important parallel to Vercingetorix's own developmental history as a hero. The owning of personal and collective memory is presented strongly here in Abbas' newspaper, and can also be seen paralleled in the adoption of the Gauls as France's own ancestors. The level of fervor that rose among Algerians, in part because of the resistance movement's efforts, resulted in a failed bomb attack on the pro-France monument by members of the same group that would eventually begin the Algerian War of Independence in the aftermath of World War II.¹⁶⁵

Following the Algerian War and Algeria's newfound independence from France, Abdelkader remained a national hero. He had been compared to Algerian leaders on both sides of the war, including Messali Hadj from the moderate PPA-MTLD party,¹⁶⁶ and numerous martyred leaders of the FLN (the successful Front de Libération Nationale [National Liberation Front]). When Abdelkader's remains returned to Algiers amid great fanfare in 1966, he was laid to rest "between Larbi Ben M'hidi (1923-57) and Mourad Didouche (1927-55), two prominent leaders of the FLN killed by the French during the first years of the Algerian Revolution."¹⁶⁷ In an important act of commemoration, Algeria thus completed Abdelkader's own construction as a hero by aligning him directly with the relevant modern martyrs. If France ever recovered a bone of their Gallic ancestor, one could only imagine the pomp and circumstance the entire country would experience. And yet, in a similar manner to Vercingetorix, Abdelkader was memorialized in many similar ways beyond his re-entombment. First, and most surprisingly given the previously failed bomb attack, the pro-France monument was allowed to remain. The pro-French quotations were removed and replaced with a sign which related "the 'machination' behind the project and the fierce resistance it encountered," as it has now been adopted "as a monument to the 'hero of Algerian popular resistance.'"¹⁶⁸ In a similar manner as the French strategy, Algeria has re-co-opted the monument into a symbol of their resistance to the intended piracy of their national figure. Second, following on promises to establish a 'proper' monument to the emir once independence was secured,¹⁶⁹ in contrast to the colonial monument, a "bronze equestrian statue of the 'great resistance fighter' was unveiled by Boumedienne on one of Algiers's most famous squares, the former Bugeaud square, now named after the emir."¹⁷⁰ Unveiled by Houari Boumedienne, then head of the Revolutionary Council, later President of Algeria, in a similar 'successor' method as French presidents mentioned previously, Abdelkader's statue in the Algerian capital symbolically replaced both the name and statue of his French conqueror, Bugeaud. His re-entombment and statue in Algiers would serve to secure Abdelkader's physical presence in modern Algeria as the monument under the statue would secure his ideological presence: "If France made me choose either keeping

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 34.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 24.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 34.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 32.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 4.

all my property and living in submission or being free and poor, I would choose to be free and poor.”¹⁷¹

In many of the same ways as Vercingetorix, Abdelkader came to light as the historical ancestor best suited to represent the Algerian resistance movement. Both of them had united the tribes of their people in order to fight off a superior invading power, and yet both had met defeat with pride. Vercingetorix’s own legacy most likely influenced the resistance movement’s idea of taking Abdelkader as an Algerian hero due to the probable presence of gallic influences in the French education system and the spirit represented by the phrase ‘nos ancêtres les Gaulois.’ In the modern era both of them were celebrated through physical symbols of remembrance—monuments and statues in significant locations—which serve to tie their legacies not just to the movements of the present but to ideals of the future. Both sides in Algeria realized the importance of national figures, and the symbolic importance that this “Algerian Vercingetorix”¹⁷² could grant to their respective ideas and movements. Abdelkader serves as an excellent, unique example (and one not far from home for the French) to understand in another light the extent of Vercingetorix’s influence as a French icon in the 20th century.

In both mainland France and its colonies, the educational system likely played a large part in instilling this new-found identification with the Gauls into the hearts of subsequent generations. The previously discussed notion of ‘nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ had further implications for French colonies, but especially regarding the mainland’s new nationalist education system, Vercingetorix and the Gauls were very likely an important aspect of the new historical syllabus. Following the War of 1870 and Vercingetorix’s newfound place in the French zeitgeist, the French people wanted to ensure that their children would understand his importance to their heritage. First introduced to French school systems in the 1870s and 1880s,¹⁷³ books such as Ernest Lavisse’s *Histoire de France* were meant to help guide a new system of “national identity formation”¹⁷⁴ in French youth. The national heritage would begin with the Gauls and trace an unbroken line through the Revolution into the present day. The cultural affinity that the French felt at the time was also integrated into these children’s history books, as they were taught how to “apply the significance of Vercingetorix’s defeat to their own lives.”¹⁷⁵ However, Vercingetorix’s presence in the French educational system certainly does not mean that the students become experts on his background; in a similar manner how American students learn of the US founders, French students learn of the Gallic chieftain through retellings of his myth.¹⁷⁶ Thus, throughout the decades, the majority of knowledge of

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 37.

¹⁷² Ibid, 36.

¹⁷³ Anthony King, “Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls: the use of Gallic national symbols in 19th- and 20th- century French politics and culture,” (Winchester, Hampshire: University of Winchester, 2015), 7.

¹⁷⁴ Janice Gross, “Revisiting ‘nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois:’ Scripting and Postscripting Francophone Identity,” *The French Review* 78, no. 5 (2005): 949, www.jstor.org/stable/25479983.

¹⁷⁵ Gross, “Revisiting ‘nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois,’” 949.

¹⁷⁶ Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 7.

Vercingetorix in the French populace gradually becomes distilled down to a hazy acknowledgement of his relation to the common Frenchman, gained more through common sayings and popular feelings of association than actual historical education. In turn, this new level of recollection and identification starts to be utilized, both consciously and unconsciously, in the new frontier of mass media.

French media, writ large, associates itself with this mythos of the Gauls and general feeling that the educational system and ‘nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ encourage. The French people only grew more closely attached to this notion in the post-war era, as France became one of the major proponents of Anti-Americanization. In the wake of their immediate loss in World War II, the creation of Vichy France, and then the loss of their colonial empire in the years to follow, the government of De Gaulle was well aware that their position as a world-power was diminished. As American products began to flood into Europe in the coming decades, both French newspapers like *Le Monde* and the French Communist party would take a particularly strong stance against them, which in turn ingrained itself to a certain degree in French culture in its own way. The idea of ‘coca-colonization’¹⁷⁷ presented a threat to the particular imagined ‘French’ way of life. So, who do the newspapers and politicians turn to? Their ancestral figure of resistance to outside invasion. Except now, the war is not physical but ideological. Anti-American France’s hero would be a novel form of the Gallic chieftain: a cartoon one.

The hit bande dessinée (Franco-Belgian comics) series *Asterix* quickly spread across the Francophone world. It was originally created to be a distinct competitor to American comics, an “aesthetic rebuttal to Disney-fied Yankee hegemony.”¹⁷⁸ For French speakers, *Asterix* has more than certainly grown to be an equal to Mickey Mouse. While meant to present a competitor to the Mouse, *Asterix* was also to be uniquely French. In the postwar era, the most immediate figure that was distinctly recognizable as being a symbol of the French was Vercingetorix and the Gauls. Goscinny, one of the strip’s creators, stated that when Uderzo and himself began, it was “to Vercingetorix that [they] thought when [they] invented *Asterix*.”¹⁷⁹ Meant for children, the story of *Asterix* is set in Roman Gaul, with the main character of the same name living in the last holdout village against Rome, on account of their druid’s magic potion. With adventures covering the scope of Europe, Africa, and even North America, *Asterix* has had a long and successful run that continues into the present.

Besides commercial success, *Asterix*’s ideological popularity in the Francophone world has allowed him to become an icon of France himself. Vercingetorix, one might think, ought to be less important as time made the war grow further distant. As a militaristic and nationalist figure, peacetime might not be a period which would see his

¹⁷⁷ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 221.

¹⁷⁸ Etelka Lehoczky, “With A Glug Of Potion And A New Translation, ‘Asterix’ Aims To Conquer America,” *NPR*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/15/890991843/with-a-glug-of-potion-and-a-new-translation-asterix-aims-to-conquer-america>.

¹⁷⁹ [C’est, en effet, à Vercingétorix que nous avons pensé, Uderzo et moi-même quand nous avons inventé notre Astérix.] Simon, *Vercingétorix*, 125.

legacy grow more popular. However, with the emergence of Anti-Americanization in France, and Asterix presenting a more tolerable form for nationalism to manifest in during peacetime, Vercingetorix would continue to find new avenues to expand his influence. In many ways, Asterix can be said to be the new representative of Vercingetorix's legacy. Since the emergence of the bande dessinée, the stories have "strongly contributed to returning to the Gauls the notoriety which they enjoyed in the grand public. They reach print runs so exceptional that all French know at least the name of Asterix."¹⁸⁰ In this way, Vercingetorix's ideals and associations would come to have a new resurgence through his mass media proxy, Asterix. As Asterix was presented to a new generation who had not engaged with Vercingetorix's legacy in the same way as their parents, parallels to his emergence in the long nineteenth century would reoccur, but centered around mass media instead. One of these would be in the bande dessinée, *Taranis*, a competitor strip to *Asterix*, who would continue the tradition of justifying Roman conquest. The presentation of Rome in *Taranis*, and even in *Asterix* at certain points, would prove a striking contrast to the simple villages of the Gallic main characters.¹⁸¹ In a more unique example, Asterix (the character specifically), generally refuses to acknowledge the defeat which had occurred at Alesia throughout the strip,¹⁸² and frequently defeats waves of Romans all on his own as if to prove this point.

One of the most important things that Asterix has achieved is the continuation of the legacy of resistance which Vercingetorix represented in the French psyche throughout the long nineteenth century and the World Wars. Partly due to its creation being influenced by Anti-American feelings, Asterix has come to represent isolationist France's "determination to resist American imperialism"¹⁸³ and countered their "fear of cultural corruption in the face of...global commercialism."¹⁸⁴ Initially competing with American comics, Asterix today continues to counter American media interests in France in terms of film. Asterix's new movie release in 1999 of *Asterix and Obelix Against Caesar* was considered by *Le Monde* (a major French newspaper) to be a "national matter of the highest importance."¹⁸⁵ The success of the movie would be symbolically tied to France's own success as a commercial country.

Yet, even as Asterix took Vercingetorix's associated ideals to new battlefields, the cartoon Gaul seems to eclipse his inspiration. Much like Superman came to epitomize the 'American way' in US comics, Asterix began to epitomize the Gauls. Current French

¹⁸⁰ [Les bandes dessinées où figure ce personnage ont fortement contribué à redonner aux Gaulois la notoriété dont ils jouissent dans le grand public. Elles atteignent des tirages si exceptionnels que chaque Français connaît au moins le nom d'Astérix.] Ibid, 124-125.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 126-129.

¹⁸² [Asterix refuse de connaître Alésia.] Ibid, 133.

¹⁸³ Gross, "Revisiting 'nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois'," 950.

¹⁸⁴ Richard Toye, "Asterix the Gaul – Colonial Freedom Fighter or Neo-Imperialist?" *Centre for Imperial and Global History, University of Exeter*, 2014, <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2014/03/06/asterix-the-gaul-colonial-freedom-fighter-or-neo-imperialist/>.

¹⁸⁵ Lara Marlowe, "Asterix is a question of French national pride," *The Irish Times*, Feb 3, 1999, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/asterix-is-a-question-of-french-national-pride-1.148407>.

President Emmanuel Macron has even compared *Asterix* to “the French way of life, a world where the bounty of the word and table has pride of place, but so do solid values: altruism, faithful friendship, struggle and togetherness. His image of the Gallic banquet is its most dazzling portrait: fine food and beautiful union under infinite stars.”¹⁸⁶ The French have come to associate themselves more closely with the Gauls through *Asterix*'s depictions of Gallic life. Asterix has served to strengthen the ties which the French pull between themselves and their Gallic ancestors, moving past Vercingetorix's legacy and creating links all his own. In this way, Asterix has come to surpass his inspiration:

As Vercingétorix and Astérix seemingly merge into a hero for all seasons and reasons, ‘le phénomène’ Astérix continues to acquire layers of signification making Astérix a veritable ‘lieu de mémoire’ in his own right. Viewed by many as the ‘alter ego’ of the French people, Asterix has come to embody familiar French reactions, behaviors, and attitudes in the form of ‘the Astérix complex’ or ‘le symptôme Astérix.’¹⁸⁷

Asterix, as described here, becomes the ideological embodiment of the overarching French aesthetic. As far as personal identification and mass media, he has come to wield his own cultural influence apart from that of Vercingetorix. In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks, Asterix's creator, Uderzo, contributed to the new outpouring of French cultural nationalism in response to fear, through a drawing of the figure stating that “Moi Aussi Je Suis Un Charlie!” (I am a Charlie too!)¹⁸⁸ Besides the rhyme present in the French, it shows that Asterix's creator is more than cognizant of the cartoon's role as a representative of the common French people.

Images and representations of Vercingetorix and the Gauls are rampant in physical form across France, not just in mass media. The Gauloises cigarettes are a recognizable example, both in name and image (the packaging has a Gallic winged helmet). Numerous street names have associations tied to his legacy, whether directly ‘Vercingetorix’, sites of importance like ‘Gergovie’, or even ‘Place des Gaules’.¹⁸⁹ The Paris Métro has a station named in the same vein, ‘Alésia’. There are even air ducts in Paris “shaped like a Gaul in a winged helmet.”¹⁹⁰ Asterix, in constant competition with Disney, has its own *Parc Astérix*, with a *Celtworld* follower in Ireland.¹⁹¹ In tabletop war games and online video games, Vercingetorix and/or the Gauls are constant inclusions for the Roman era, most notably in the Total War series. In heavy metal, many European and Celtic bands have tribute songs relating to Vercingetorix or one of his sites of

¹⁸⁶ Cynthia Rose, “Albert Uderzo: 1927-2020,” *The Comics Journal*, Mar 27, 2020,

<http://www.tcj.com/albert-uderzo-1927-2020/>.

¹⁸⁷ Gross, “Revisiting ‘nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois,’” 949.

¹⁸⁸ Kiel Phegley, “Retired ‘Asterix’ artist Albert Uderzo surprises with ‘Charlie Hebdo’ tribute,” *CBR.com*, Jan 9, 2015, <https://www.cbr.com/retired-asterix-artist-albert-uderzo-surprises-with-charlie-hebdo-tribute/>.

¹⁸⁹ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 590.

¹⁹⁰ Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 175.

¹⁹¹ Dietler, “Our Ancestors the Gauls,” 593.

importance. To contrast, classical music has also seen a resurgence of interest relating to the *carnyx*, an ancient Gallic instrument used in ceremony and war alike. These serve as but examples of the length to which Vercingetorix and the Gauls have entered into a subconscious realm of awareness and association both in France and without.

One of the most notable of these examples would be the creation of the MuséoParc Alésia in 2012. In a way completing Napoleon III and De Gaulle's missions of association, the museum constructed at the site of Alesia serves to officially note the national site and make it fully legitimate. All it took was about 160 years of cultural association, a decade of construction, and around "seventy-five million Euros" [60 million pounds/88.275 million dollars] worth of intent.¹⁹² The epitome of modern construction and presentation, the museum's shape itself is that of a circle, calling back to the siege lines constructed around the site by Caesar over 2000 years prior. Encompassing the new museum building, the nearby ruins of the Gallic oppidum, Napoleon III's statue, and their own reconstructions of a section of the Roman fortifications, the MuséoParc has certainly lit a fire underneath the French mythos. Aspiring to be a "museum of mentalities," the MuséoParc's intent seems to be in line with the European Union's goal of détente, demilitarization, and the rejection of nationalism.¹⁹³ Yet, while its exhibits and displays endeavor to explain the background behind Vercingetorix's myth, reversing a cultural association of nearly two centuries ends up much harder in practice. Rather than as a place of revelation and understanding, it is more commonly associated with, and sold online as, a tourist attraction based around its reenactments. Besides organized demonstrations of Roman and Gallic tactics and fighting techniques done in the museum and the recreated camp, they also host these larger events done between enthusiasts. These entail recreations of battles between Roman soldiers and Gallic warriors, done with wooden and foam weapons seen more often among 'LARP' groups. However, given that the majority of people at these events are more likely to be spectators than participants, it lends support to the idea that the culture of reenactment itself is connected to a certain degree to how people see their ancestors. In order to partake in the first place, reenactment first necessitates identification, and pride above all. Without these things, it would at the very least be lackluster for the crowds which gather to watch. The MuséoParc is anything but. The reenactments and recreated fortifications are popular among children and adults both, and "does nothing so much as fan an interest in warfare."¹⁹⁴ Vercingetorix's legacy is thus enflamed in the hearts of the French who visit the museum, whether in the adults who know the myth already, or the children who learn of it through reenactors at the site itself. The easiest way to teach and instill a certain view of history into children, after all, is to make it exciting.

¹⁹² Sadler and Serdiville, *Caesar's Greatest Victory*, 8.

¹⁹³ Barry Strauss, "The Antiwar Museum That Wasn't: Alésia and the contradictions of the European heart," *City Journal*, June 17, 2013, <https://www.city-journal.org/html/antiwar-museum-wasn%E2%80%99t-9770.html>.

¹⁹⁴ Strauss, "The Antiwar Museum That Wasn't."

From pre-war colonial movements to the post-modern museum, Vercingetorix has permeated French culture and politics. In this age of re-emerging nationalism and ethnic conflict, perhaps he will be recalled again as a rallying point for the French. Yet, even as his legacy is twisted and adapted to new situations, the associations attached to his legacy remain constant. The Gallic chieftain fights against the invasion of France, whether physical or ideological, and unites the French together, thus making them stronger in said fight. Building connections to the common French people through Asterix and consistently representing a bastion of French pride, Vercingetorix and the Gauls are deeply engrained in French identity.

Conclusion

As a beginning, the first chapter laid out Vercingetorix's origins in Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. These journals of Caesar's are enormously important to any work regarding Vercingetorix, given that they are the only written 'facts' known about his life. 'Facts' in quotations because Caesar's construction of Vercingetorix is just that: his own creation. While the information Caesar feeds the reader may be more true than false, it is important to understand that these historical 'truths' are manipulated by Caesar to serve his purposes. Caesar makes out Vercingetorix to be an equivalent, worthy, and dangerous opponent. By doing so, Caesar is able to justify his military campaigns to the Senate and people of Rome. But why is this significant? Because this construction of Vercingetorix created by Caesar is the image and source of the meanings which become attached to him by Napoleon III in the future.

The second chapter demonstrates how Caesar's construction is utilized by pre-modern French governments throughout the long nineteenth century. Napoleon III especially pushed the practice of these meanings transferred from the *Gallic Wars*, such as pride and resistance, to the forefront of Vercingetorix's myth. By being utilized as a national symbol, and through his new popularity in the world of art, the idea of his legacy would begin to be transferred to the common people of France. With helpful ties in these artworks connecting the Gauls and Vercingetorix to pre-existing heroes such as Joan of Arc, Napoleon III's goal of identifying Vercingetorix as a national rallying point for the people would be strengthened tremendously.

The French experiences in the War of 1870 and World War II, rather than weakening Vercingetorix's newfound connection to the French people, would actually serve to strengthen it. Associations of defeat during the War of 1870, and the establishment of Vichy France during World War II presented parallels to the Gallic experience of defeat at Alesia and the subsequent Roman occupation. These parallels would push the French people to more closely—consciously and unconsciously—identify themselves with the Gauls.

The third chapter elaborates on how Vercingetorix's legacy is developed throughout the twentieth century and into the present. Firstly, that the idea of identification with the Gauls was not just limited to mainland France. The French

education system's newfound emphasis on the Gauls likely contributed to the gallicization of French colonies as well. The French government pushed a common Gallic history in classrooms, which resulted in the French ideal of 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois' being applied unanimously to both mainland and colonial France. As seen with Abd-el-Kader, this resulted in the creation of colonial heroes whose meanings mirrored those of Vercingetorix.

Vercingetorix's ideals eventually come to be applied to the realm of media in France, as the battlefield of soft power replaces that of the physical, militaristic one. America's commercial strength in the postwar world would prompt the response of French newspapers and businesses, who needed competitors of their own to retain a French presence in the world of commerce (and thus influence). As an opponent of American soft power, the bande dessinée *Asterix* would be created with Vercingetorix's ideals in mind. In time, the titular character Asterix would become so popular in the Francophone world that he would head a thriving media presence. This presence would strengthen and continue the identification the French people held towards Vercingetorix and the Gauls as ancestral, relatable figures. The creation of the MuséoParc Alésia in 2012 offers support to these claims, as its celebrated culture of reenactment paints the Gallic warriors in an exciting and captivating light.

As shown by these three chapters, Vercingetorix is the most significant symbol which has contributed to the development of French nationalism and identity. The ideals which are included in his legacy have remained unchanged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: resistance, self-sacrifice, and pride. Across these times, the majority of French leaders have utilized Vercingetorix's legacy to create a rallying point for the French people. In turn, these consistent usages have cemented Vercingetorix's place as a national icon and hero. But most importantly, it has resulted in the unconscious identification of the Gauls and Vercingetorix as French ancestors.

Bibliography

- Adema, Suzanne M. "Encouraging Troops, Persuading Narratees: Pre-Battle Exhortations in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* as a Narrative Device." In *The Art of History. Literary Perspectives on Greek and Roman Historiography*, edited by V. Liotsakis and S. Farrington, 219-240. Berlin, 2016.
https://www.academia.edu/28802963/Adema_S.M._2016._Encouraging_Troops_Persuading_Narratees_Pre-Battle_Exhortations_in_Caesar_s_Bellum_Gallicum_as_a_Narrative_Device_in_V._Liotsakis_and_S._Farrington_eds._The_Art_of_History._Literary_Perspectives_on_Greek_and_Roman_Historiography._Berlin._219-240.
- Brunaux, Jean-Louis. *Alésia*. Éditions Gallimard, 2012.
- Caesar, Julius. *The Gallic War*. Translated by Carolyn Hammond. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- Dietler, Michael. "A Tale of Three Sites: The Monumentalization of Celtic Oppida and the Politics of Collective Memory and Identity." *World Archaeology* 30, no. 1 (Jun 1998): 72-89. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/125010>.
- Dietler, Michael. "'Our Ancestors the Gauls': Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 96, no. 3 (September 1994): 584-605. www.jstor.org/stable/682302.
- Goudineau, Christian. « La Gaule, les Gaulois, Vercingétorix et le sentiment national au XIXe siècle,» *Beihefte der Francia*, Bd. 66 (2008): 53-71.
- Gross, Janice. "Revisiting 'nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois': Scripting and Postscripting Francophone Identity." *The French Review* 78, no. 5 (2005): 948-59. www.jstor.org/stable/25479983.
- Jansen, Jan C. "Creating National Heroes: Colonial Rule, Anticolonial Politics and Conflicting Memories of Emir 'Abd al-Qadir in Algeria, 1900–1960s." *History and Memory* 28, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2016): 3-46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/histmemo.28.2.0003>.
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.
- King, Anthony. "Vercingetorix, Asterix and the Gauls: the use of Gallic national symbols in 19th- and 20th-century French politics and culture." 1-16. Winchester, Hampshire: University of Winchester, 2015.
- Kraus, Christina S. "Divide and conquer: Caesar, De bello gallico 7." In *Ancient Historiography and its Contexts: Studies in Honour of A. J. Woodman*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010. https://www.academia.edu/11853794/Divide_and_conquer_Caesar_De_bello_gallico_7.
- Lehoczky, Etelka. "With A Glug Of Potion And A New Translation, 'Asterix' Aims To Conquer America." *NPR*, July 15, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/15/890991843/with-a-glug-of-potion-and-a-new-translation-asterix-aims-to-conquer-america>.
- Marlowe, Lara. "Asterix is a question of French national pride." *The Irish Times*, Feb 3, 1999. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/asterix-is-a-question-of-french-national-pride-1.148407>.
- Nice, Alex. "Caesar, Julius. Commentaries on the Gallic War." In *Classical Literature and Its Times*, edited by J. Moss, 93-103. Los Angeles: Moss Publishing, 2006. https://www.academia.edu/693919/Caesar_Julius_Commentaries_on_the_Gallic_War_in_Classical_Literature_and_its_Times_ed._J._Moss._Los_Angeles_Moss_Publishing_2006_93-103.

- Phegley, Kiel. "Retired 'Asterix' artist Albert Uderzo surprises with 'Charlie Hebdo' tribute." *CBR.com*, Jan 9, 2015. <https://www.cbr.com/retired-asterix-artist-albert-uderzo-surprises-with-charlie-hebdo-tribute/>.
- Riggsby, Andrew. "In a Different Voice? Speech and Agency in de Bello Gallico" colloquium on "Representations of the Alien," Getty Villa, Mar. 2008; University of Georgia, July 2012. https://www.academia.edu/3984899/In_a_Different_Voice_Aliens_and_Agency_in_de_Bello_Gallico.
- Rose, Cynthia. "Albert Uderzo: 1927-2020." *The Comics Journal*, Mar 27, 2020. <http://www.tcj.com/albert-uderzo-1927-2020/>.
- Sadler, John and Rosie Serdiville. *Caesar's Greatest Victory: The Battle of Alesia, 52 BC*. Oxford and Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2016.
- Simon, André. *Vercingétorix et l'idéologie Française*. Paris: Éditions Imago, 1989.
- Stevens, C. E. "The « Bellum Gallicum » as a Work of Propaganda." *Latomus* 11, no. 2 (1952): 165-79. www.jstor.org/stable/41519768.
- Strauss, Barry. "The Antiwar Museum That Wasn't: Alésia and the contradictions of the European heart." *City Journal*, June 17, 2013. <https://www.city-journal.org/html/antiwar-museum-wasn%E2%80%99t-9770.html>.
- Toye, Richard. "Asterix the Gaul – Colonial Freedom Fighter or Neo-Imperialist?" *Centre for Imperial and Global History, University of Exeter*, March 6, 2014. <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2014/03/06/asterix-the-gaul-colonial-freedom-fighter-or-neo-imperialist/>.
- Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. London, J.M. Dent; New York, E.P. Dutton. 1910. <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0003.tlg001.perseus-eng3:1.22>.
- Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène. *Monument à Vercingétorix*, 1865. Inscription carving. Alise-Sainte-Reine, Côte-d'Or, Burgundy, France.