
This collection of nine essays about Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* originated from a conference at the University of Wales Institute of Classics at Hay on Wye in July 1996. The organisation of the book is splendid, moving seamlessly, despite the diverse approaches, from publication and style of the *BG* through the presentation of Romans and Gauls, to the generalship of Caesar.

The first four essays discuss the production, publication and purpose of the commentaries. T. P. Wiseman’s article on the publication of the *BG* begins the book. He addresses the way that the *BG* was produced and disseminated through Italy. He argues for an annual publication, book by book, aimed at and delivered to a popular audience in the various Italian communities through Caesar’s agents there. Wiseman stresses the popular tone of the text to support this thesis. This work was not aimed at the nobiles. Lindsay G. H. Hall examines ‘Ratio and Romanitas’ in the commentaries. The term *romanitas* is a later Roman notion, but to Hall the *BG* provided Caesar with the literary opportunity to be the creator as much as the defender of ‘Roman-ness’. This he did in opposition to Greek culture. There is a suggestion that this was a deliberate move contrary to other Roman nobles who were Hellenophiles, in particular Pompey. Catherine Torrigian assesses the ‘Logos’ of the commentaries. The author argues that the *logos*, as defined by ‘the larger rhetorical design’, ‘Caesar’s intentions’ and ‘the methods employed to fulfil these intentions’, is present from the very beginning of the *BG*. She makes two interesting points. The first is that at the time of dissemination of the work his victories in the initial campaigns would already be known in Italy. His work from the opening line has an air of inevitability (50). The second is that Caesar does refer back to the opening often as a point of reference (57). Barbara Levick reviews the career and legacy of C.E. Stevens, the author of a series of essays on Caesar and Western Europe in the mid-first century BC including ‘The *Bellum Gallicum* as a work of Propaganda’, in *Lat.* 11 (1952). She notes he was a ‘conspiracy theorist’ partly as a result of his wartime experiences making propaganda for the allies and that this drove his thinking about Caesar’s Gallic War (62). She surveys the role Stevens
played in creating the image of the *BG* and how his work has been viewed in recent years. She concludes that many of his ideas leave him still 'in the field' (73). This seems particularly true with regard to the level of deceit that Caesar aimed at with reference to Book III and the Veneti. Stevens focused on the purpose that Caesar saw for the *naves longae* built supposedly to assault the coast of north west France (but never used). Stevens suggested that a British invasion lay behind their purpose and that Caesar concealed such an invasion plan for 56 BC (66). That the commentaries were propaganda remains unquestioned.

The middle essays assess the way in which Caesar presented material in the *BG*: his officers, massacres, and the Gauls. Kathryn Welch discusses the presentation of Caesar's officers in the *BG*. Caesar needed to strike a balance between presentation of his officers and himself. They could not be too much in the limelight as they might divert the attention of the audience from him. Nevertheless, some of these men had important political connections, Q. Cicero for one (97-8), and these connections seem to have determined the way that Caesar portrayed them. They were also influential witnesses of Caesar’s activities. She notes that Book III is the shortest book and that Caesar was not in Gaul for much of 56 BC (the period with which this book deals) and the Legates must have been instrumental in the activities in Gaul in this year. As a result the legates get some focus and *BG* III is unique. Welch notes here that Plutarch’s account of Caesar, which used the *BG* extensively, (but passes over *BG* III) ‘as if without the hero present there is nothing in the book worth relating’ (94). Despite their circumstantial treatment only one legate gets a singularly poor review from Caesar: Sabinus. In 54 BC (*BG* V.30) a great number of Romans were ambushed and massacred under Sabinus’ command. Caesar scape-goated Sabinus as the man solely responsible for this disaster. Welch notes that Caesar had complimented him in 56 BC earlier in the work (93). Someone had to be blamed for the disaster and it was not going to be Caesar. Fortunately for Caesar there would have been few witnesses left to question Caesar’s portrayal of the events in question (96). Hirtius gives an opportunity to see legates (as in *BG* III) acting independently of Caesar. In Welch’s eyes, however, the centurions are the stock men of the army, deftly sidestepping any focus on noble officers in the campaign (90). Anton Powell uses the presentation of massacres in the text of the *BG* as a vehicle to analyse the level of distortion Caesar was able to apply to the narrative. He is interested in omissions as well as those things that are included. He also is aware of Caesar’s style in
presentation. He highlights the literary equivalent of advocacy (115). He points to other Caesar narratives—the mutiny of the IX Legion in 49 BC that Caesar suppressed—and from the *BG* the looting of Gallic sacred places. The massacre of Sabinus’ command was too big a deal to be ‘ignored’. The deaths of Gauls at the hands of Germans are used to justify Roman presence in the country, to help the Gauls against the dangerous common foe. Powell draws attention to Aulus Hirtius’ book VIII as an example of how Caesar did not present events in his commentaries, focusing on booty in particular (115). Like Welch he can show that the final book illustrates well what Caesar did not do. Jonathan Barlow picks up the theme of the noble Gaul. Gauls represent the virtues which Caesar thinks are important. They are portrayed in particularly Roman terms (*principes, nobiles, equites, plebs rustica*) and described as having Roman virtues: *fides, iustitia, temperantia, nobilitas* (144). Their vices are those despised by Romans. He notes that the term ‘*rex*’ is used overwhelmingly of Rome’s enemies’ (142), but he adds *crudeliter* and *superbe* to describe Roman opponents. Barlow realises that the purpose of these descriptions is propaganda (158). He includes a very useful prosopography of Gauls and Germans and the descriptions applied to them in the *BG* at the end of the essay.

The last essays deal with the military aspects of the *BG*. As a bridge from Caesar’s presentation of people and things to Caesar at war Louis Rawlings discusses the Gauls as warriors. This essay looks at both the presentation of Gauls and the Gallic military system in relation to Gallic society. He notes how Caesar demonstrates a ‘garbled sense of the Gallic value system’ (182-6) and elements of Caesar’s description which are likely to be *topoi* (171). These examples highlight the literary creativity of Caesar’s work. The personal nature of Gallic warfare and recruitment is well illustrated by the *BG* and Rawlings identifies that this reflected Caesar’s own experiences of recruiting (and relating to) Gauls and Germans in his campaigns (183). He illustrates how the Gauls were coming to terms with Roman warfare and fought accordingly in the later campaigns (180). He concludes with the insightful thought that just as the Gauls were curbing the power of individuals within their tribal system, Caesar was able to establish himself at the head of Gaul and as a result at the head of the Republic that was unable to control him (186). In the final article, Adrian Goldsworthy looks at Caesar’s generalship in the context of the Republic and early empire. He concludes that Caesar was a very Roman general (and by contrast the later caution ascribed to Augustus set
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him apart from other Roman generals) (200). He took risks and he was not flustered in adversity. In his risk taking Caesar fitted into a long tradition of Roman generalship.

Despite the diverse approaches and focuses of these articles some main themes emerge. The first of these is the production and time of publication of the Commentaries. Wiseman's article sets the stage by making the strong case that each book was produced between campaigning seasons and then disseminated (through public 'readings') among the various communities of Italy via Caesar's agents. The seriatim nature of composition and thus the haphazard 'publication' of the BG is supported by Hall, Welch and Torrigian in their respective articles. Despite Torrigian's disclaimer that she believes in the piecemeal nature of composition her article on the logos of the BG I-V fails to reconcile the difficulties involved in maintaining an overall plan within a work that was designed in and produced in sections over a long period of time. The logos of Caesar's work, in this sense, seems unconvincing: if Caesar began work on BG I in winter 58/7 how could he have had an overall view or logos of how events (and thus how the commentaries) would unfold through the following six years? She states correctly that his opening remarks in the BG strongly imply that his plan was the conquest of the divided region of Gaul and this division is a constant reference in the BG. Caesar, however, could not have known then of the events that were driven by Gallic action, for example the revolt of 52 BC. A logos suggests a teleology that the BG could only have had in sections. Barbara Levick in her homage to C.E. Stevens reminds us that he, like Michel Rambaud, Matthias Gelzer, and Christian Meier (all referred to in Wiseman's essay), believed that the BG was produced in full at some time after the siege of Alesia. Levick notes well that this thesis is yet to be disproved. The articles in this volume, particularly by Wiseman, Welch and Hall, mount a very strong case against that thesis.

The time and nature of publication have important ramifications for the intended audience of the BG. This is another theme. Most of the essays suggest this was popular rather than equestrian or senatorial. The Senate, presumably, received terse and to-the-point notice of Caesar's progress. Several articles note that Caesar is the central figure, but he shares the limelight with the centurionate (2, 72, 90, 122) and the army (71, 91). These included men with whom the people of Italy would identify. Digressions about customs and environment were aesthetic
literary additions that can have served an entertaining rather than a 
practical purpose and would therefore have been ‘largely’ redundant in 
reports to the senate. Such reports need not have been aimed at the people 
specifically as there was a long tradition of ethnographic writing for the 
elite encapsulated by the works of Strabo and Pausanias. Nonetheless as 
Levick (71) says the people were told what they wanted to hear and 
Goldsworthy notes that terms like nostri (our side) (193) highlight the 
populist tone of events in Gaul. Powell compares aspects of Caesar’s BG 
to modern journalism (121) and this further supports the popular aspect of 
the BG, its purpose and the serialised nature of its publication.

Tied to the time and nature of publication and the audience of the BG 
is Caesar’s purpose in its production. The purpose of the BG is this 
collection’s central theme, indeed the title demonstrates the relevance of 
politics to the purpose of the BG. In simple terms to those who subscribe 
to a serialised publication and popular dissemination, this was the 
promotion of Caesar in the eyes of the Roman people (186). This would 
mean there was no need for explanations that might have interested the 
Senate or Caesar’s rivals. All of the articles in this volume address the 
problem of the purpose of the BG. Caesar was keen to present himself as a 
good general. He was keen to present himself as a good writer and, 
therefore, as a man of words, a good rhetor. Even though Goldsworthy’s 
focus was Caesar’s generalship he notes the political framework and the 
Roman context in which Caesar campaigned (194). The political purpose 
of the BG drove its production, just as his political aims in Italy drove 
Caesar’s conquest of Gaul. On this point all the articles find common 
ground, for Caesar as a good politician in the context of the late first 
century BC wanted to portray himself as a ‘Good’ Roman. This he does in 
several spheres. Lindsay Hall can show how Caesar commands Latin (16- 
19). Caesar becomes the master, in a literary sense of the Roman 
language. Indeed, he creates and orders Latin as no other had done before 
him, avoiding Greek terms that were commonplace in the Latin of his day. 
This ‘Romanness’ fits nicely into Caesar’s political environment in that his 
advisers and attendants were generally Romans (25). Pompey, on the 
other hand, courted Greek culture (29). He employed a Greek writer to 
eulogise his achievements. Caesar avoided these and wrote about himself 
for a Roman audience. Barlow illustrates Caesar’s Gauls in Roman terms 
and they represent Roman virtues (140, 144-145). Militarily, Goldsworthy 
demonstrates that Caesar was in the finest tradition of Roman generalship. 
He was aggressive and pro-active in Gaul. He was, like Marcellus and
Scipio before him, bold (200). In being a risk taker and successful he was very Roman.

The theme that pervades this volume of essays is the very Roman nature of Caesar that is presented by and in the BG. He is Roman in the context of Roman Italy setting himself apart from other Romans like Pompey. Several of the articles refer to the BG's romanitas (11, 50, 180), which may seem problematic in the context of the mid-first century, but the Roman nature of the BG is well illustrated. Indeed, Rawlings draws the tempting parallel between Gaul and the Republic (186) that, I would add, may have played on Caesar's mind. On the one side were Caesar and his legions and on the other Vercingetorix and the rest of Gaul. In the Republic there were Pompey and his clients, set against Caesar on the other. He is both rhetor and soldier, but ultimately he is a politician. The fact that he commands in both word and deed make him the perfect Roman politician. He is in the tradition of Roman soldiers before him. Successful Roman politicians led armies to conquest as a natural part of a career and he spoke (and wrote about) politics in the Senate as a natural part of that career. The image is reinforced that Caesar's BG is a Roman creation for a Roman audience.

Jonathan Barlow sums up the impression this very worthwhile and critical collection of essays gives when he writes: 'If Caesar emerges with reputation diminished, he emerges with intelligence enhanced.' *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter* illustrates the scope and the complexity of Caesar, the first century BC, and above all *de Bello Gallico*.

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