Garcilaso’s Third *Eclogue*, Verses 65-68: The Tagus River, Exile, and Caesar’s Campaign in Gaul

La primera descripción que hace Garcilaso de la Vega del río Tajo en la Égloga tercera alude claramente a la Guerra de las Galias de Julio César y la descripción que hace este del río Arar (hoy día conocido como Saona). El presente estudio investiga las razones de esta sorprendente alusión y procura demostrar que el uso del texto cesariano como modelo funciona como una referencia al destierro de Garcilaso por el Emperador Carlos V. Con esta referencia Garcilaso lamenta su exilio a la vez que celebra la ciudad de Toledo y su río que, a causa de ese destierro, jamás volvería a ver.

Palabras clave: Garcilaso de la Vega, Égloga tercera, emperadores, ríos, exilio.

The first description of the Tagus River in Garcilaso de la Vega’s third Eclogue contains a clear allusion to Julius Caesar’s Gallic War and its description of the Arar River (today called the Saône). This study analyzes the reasons for this surprising allusion and attempts to demonstrate that the use of the Caesarian text as a model functions as a reference to Garcilaso’s exile, decreed by Emperor Charles V. The reference to Caesar’s text allows Garcilaso to lament his exile even as he praises the city of Toledo and its river, which, because of that exile, he would never see again.

Keywords: Garcilaso de la Vega, Third Eclogue, Emperors, Rivers, Exile.

The opening description of the Tagus River in Garcilaso de la Vega’s third *Eclogue* contains an allusion that at first sight seems rather surprising. Garcilaso writes that the river’s current moves so slowly that it is almost impossible to determine which way it is flowing:

Con tanta mansedumbre el cristalino
Tajo en aquella parte caminaba
que pudieran los ojos el camino
determinar apenas que llevaba. (**Eclogue** 3.65-68)

---

[1] **Eclogue** 3.65-68
The description alludes to a passage in Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, or *Gallic War*, in which the Saône River, called the Arar in Latin, is described as having the same kind of current. As Caesar writes:

Flumen est Arar, quod per fines Haeduorum et Sequanorum in Rhodanum influit, incredibili lenitate, ita ut oculis in utram partem flua iudicari non possit.

(There is a river called the Arar, which flows through the lands of the Aedui and the Sequani into the Rhône so very slowly that it is impossible to tell just by looking in which direction it is flowing.)

There is little doubt that this is the allusion that Garcilaso’s text is trying to make, as it was identified by his earliest commentators, El Brocense and Fernando de Herrera. And in the twentieth century Eugenio Hernández Vista reexamined the parallel and proved fairly conclusively, based on a stylistic comparison, that Garcilaso modeled the description of the Tagus on this passage in Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, and Hernández Vista’s conclusion was cited approvingly by Dámaso Alonso (63-64n.6).

Rivers perform important functions in Garcilaso’s eclogues: the Danube, site of his confinement after being exiled by Emperor Charles V, in the third *canción*; the Tormes in the second *Eclogue*, followed by the Rhine and the Danube again. But none rivals the Tagus in importance, especially its place in the third *Eclogue* as the *locus amoenus* in which the action is set, as well as symbol of Garcilaso’s hometown of Toledo.

Why, then, would Garcilaso model his initial description of the Tagus on a prose text by Caesar? Hernández Vista suggests that Garcilaso’s situation during the composition of the third *Eclogue* may have brought the passage to mind – as is well known, he was campaigning in Provence with the Emperor Charles V’s army. The purpose of the present essay is to go further and suggest that the passage, in drawing on the associations surrounding the Arar River in Caesar and in later writers such as Vergil, is a complex allusion to Garcilaso’s exile and the circumstances surrounding it: his witnessing of a betrothal that angered the Emperor as well as his wife, Isabel of Portugal, and which resulted in his temporary banishment to an island in the Danube. The passage does this by making a connection between Roman emperors – both Caesar and Charles V – and rivers as symbols of imperial power and objects of military conquest. The passage allows Garcilaso to lament how Charles V has used this power to exile him from his native city of Toledo, at the very moment that he celebrates the city’s river by connecting it to the great rivers of Roman literature such as the Tiber.
A key to these meanings comes in Fernando de Herrera’s extensive comment on the passage in his Anotaciones a la poesía de Garcilaso, which I quote in full:

Con tanta. [v. 65] Lo mismo díse Silio en el Libro 4 del Tesín, que parece que no corre:

vixlabi credas ... Iulio César en el Primero de La guerra de Galia, hablando de la Sena, que nace en los fines de Borgoña i Lorrena, no lexos del monte Vógeso, díse assí: flumen est Arar, quod per fines Heduorum, & Sequanorum in Rhodanum influit incredibilis lenitate, ita ut oculis in utram partem influat, iudicari no possit. Aldo, hijo de Paulo Manucio, emienda este lugar i pone levitate, porque con ella se puede engañar la vista, i no le satisfaze que diga lenitate, porque no le parece que conviene al rio Arar. Pero, ¿por qué no se puede engañar este sentido con la blandura i sosiego i tardança de la corriente? Iuan Goropio piensa que Arar tiene tal nombre en lengua címbrica por su tardança i pereza, i Francisco Otomano es conforme a mi opinión. (945-46)

As Herrera’s comment moves from a possible parallel in Silius Italicus to the one in Caesar’s Bellum Gallicum, the question for the commentator becomes the accuracy of the classical text: should the text read that the Arar seemed to flow with incredible levitate (roughly “quickness” or “lightness”)? Or with incredible lenitate (“smoothness” or “gentleness”)? To modern readers familiar with the Anotaciones, this might look like yet another case of Herrera’s pedantry, in this case in the form of a polemic over textual variants with a fellow humanist, the Venetian editor Aldo Manuzio the Younger (El Brocense, by contrast, limited himself to noting the parallel). But what is at stake here? Why does Herrera consider the textual history of the Caesar passage so important? The answer goes a long way toward explaining why Garcilaso is using an allusion to the description of the Arar in Caesar to describe his exile.

A closer examination reveals that Herrera’s survey of the textual criticism of the passage, far from idle pedantry, in fact reflects a significant dispute among sixteenth-century interpreters of the Bellum Gallicum, one that had relevance for the political meaning of Caesar’s text. The classicist Antonio Moreno Hernández has dedicated an entire article to this issue, in which he reports that lenitate, “smoothness” or “gentleness” (“lentitud de movimiento” in Moreno Hernández’s gloss) was the word that appeared in the editio princeps of the Bellum Gallicum and all editions up until 1560. As Moreno Hernández notes, this reading was also accepted by the first Castilian translation of Caesar, that of Diego López de Toledo, in which he translates incredibili lenitate as “tan manso” (318): “Ay un rio que se
llamava Arar / el qual va por las tierras delos Heduos y Secanos a entrar en Rodano, y va tan manso que no se puede bien juzgar hazia que parte corre.” (Caesar, *Commentarios de Gayo Julio Cesar* 4r.)

The reading of *levitate*, “quickness” or “lightness,” which Herrera rejects, was first proposed by the Venetian humanist Giovanni Michele Bruto in his 1560 edition of Caesar (Moreno Hernández 318). Bruto’s suggestion provoked a debate among editors of Caesar, who argued for the earlier reading of *lenitate* on geographical grounds, namely that the Saône River is in fact slow, and Herrera’s note is a partial account of this debate. And as we see, Herrera accepts the reading of *lenitate*, although he is wrong in pointing the finger at the Aldo Manuzio the Younger, and not at his compatriot Giovanni Michele Bruto, as the culprit for suggesting *levitate* for *lenitate* in the first place.

But Moreno Hernández advances another reason why *lenitate* should be preferred to *levitate* in this passage, and that is that *lenitas* has a political meaning in Caesar. In his account of the Roman civil war, the *De bello civili*, Caesar used the word to describe his own clemency in relation to his defeated enemies, first when referring to his treatment of Pompey’s soldiers in Spain (and here López de Toledo translates *lenitas* as “mansedumbre”), and later when describing his pardon of Pompey’s soldiers after the battle of Pharsalus. Caesar’s use of *lenitas* in the *Bellum Gallicum* is the only time he uses it for natural phenomena, and Moreno Hernández suggests that he does so because he wants to mark a contrast with his actions in the *Civil War* (321-22). In other words, in the *Civil War* he had shown clemency – *lenitas* – to his fellow Romans, but in the *Gallic War* he did not want to depict himself showing any mercy to the Gauls, so he used *lenitas* to describe a river, and not his own actions (Moreno Hernández 321-22).

So the passage describing the flow of the Arar in Caesar has political overtones, but one must not forget the undeniably poetic force of the passage. Indeed, Latin writers and poets seem to have been attracted to this image of a river moving so slowly that it is difficult to discern the direction of its flow. Caesar’s description of the deceptive flow of the Arar became a standard characteristic attached to the river in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Later Latin writers combined Caesar’s description of the Arar with depictions of the Rhodanus, or Rhône – into which the Arar flows, as Caesar notes – that highlighted the opposite characteristic – the fast current – of the latter river, and Petrarch picked up on these contrasting qualities in his description of the rivers in his life of Caesar. And at least one contemporary of Garcilaso cited the passage in his own work: Andrea Navagero, Venetian ambassador to the court of Charles V, as
he passed through Lyon on his way back to Italy from Spain in August of 1528.  

As a result of Caesar’s description, then, the Arar, or Sôane, had a tradition of aesthetic beauty as well as tromp l’oeil features that would have appealed to Garcilaso in writing the third Eclogue, which combines both characteristics. But the Arar also carried meanings related to Caesar’s power and his military campaign in Gaul. The description of the Arar comes when Caesar has already narrated the first battles of the Bellum Gallicum. And directly after his description of the Arar and its flow, Caesar reports that the Helvetii tried to cross it but are killed by his troops, which Caesar sees as vengeance for a historic Roman defeat. He then builds a bridge over the river and crosses it quickly with his men (1.13).  

Caesar’s military maneuverings in and around the Arar highlight the important relationship between Roman emperors and rivers that has been most recently studied by Santiago Montero in his book El emperador y los ríos: how the emperors engineered them, how they built bridges over them, how they used them in battle. Garcilaso had alluded to this relationship many times in his poetry before his description of the Tagus in the third Eclogue, and these allusions will help us understand the reference to the Arar River in his last composition.  

The first such allusion in Garcilaso is in the second Eclogue where Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, gran duque de Alba, is described crossing the Rhine River on his way to Vienna to join Charles V and his army as they prepare to relieve Suleyman the Magnificent’s siege of the city:  

Tomábale en su seno el caudaloso y claro rio, gozoso de tal gloria, trayendo a la memoria cuando vino el vencedor latino al mismo paso. (Eclogue 2.1471-74)  

The vencedor latino is Caesar, and the allusion is to Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine as it is described in the Bellum Gallicum, as Herrera notes: “Perífrasis de Iulio César o antonomasia... Fue César el primer capitán romano que pasó el Rin i venció a los tudescos ...” (893-94). Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine was famous even in his own time. The Rhine was a frontier separating Roman territory from barbarian lands. But Caesar added to the fame of the crossing by the way in which he accomplished it: the construction of the bridge, which Caesar describes in detail. The fame of Caesar’s bridge over the Rhine continued into the Renaissance, in which commentators tried their hand at figuring out exactly how the bridge was constructed, and many sixteenth-century editions of the Bellum Gallicum
contained illustrations of what the bridge might have looked like (Fernández-Savater Martín and Conde Salazar).

Charles V knew of this exploit. He owned several editions of the *Gallic War*, in several languages, including an Italian translation by Agostino Ortica della Porta which, like many editions of Caesar at the time, had an illustration of the bridge. Furthermore, an inventory of his library contains records that he had designs of the bridge. And according to Ambrosio de Morales in his *Antigüedades de las ciudades de España*, Juanelo Turriano, the emperor’s favorite engineer and the designer of the water wheels of Toledo, also constructed a bridge over the Tagus on the model of Caesar’s bridge in the *Bellum Gallicum*.

Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine was also connected in the early modern imagination to another event: the crossing of the Rubicon to initiate the Roman Civil War in 49 B.C. This event was also used to connect Charles V to Caesar, especially in relation to the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547, where Charles’ army crossed the Elbe River and defeated the forces of the Schmalkaldic league. The ability of a Roman emperor to cross rivers and, symbolically, to conquer them, was considered important — hence Caesar’s fame for crossing the Rhine, as well as the appearance of rivers in triumphal processions, a practice adopted by Charles V, for example, after the victory in Tunis. Conversely, the emperor’s failure to cross a river and subdue an opponent could be a source of scorn, as could be seen when certain French representatives in Rome rejoiced over the failure of Charles V’s campaign in Provence by making fun of his inability to cross the Rhône River with a graffito that read “Non plus ultra Rhodanus” — a parody, of course, of Charles’ *Plus Ultra* columnar device (qtd. in Rosenthal 228). The campaign in question is, incidentally, the one during which Garcilaso wrote the third *Eclogue*, and in which he later met his death.

Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine is not the only event from Roman history alluded to in this passage however. Directly after the mention of *el vencedor latino*, the emphasis shifts to another Roman and another river:

> No se mostraba escaso de sus ondas;  
> antes, con aguas hondas que engendraba,  
> los bajos igualaba, ya liviano  
> barco daba de mano, el cual, volando,  
> atrás iba dejando muros, torres. (2.1475-79)

The image of Fernando Álvarez de Toledo’s boat traveling on the Rhine alludes to a river journey in Vergil’s *Aeneid*: Aeneas’ voyage on the Tiber River in Book 8. Aeneas, recently landed in Italy with his Trojan band and
preparing to battle the native Latins, has just spent the night beside the Tiber River, and the river in the form of a man has come to him in a dream and prophesied success in the Trojans’ upcoming war. Upon waking, Aeneas chooses two galleys and prepares to set out on the river, when he sees a white sow, which he takes as a favorable omen. He sacrifices it to Juno and then embarks with his men. The river, Vergil tells us, has calmed its current (\textit{fluvium . . . tumentem leniit, v. 87}) in order to give the Trojan ships a smooth ride, and the Trojans applaud as they glide effortlessly across the water:

\begin{quote}
Thybris ea fluvium, quam longa est, nocte tumentem leniit, et tacita refluentes ita substituit unda, mitis ut in morem stagni placidaeque paludis sternere te aequor aquis, remo ut luctamen abesset. 
\textit{ergo iter inceptum celerant rumore secundo: labitur uncta vadis abies; mirantur et undae, miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe scuta virum fluvio pictasque innare carinas. (Aeneid 8.86-93)}
\end{quote}

(All that night long Tiber calmed his swelling flood, and flowing back with silent wave so halted that like a gentle pool or quiet mere he smoothed his watery plain, so that the oars might know no struggle. Therefore with cheering cries they speed the voyage they have begun; over the waters glides the well-pitched pine; in wonder the waves, in wonder the woods unused to such a sight, view the far-gleaming shields of warriors and the painted hulls floating on the stream.)

Herrera, in identifying the allusion to the \textit{Aeneid} in this passage, feels the need to enter into interpretative disputes surrounding the classical text, much as he did in the case of Caesar’s description of the Arar. The focus of his attention is the part of the passage in which the Trojans cheer as they begin their voyage (\textit{ergo iter inceptum celerant rumore secundo}):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Rumore secundo no quiere decir buena fama, porque a ninguno hazían daño, como pensó Paulo Manucio; i assí dize Turnebo, dotíssimo intérprete de los lugares difíciles, en el \textit{Capítulo 40 del Libro 24: Existimo Maronem dicere Troianos lenitate fluminis & monstro albae scrophae exhilaratos, laetis & secundis ominibus & acclamationibus iter inceptum urgere . . . .} (894-95)}
\end{quote}

Herrera disputes the interpretation of \textit{rumore secundo}, literally a favorable sound or noise, by the Venetian printer and humanist Paulo Manuzio (incidentally, the father of Aldo Manuzio the Younger, mistakenly blamed
by Herrera for changing the reading of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*). To
support his view he cites the interpretation of the lines in the *Adversaria*, a
collection of commentaries on difficult passages in classical literature by
the French humanist Adrian Turnèbe, who says, in interpreting the
meaning of *rumore sedundo*: "I think that Vergil is saying that the Trojans,
cheered by the calm of the river [*lenitate fluminis*] and the omen of the
white sow, press on with the course they have taken with favorable omens
and acclamation." As we see in Turnèbe's commentary cited by Herrera,
we again have the concept of *lenitas* – *lenitate fluminis*, which picks up on
the *fluvium ... tumentem leniit* of the original passage – to describe a river
and associate it with an emperor – in this case, the prefiguration of all
Roman emperors, Aeneas.

So the two traditions of emperors on rivers alluded to in the second
and third *Eclogues* – the river voyage of Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, and Caesar
and the Arar River in the *Bellum Gallicum* – are united by the adjective
*lenis* and its derivatives. It should be said that this is not the first time that Vergil
associates the Tiber, Rome's river, with *lenitas*. This came when Creusa,
Aeneas' wife, appeared as a ghost in Book 2 of the epic and told the hero
that he and the Trojans must find the land of the Tiber and make a new life
there. Significantly, Creusa suggests that arrival at the Tiber will signal that
the Trojans' exile is at an end:

Longa tibi exsilia, et vastum maris aequor arandum;
et terram Hesperiam venies, ubi Lydius arva
inter opima virum leni fluit agmine Thybris. (*Aeneid* 2.780-82)

(Long exile is your lot, a vast stretch of sea you must plough; and you will come to
the land Hesperia, where amid the rich fields of husbandmen the Lydian Tiber
flows with gentle sweep) (1:369).

The use of *lenis* to describe the Tiber, considered the father of Roman
rivers, was followed by later authors such as the Gallo-Roman poet
Ausonius, who praised the Moselle, using the same word in the *Mosella*.

Aeneas' voyage on the Tiber also provides the background of a second
river crossing of the second *Eclogue*, in this case Charles V's crossing of the
Danube before the Battle of Vienna against Suleyman's forces. While he
and Fernando are at the river's edge they fall asleep and see the Danube in
the form of a man rise up and instruct them on the events to come. The
Danube's instructions are not as precise as the Tiber's prophecy to Aeneas
– Garcilaso limits himself to saying that the river "mostraba / todo cuan
to tocaba al gran negocio" – but the model in the *Aeneid* is clear enough and
all the early commentators point it out. Then the emperor and Fernando awake and board ships. And as the Rhine did for Fernando earlier, the Danube smooths the way for Charles V:

El río, sin tardanza, parecía
que'l agua disponía al gran viaje;
allanaba el pasaje y la corriente
para que fácilmente aquella armada
que había de ser guiada por su mano,
en el remar liviano y dulce viese
cuánto el Danubio fuese favorable. (2.1602-08)

The descriptions of the river crossings in the second Eclogue are clearly encomiastic in intent, celebrating don Fernando and Charles V for their military prowess in crossing the Rhine and the Danube rivers, respectively, in preparation for Charles' defeat of Suleyman's army. And Garcilaso associates these feats with the Roman emperors, especially Caesar, and also Vergil's Aeneas. The allusion to the Arar in the description of the Tagus in the third Eclogue clearly participates in this web of associations. At the same time, however, the allusion to the Arar River in the description of the Tagus marks a change in the relationship between the emperor and rivers. Here the war and imperial service are putting unwelcome pressure on Garcilaso's personal life, as is clear from the poem's dedication: as he says to María, the dedicatee: "Entre las armas del sangriento Marte, / do apenas hay quien su furor contraste, / hurté de tiempo aquesta breve suma, / tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma" (vv. 37-40). As the dedication ends and Garcilaso passes on to describe the locus amoenus near the Tagus, it would seem that he has succeeded in carving out a space in which to compose the rest of the eclogue, which will have nothing to do with war. But the depiction of the Tagus River in the same terms as Caesar's description of a river in Gaul is important because it is yet another indication that the locus amoenus of the third Eclogue is very much connected to Garcilaso's service as a soldier. The mansedumbre of the Tagus River connects it to the lenitas of the Roman rivers in Caesar and Vergil. The Tagus, by allusion, is thus an imperial river, connected to Charles V and Spain's territorial pretensions. But it is also Garcilaso's hometown river, one which he uses the eclogue to praise and make it the bearer of Elisa's name, and Garcilaso's poetry generally, to Portugal and the sea.
The word *mansedumbre* is used again later in the eclogue in describing the famous fourth tapestry, woven by the nymph Nise, which depicts Toledo and the Tagus running past it:

Estaba puesta en la sublime cumbre
del monte, y desd'allí por él sembrada,
aquella ilustre y clara pesadumbre
d'antiguos edificios adornada.
D'allí con agradable *mansedumbre*
el Tajo va siguiendo su jornada
y regando los campus y arboledas
con artificio de las altas ruedas. (*Eclogue* 3.209-16 [emphasis mine])

Here the word *mansedumbre* participates in a web of oppositions: as it did in its first appearance, it describes the slow and pleasant flow of the Tagus, but this comes almost directly after it is represented as flowing quickly – "con ímpetu corriendo y con ruido" (204); the *mansedumbre* of the Tagus is connected by rhyme to the heavy and imposing *pesadumbre* of the city; and the river, in the earlier stanza, "baña / la más felice tierra de España" (199-200) but yet it is also the river of Garcilaso's *patria chica*. Though Garcilaso had used the adjective *manso* in the past to describe the sound of water – including that of the Danube River, the site of the first stage of his exile, in the third *canción* – the third *Eclogue* is the only composition in which he uses the word *mansedumbre*, first in clear allusion to the Arar in Caesar, and then again to describe the flow of the river at the height of the visual representation of both the river and Toledo. The *mansedumbre* of the Tagus in the third *Eclogue* is thus many things: Charles V's power; his push into Provence, just as Caesar invaded Gaul; but it is also the aesthetically beautiful description of a river, one that prefigures the description of the tapestries later, and in the case of the last passage, it is represented within a tapestry itself. And the river described, the Tagus, is the river which comforts the mind of the poet who, though eventually allowed to live in Naples, was still under punishment of exile.

And exile, indeed, is the strongest association activated by the reference to the Arar in the opening description of the Tagus in the third *Eclogue*. Garcilaso does this not only with the reference to Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, but also by alluding to intertexts that reinforce the association of the Arar – and hence the Tagus – to exile and nostalgia for home, as well as to imperial power. Vergil's first *Eclogue*, perhaps the most influential of pastoral poems and long recognized as an influence on Garcilaso's eclogues, is one such text. In this poem the Arar is mentioned by Tityrus,
the shepherd who has been allowed to keep his farm while others have been evicted from their lands. Tityrus’ mention of the Arar comes as he promises to not to lose the memory of the benefactor who has given him this protection:

TITYRUS: Ante leves ergo pascentur in aethere cervi
et fera destituent nudos in litore pisces,
ante pererratis amborum finibus exsul
aut Ararim Parthus bibet aut Germania Tigrim,
quam nostro illius labatur pectore vulus. (Eclogue 1.59-63)

In rhetorical terms, the passage is an adynaton, a description of impossibilities: the Parthians would never exchange places with the Germans and drink from the Arar, nor vice versa in the case of the Germans from the Tigris.

The situation of Meliboeus, the other shepherd in the eclogue, is quite different: he asserts that such a voyage is indeed possible, as he himself knows because he will have to undertake it as he flees into exile:

MELIBOEUS: At nos hinc alii sitientis ibimus Afros,
pars Scythiam et rapidum cretae veniemus Oaxen
et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos. (1.64-66)

The statement contains a bitter irony that commentators have not failed to note: Meliboeus will indeed go to these places as he wanders in exile – the impossible has become for him real – and he wonders if he will ever see his farm again, which is due to be taken over at any moment by an impious and barbarous soldier (vv. 67-72). The historical background of the eclogue is one of real exile. According to Vergil’s ancient biographers, the dispossession of Meliboeus and the reprieve granted Tityrus are references to the expropriation of land to
benefit veterans of the victorious Antony and Octavian in 42-41 B.C. These
same biographers report that Vergil himself was a victim of these
expropriations, and that his farm near Mantua was taken away from him,
though relationships with influential figures allowed him to recover his
farm eventually. While it is hard to know whether these stories are true, or
simply later attempts to provide biographical motivations for these
passages, there is no doubt that the first Eclogue is dominated by exile –
Meliboeus’ exile, and Tityrus’ rescue from such a fate – and has given later
writers a model with which to speak about exile and displacement in
pastoral guise. And in choosing the Arar as the river that symbolizes
exile, Vergil seems to have had precisely Caesar’s description of the river in
the Bellum Gallicum in mind.

These associations surrounding the Arar River were taken up by
Jacopo Sannazaro in Latin poems – the piscatorial eclogues, or Piscatoriae,
and the De partu virginis, the epic depicting the birth of Christ – long
recognized as an influence on Garcilaso’s eclogues. In Sannazaro the Arar
has some of the same ambivalence as in Vergil, and the same connections
to Caesar’s depiction of it in the Bellum Gallicum: on the one hand it
demonstrates Caesar’s power and the extension of Roman conquest; on
the other, it is a signifier of exile and the personal sorrow of the one who
suffers it.

Sannazaro’s own exile provides the biographical basis for the allusions
to the Arar and other French rivers in his Latin poetry (Vecce 45-46).
Sannazaro accompanied the king of Naples, Federigo d’Aragona, into exile
in France after the French invaded and captured the kingdom in 1501.
Sannazaro stayed with his king in France (where Federigo had become
essentially a prisoner of the French king Louis XII) until 1505, when he
was finally able to return to Naples, which had been retaken by Spain.
During his stay in France, Sannazaro stayed in Lyon, which is beside the
Saône, and so it is no surprise that he alludes to the story of his exile
precisely with a reference to that river in his Latin poetry. Sannazaro does
this by taking the two strands we have been examining till now – the
identification of the river with Gaul in Caesar, and the connection to exile
in Vergil – and fusing them with his own biographical situation as an exile.

In the fifth Piscatoria, Sannazaro makes reference to his exile through
a fisherman named Thelgon, who describes the places he has known,
including France, the Varus and the Arar.

Me Ligurum durae rupes, me Gallica norunt
litora, piscantem pariter me Varus et ingens
sensit Arar, sensere maris fera monstra Britanni. (Piscatoria 5.112-15)
(The hard cliffs of the Ligurians know me, the shores of Gaul, the Var likewise has experienced my fishing and the mighty Saône, the wild monsters of the sea off Britain have experienced it.)

In this context it is significant that Sannazaro’s humanist friends also described his exile by using vocabulary from Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*: for example, Pietro Summonte, the Neapolitan humanist who published the first authorized edition of the *Arcadia*, Sannazaro’s pastoral novel; and Giovanni Pontano in his poem *De hortis hesperidum*.

Sannazaro gives the Saône a more public meaning in a Latin elegy to Guy de Rochefort, Grand Chancellor to the French king Louis XII. Written in the voice of Astraea, the Roman goddess of Justice, the poem is a plea to Rochefort to use his power to stop the French from preying on conquered Neapolitan lands.

Ergo tu, regem cui fas lenire potentem,
da desideriis vela secunda meis.
Effice, iustitiae soliti reddantur honores;
dignus es altricem qui tueare tuam:
sed soror ut nostros aequet Clementia fasces:
qua sine, dura nimis, difficilisque vocer.  (*Elegy* 2.8.41-46)

(And so you, whose right it is to turn a powerful king toward leniency, grant favorable sailing to my desires. See to it that her accustomed honors are restored to Justice—you are worthy to protect your nurse—but also that our sister Clemency, without whom I might be called too unyielding and intractable, shares equally in our power.)  (179)

Astraea then wishes him victory in a future Crusade, which will lead to a triumph on the Rhône and Saône rivers:

Sic Thodanum Nilo spectes dare iura suacto:  
perque Araris ripas plurima laurus eat.  (51-52).

(Thus may you behold the Rhône prescribing laws for the conquered Nile, and many a laurel making its way along the banks of the Saône.)  (181)

Sannazaro’s plea draws on Caesarian imagery: Guy de Rochefort is depicted with the power to convince his king to be lenient—*lenire* (v. 41)—and is enjoined to give a role to Clementia, Astraea’s sister—recall the use
of lenitas in a political context as well as clementia in Caesar’s Bellum civile. Then comes the mention of the Rhône and the Saône, rivers joined by Caesar in the Bellum Gallicum, as we have seen.

The Arar makes an appearance in a fully epic and imperial register in the De partu virginis, in the census of the Roman world ordered by Augustus on the eve of Christ’s birth. Reported briefly in the Gospel of Luke (2: 1-2) the event is expanded by Sannazar into an extensive catalogue of over a hundred lines which names about a hundred lands and peoples ruled by Rome. The mention of the Arar comes in the census of lands conquered by Caesar:

Gallia caesareis Latio dignata triumphis,
quam Rhodanus, quam findit Arar, quam permeat ingens
Sequana piscosoque interluit amne Garumna. (De partu virginis 2.195-97)

(Gaul, glorified in Latium for the triumphs of Caesar, which the Rhône, which the Saône divides, through which the mighty Seine makes its way, and the Garonne passes with its fish-filled waters) (45).

As in the examples discussed earlier, the Arar here signifies Caesar’s power as conqueror. It is significant that the Tagus is mentioned only six lines later – in its traditional depiction as carrying gold in its current, and one that Garcilaso employs in the third Eclogue – as the census moves from Gaul to Hispania (De partu virginis 2.189-203).45

In sum, Sannazar’s references to the Arar are also something that Garcilaso likely drew on. His exile, spent in part by the river, is alluded to by mentions of the Arar, which activate associations both to Caesar’s conquest of Gaul and the exile of Vergilian characters. But Sannazar also gives the Arar a more public meaning, perhaps even the opposite meaning, one of praise for Caesar’s conquests of lands outside Italy and their role in the making of a Christian empire.

A final text can shed light on the importance of rivers and exile in Sannazar, and the influence that this association had on Garcilaso’s poetry. The text is a Latin epigram that Sannazar wrote before his exile in France in which he addresses the nymph of the river Sebetho:

Parthenope mihi culta vale, blandissima Siren…
................. Virgo Sebethias, amnes,
absentique tuas det mihi somnus aquas.
Det fesso aestivas umbras sopor, et levis aura
fluminaque ipsa suo lene sonent strepitu.
Exilium name sponte sequor... (Epigram 3.9.1, 7-11)

(Parthenope, most delightful Siren, adored by me, farewell...Virgin Sebethias, do not deny me your beloved streams; may sleep bestow your waters upon me while I'm away. May my dreams grant me the shades of summer when I'm tired, and may a fluttering breeze and the waters themselves gently murmur with their rippling. For willingly I pursue exile.)

The Sebetho is the river of Naples, and for Sannazaro the “amato fiumicello” that was so important to the Neapolitan scenes of the Arcadia. In this poem Sannazaro wishes for the river (here referred to as the nymph Sebethias) to comfort him from afar during his exile, describing it with the adjective lenis, though here it describes the sound of the river, not its current.

In a Latin ode written during his Neapolitan period, Garcilaso seems to follow Sannazaro and make the Sebetho his home river, abandoning his allegiance to the Tagus. Addressing his friend, Antonio Telesio, a humanist and fellow member of the Accademia Pontaniana, Garcilaso begins by announcing that he is an exile (exsul), having left behind his homeland, wife, and children, and forced to flee through barbarian lands and endure exile by the Danube (vv. 1-8). Fortunately for Garcilaso, Telesio is there to help comfort him after his troubles:

O nate tristem sillicitudine
Lenire mentem et rebus atrociter
Urgentibus fulcire amici
Pectora docte manu, Thylesi! (9-12)

(Oh learned Telesio, you who were born to ease a mind sad with worry and terribly urgent matters, and to support the heart of a friend with your hand!) (11)

Now that he is in Naples, under the protection of Telesio and others, he no longer misses Toledo or its river. The Sebetho, the river of Naples, is his new home:

Iam iam sonantem Delius admovet
dexter tacentem barbiton antea;
cantare Sebethi suădent
ad vaga flumina cursitantes

Nymphae; iam amatis moenibus inclitae
non urbis, amnis quam Tagus aureo
nodare nexu gesti, ultra
me lacerat modum amor furentem. (13-20)

(Now skillful Apollo hands over the sonorous lyre, formerly silent; the Nymphs of the Sebethian River draw the wantering streams into song; now I am no longer stricken so terribly by love for the beloved walls of the great city that the Tagus River surrounds with its golden embrace) (11-12).

The final verses of the poem reinforce this idea that Toledo and the Tagus exert a diminishing hold on Garcilaso by posing a rhetorical question to Telesio:

Num tu fluentem divitiis Tagum,
num prata gyris uvida roscidis,
mutare me insanum putabas
dulcis immemoremque amicis? (69-72)

(For did you think that I would be so insane and forgetful as to exchange my dear friends for the Tagus, flowing with riches, or the fields wet with dewy mills?) (17)

In a poem about his own exile, Garcilaso adopts the Sebetho, symbol of Naples thanks to Sannazaro, and invests it with adjectives denoting ease and tranquility – the vaga flumina, the river nymphs who incite (suadent) to song, which contrast with the “harsh murmurings” of the Danube (rauco ... murmure Danubii [vv. 7-8]), itself a contrast to the original description of the Danube in his third canción, in which the water of the river emits a “manso ruido” (Gray 8). He also describes the comfort Telesio has given him after his exile by using the verb lenire (v. 10) to signify the action of mitigating exile.

These concepts are preserved in the third Eclogue, even as Garcilaso’s allegiances, as we know, are reversed. Here the Tagus is again his hometown river, invested with patriotic feeling as never before, because now Toledo and the Tagus are the scene of the action as well as the last and most important artistic representation within the poem itself – Nise’s tapestry – and, therefore, at the center of Garcilaso’s poetic identity. When Garcilaso in his initial description of the Tagus alludes to Caesar’s description of the Arar in the Bellum Gallicum, he is placing his hometown river in a web of associations. The Tagus is now associated with a barbarian river, one outside of Italy and the rivers that counted in Vergil and Sannazaro, such as the Tiber and the Sebetho. It is also associated with
exile through the meaning of the Arar in Vergil’s *Eclogues* and in Sannazaro. But the Tagus is also an imperial river, and here again Vergil and Sannazaro provide the intertexts, with the Tiber in the *Aeneid* associated with *lenitas* and the Arar in Sannazaro’s own epic as well as in his political elegy. More broadly, the Tagus, in its association with the Arar in Caesar, alludes to a military campaign, which describes Garcilaso’s circumstances in writing the eclogue, but it is also aesthetic within the eclogue, as the *mansedumbre* of the first, direct description of the river echoes the *mansedumbre* of the depiction of the Tagus on Nise’s tapestry.

Descriptions of rivers in classical authors are important, down to the detail of individual adjectives. This is the case with the Arar in Caesar, and the philological disputes about the passage among humanists, in which Herrera felt the need to intervene, confirm this. Later Vergil and Sannazaro took Caesar’s description of the Arar and developed it into somewhat contradictory associations of exile and imperial power. Garcilaso took up these associations and used them to fashion a poetic description of his *Tajo amado* that allowed him to signal meanings of exile, aesthetic beauty, and poetic *translatio*, all carried onwards by the *mansedumbre* of the river’s current.

*Dartmouth College*

**NOTES**

1 Quotations from Garcilaso’s works are from Bienvenido Morros’ edition.
2 *Bellum Gallicum* 1.12; 1: 7. All quotations of the Latin text of Caesar are from the Teubner edition and will be indicated by the traditional numeration of the Caesarian text, followed by the volume and page number. The translation is by Hammond 8–9; I have substituted “Arar” for “Saône.”
3 El Brocense: “Galanamente parece que traslada las palabras de César, *libro I, De Bello Gallico* hablando del río Arar;” followed by the quotation in Latin (note B-233 in Gallego Morell 300). Herrera’s comment will be discussed below. Morros in Garcilaso, *Obras* 516 ad. vv. 65-68 has more parallels.
4 For studies of rivers and water generally in Garcilaso’s poetry, see Araya; Lojo de Beuter; Mazzei; and Carranza.
5 For the sequence of events leading up to Garcilaso’s exile in 1523, see Vaquero Serrano 414-22.
6 All citations from the *Anotaciones* are from the edition of Inoria Pepe and José María Reyes.
On this translation see Menéndez y Pelayo 44: 142-45. In Garcilaso’s lifetime the translation was reprinted in 1529 by Miguel de Eguía with a dedicatory letter to Carlos V (Commentarios de Cayo Julio Cesar. . ; see Menéndez y Pelayo 44: 146-47).

The commentary was republished four times before the publication of the Anotaciones in 1580 (Battistini 142), and Bruto’s notes were also published in a counterfeit 1571 edition, which will be discussed below.

Two of the humanists who entered the debate over the passage and supported the reading of lenitate are cited by Herrera. “Francisco Otomano,” as noted by Reyes and Pepe in their edition of the Anotaciones (946n.45), is the French humanist François Hotman, who defended the reading of lenitate in his 1574 edition of Caesar (De bello Gallico commentarii VII, page 5 of Hotman’s commentary; see Moreno Hernández 319-20). The reference to “Iuan Goropio,” not glossed by Pepe and Reyes, is to the Flemish humanist Joannes Goropius Becanus and the collection of his works published posthumously in 1580. As Herrera indicates, Goropius discussed the Arar several times in the collection (three times by citing the passage in Caesar) in trying to demonstrate that the sound –ar signifies slowness (Hermathena 63, 110; Gallica 18; Hispanica 62, 69).

What led Herrera to make this mistake? It could have been that the text with Bruto’s notes was published by the Aldine press in later editions (1564, 1566 and 1569; see Moreno Hernández 319), but this was when Paolo Manuzio was in charge of the press, not his son Aldo the Younger. Thus the most likely explanation is that Herrera’s mistake came from consulting Aldo the Younger’s 1571 edition of Caesar. As Pierre de Nolhac pointed out, this edition is a counterfeit edition of a 1570 edition, published by the Plantin press, which had included Bruto’s notes (39-40; Bouquet 138). In the 1571 counterfeit, Aldo had included Bruto’s notes without attribution (calling it simply Libellus variorum lectionum [647ff.]), and followed it with his notes which have his own name on them (Scholia Aldi Manutii Pauli F. Aldi N). Aldo’s notes make no reference to the dispute over lenitate vs. levitate. Perhaps, then, Herrera saw the notes by Bruto and attributed them to Aldo, without noticing Aldo’s own notes that followed. Godefroy Jungerman’s 1606 edition of Caesar’s works conveniently reprints all the major commentators on the text up to that time. For more information on the commentaries, see Brown 102-26.

“todas las cosas estavan llenas de alegria y de graçia de aquellos que havian vedado tantos peligros: y de aquellos que paresçia que havian acabado sin herida tantas cosas. Cesar traya grand fruto de su antigua mansedumbre a juycio de todos [magnumque fructum suae pristinae lenitatis ... ferebat] y su consejo era alabado de todos” (Commentarios de Cayo Julio Cesar 87r; De bello civili 1.74; 2: 45).
Here, however, López de Toledo translates *lenitas* as “liviandad”: “Consolandolos mандe que se leuantasen. E hablandoles pocas cosas de su liviandad [et paucу apud eos de lenitate sua locutus] porque tουiesen menos temor guardolos a todos y encomendolos a su gente que no hiziesen mal a ninguno dellos: ni desseasen ninguna cosa delo suyo” (Commentarios de Cayo Julio Cesar 116v; De bello civili 3.98; 2: 148).

For more on Caesar’s *clementia* see Mayer 204.

As Decourt and Lucas say, Caesar’s description of the Arar in the *Bellum Gallicum* is “une courte phrase vouée par une grande postérité” because it became “un topos littéraire” (116). Campbell describes the passage as one of the “[s]triking river images” of antiquity (70).

See Vibius Sequester in his *De fluminibus, fontibus, lacubus, nemoribus, paludibus, montibus, gentibus per litteras libellus* of circa 400 CE: “Arar, Germaniae, e Vogeso monte. miscetur Rhodano. ita lene decurrit, ut vix intellegi possit decursus eius” (2; see Montero 321n.22). Herrera seems to have relied on Vibius for part of his note since he says that the Arar “nace . . . no lexos del monte Vógeso. . . .” Boccaccio in his *De montibus, silvis, fontibus, lacubus, fluminibus* . . . largely follows Vibius Sequester but replaces the adverb *lene* with *leviter* (a foreshadowing of the debate between *lenitate* and *levitate* that would come later?): “ARAR Germaniae fluvius est e Vogeso effluens monte et per fines Eduorum atque Sequanorum in Rhodanum adeo leviter currit ut vix intellegi possit quam in partem descendat. Tamen miscetur Rodano.” (1916).

The bibliography on the visual features of the eclogue is substantial. See, for example, Spitzer and Orobitg.

Asimismo se pueden enviar comodísimamente muchas cosas de Lyón hacia arriba, por ser el Araris río que no corre, y, en verdad, de la suerte que dice César en los Comentarios: *tanta lenitate ut oculis diiudicari non possit in utram partem fluat.* The translation is by Alonso Gamo (125-26); I have taken Navagero’s citation of Caesar from the 1563 edition of the *Viaggio*, which preserves *lenitate* while featuring other variations with respect to the accepted text (58r).

See also the study by Campbell.

The allusion was also noted by El Brocense (“Dícele por Julio César, que pasó el Rheno contra Alemanes”) and Nicolás Azara (notes B-206 and A-115 in Gallego Morell 297 and 678). See the comments by Araya 155-56.
For the theme of Roman emperors crossing rivers, see Montero 165-251, and Campbell 372-73; on Caesar’s bridge over the Rhine, see Montero 134-38, and Campbell 166-67.

As the inventory says, the emperor had a “caxa blanca, en que está dentro unos patrones de la puente que Julio Cesar hizo sobre un rio” (Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero “Biblioteca” 918).

Quoted in Fernández-Savater Martín and Conde Salazar, who explain why Morales claims mistakenly that the bridge was constructed during “el cerco de Marsella” (419-21, quotation 419).

See the studies by Nancy Marino

For rivers in Roman triumphs and in media such as coins, see Montero 78-90, and Campbell 373-78; for rivers depicted in Charles V’s triumphs, see Béhar, who sees also the influence of Sannazaro’s De partu virginis on these depictions (I discuss the influence of Sannazaro on Garcilaso later in the essay).

The translation is by Fairclough (2:67). All text and translations from Vergil’s works are from this edition.

Paolo Manuzio’s comment can be found in his 1558 edition (165). This edition was reprinted in 1560, 1565, and 1567, and the Plantin press in Antwerp brought out three counterfeit editions of it by 1580, the date of publication of the Anotaciones (nos.218 and 231 in Mambelli 74, 76).

As Reyes and Pepe note in their edition of the Anotaciones (813n.29) Turnèbe was a French humanist. His Adversaria went through many editions. I have used the one published in Paris in 1580. The translation is my own.

See Ricci for this and other uses of lenis in Vergil.

“...cum vada lene meant liquidarum ...,” addressed directly to the river (Mosella 61), with the adjective used adverbially, as Gruber notes (in Ausonius, Mosella 138 ad. 61); translated by Evelyn White as “... whenas thy flood moves softly...” (229), and by Antonio Alvar Ezquerra as “... mientras dulcemente se deslizan tus ondas. ...” (2:77). The parallel between the Moselle in Ausonius’ Mosella and Vergil’s Tiber was pointed out in Garcilaso’s lifetime by the Italian humanist Mariangelo Accursio in the Diatribae (H41). Carranza has argued that Accursio, who was at Charles V’s court in Spain while Garcilaso was there, may have met Garcilaso, and that Accursio’s comments on the Mosella in the Diatribae may have influenced Garcilaso’s depiction of the Tagus.

E.g. Herrera (910), and El Brocense (note B-213 in Gallego Morell 297).

See Maravall 15 for this concept in Garcilaso, and Araya 147 for its relation to the Tagus.
"Con un manso ruido / d’agua corriente y clara" (vv.1-2). The second use of the word in this manner is in Salicio’s description of the locus amoenus in the second Eclogue: “aquel manso ruido / del agua” (vv. 65-66).

I have modified Fairclough’s translation of verse 63 to bring out the literal thrust describing the two peoples drinking from each other’s rivers.

For the irony, and questions of exile generally in the eclogue, see Clausen ad loc., Putnam, and Segal.

On attempts to see Vergil’s biography in these passages, see Coleman 274. For the use of Vergil’s first Eclogue in this manner by Gutierre de Cetina, see Middlebrook 128-30, and for a more general discussion see Patterson.

See Clausen 55 ad 62 and the literature he cites. Some commentators, however, think that the Rhine should be the river identified with the Germans, and propose emending accordingly, but Clausen defends the Arar as a German river in light of Caesar’s account of his actions in Gaul.

For the influence of the Piscatoria see Bocchetta, and for the influence of the De partu see further below.

For Sannazaro’s exile in the company of Federigo, see Vecce 35-40. For Sannazaro’s literary responses to his exile, see Bihrer.

Text, numeration, and translations of Sannazaro’s Latin poetry are from Putnam’s edition. Mustard notes the reference to the exile in France (90 ad. 115). Vecce, meanwhile, reports that Sannazaro placed the Arar in v. 115 in place of Sequana (i.e., the Seine), which is conserved in an earlier manuscript copy of the poem (44). An earlier reference to Sannazaro’s exile using details from both Caesar’s Bellum Gallicum and Vergil’s first Eclogue is in the third Piscatoria, which describe the exile of two characters as their flight drives them past the Rhône River to the north coast of France to the English Channel (Putnam 445 ad. 21; Kidwell 99 and 227-28n.35, and 98 and 227n.32; and Vecce 43).

Summonte’s reference, in which he speaks of Sannazaro returning “ex Heduorum usque finibus atque e Turonibus,” or from the lands Aedui (who lived beside the Arar according to Caesar) and the Turoni (another Gallic tribe mentioned in the Bellum Gallicum) is in a letter that served as a preface to a 1507 edition of Giovanni Pontano’s dialogues (Pontano, Actius A1v, reprinted in Pontano, I dialoghi 124; see Vecce 57-58).

Pontano refers to Sannazaro, using his academic name Syncerus: Ah fatum crudele hominum, et sors invida votis, / Ignotos nunc per populos, per Gallica regna / Horrentem ad Rheni ripam, atque ad norica saxa / Horrentem ad Rheni ripam, atque ad norica saxa / Exulat, oceanique vada ad squalentia tabo / Navifragum, extremos queritur Syncerus ad Anglos. (Pontano, Vrania . . . Meteororum . . . De hortis hesperidum 155v [vv. 297-301])

[Oh the cruel fate of men and fortune hostile to our prayers! / Now through unknown peoples, through the Gallic kingdoms to the rough / Bank of the
Rhine and to the rocks of the Tyrol he is banished / And, by the shallows of the ocean, filthy with the rotting victims / Of shipwreck, Syncerus laments to the most distant English. (Translation by Kidwell [99]).

In Garcilaso, the mention is at Eclogue 3.105-06, Sonnet 24.12, and in his Latin ode to Telesio (discussed below). See Morros in Garcilaso, Obras 518 ad 105-08.

The last reference to the Arar comes in a strange poem making fun of a certain Lucius, whom commentators identify as the Neapolitan grammarian Lucio Giovanni Scoppa, often criticized by Sannazaro and others for his pedantry: (While Lucius was repeating nights, nights, over again, the deep Saône [altus Arar] granted him unceasing nights) (Epigram 2.25). See the comments on the poem by Frison (182).

The poem appeared in Pontano’s dialogue Aegidius, published in 1507 (Actius H2–H2v in the same edition that contained Pietro Summonte’s letter referring to Sannazaro’s exile). For an analysis of the poem in relation to exile, see Bihrer 162-65, who notes that it was influenced by the exchange between Tityrus and Meliboeus in Vergil’s Eclogue 1.

Síncero, Sanazaro’s autobiographical persona in the Arcadia, elsewhere calls it the “placidissimo Sebeto” and compares it to the Tiber (“il mio napolitano Tevere”) (Arcadia 260).

All translations of the ode to Telesio are from Gray’s study, indicated by page number.

For more on rivers as signifiers of exile in the ode, see Fitzpatrick.

For a discussion of this reversal of allegiances, see Gray.

WORKS CITED


—. *Commentarios de Cayo Julio Cesar... Trans. Diego López de Toledo. Alcalá de Henares: U de Alcalá, en casa de Miguel de Egús, 1529.


GOROPIUS, JOANNE BECANTUS. *Opera Ioan. Goropii Becani, hactenus in lucem non edita: nempe, Hermathena, Hieroglyphica, Vertumnus, Gallica, Francica, Hispanica.* Antwerpiae, excudebat Christophorus Plantinus, 1580.


—. Ioannis Iouiani Pontani Vrania ... Meteororum ... De hortis hesperidum ... Lepidina ... Melisseus, Meon, Acon. Florentiae: Ex officina Philippi de Giunta Florentini, 1514.


—. P. Virgilivs Maro, Pavli Manvtii adnotationivs, in libri margine ob studiosorum commodum adscriptis, illustratus. Venetiis, apud Paulum Manutium, Aldi f., 1558.