

Introduction
Caesarian Questions: Then, Now, Hence
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When, in Shakespeare, Julius Caesar reflects on Cassius' mean menace, he concludes that, fear-inspiring though Cassius may be, he fears him not: "For always I am Caesar" (1.2.213). Four hundred and some years after the influential tragedy premiered, and some two thousand years after Caesar and Cassius faced one another in Rome, Caesar is still with us: first and foremost, in the living memory of posterity, as the tyrannical undertaker of the Roman Republic – *sic semper tyrannis!* – and, secondly, as conqueror of Gaul, land of Asterix.¹ In this latter capacity, he has marched across the pages of his *Gallic Wars*, his account of his conquest in seven books, leading countless students in classrooms near and far through the Latin syntax ever since the Renaissance. Matthias Gelzer, the eminent ancient historian and author of a magisterial biography of Caesar, in the 1960s remarked how the Latin teachers of his school days knew the *Gallic Wars* by heart.² While the degree of familiarity may have changed more recently, Caesar's standing as *the* primer in Latin grammars, prose composition volumes, and in the classroom remains unchallenged.

This standing is largely owed to Caesar's limpid style, which contemporaries recognized as exceptional (e.g. Cic. *Brut.* 262). It results from careful and consistent choice and represents his effort at regulation as advanced, theoretically, in his linguistic treatise *De Analogia*, "On analogous word formation."³ As a linguist, Caesar enjoyed great authority (cf. Gell. 1.10.4 and 19.8.1–8); his various other contributions to the Roman Republic of letters were no less admired. To contemporaries and following generations he was, in fact, known not only as a political and military

¹ On the alleged origin and afterlife of the declaration, see Wyke (2012, 1–4); on Caesar and the comic series *Asterix*, see Wyke (2008, 61–5). Tatum (2008) uses part of the Shakespearean line for a title.

² "Die Lateinlehrer meiner Schulzeit kannten die 7 Bücher auswendig ..." (Gelzer, 1960, reprinted 1977, 444).

³ Cf. Pezzini 173–92 in this volume. The extent to which Caesar's practice conforms to his theory is debated.

leader but also as an eminent man of letters, who enjoyed the company of the bright and talented (*favet ingeniis*, Cic. *Fam.* 4.8.2).⁴ The list of his accomplishments is long: as orator he ranked second only to Cicero (Quint. 10.1.114; cf. Cic. *Brut.* 252), while, as ethnographer, he produced an account of the Gallic and Germanic tribes so compelling that Tacitus thought it necessary to take him on one hundred and fifty years later.⁵ Caesar's letter-writing inspired awe (Plut. *Caes.* 17.7) and impressed for novelty (Suet. *Iul.* 56.6).⁶ But he also penned a political pamphlet (*Anticato*) and poems, whereof we have fragments (or secure knowledge) of an epigram on Terence, for example, and what may have been a verse travelogue (*Iter*).⁷ He was fluent in Greek and admired (and feared) for his wit.⁸ Caesar's intellectual talents and contributions impress, even through their mostly fragmentary state. But his fate as man of letters was to disappear in the shadow of his own accomplishments as military and political leader.⁹ One aim of this *Companion* is to provide discussion of all his works across the literary genres.

The predominant view of Caesar as a historical figure (on which Miriam Griffin's *A Companion to Julius Caesar* focuses) and as a man of power rather than letters is not only discernible in scholarship on him;¹⁰ it has influenced modern readings of his only extant works, the "commentaries" on the Gallic and civil wars, as well. These seemingly straightforward, seemingly unadorned narratives, rendered in a seemingly unassuming style, befitted the military man, an impression that Cicero's famous praise of them as *nudi . . . recti et venusti*, "naked, upright, and charming" (*Brut.* 262), only seemed to confirm. In addition, with their lapidary Latin elevated to classical status – the *BG* especially came to enjoy the status of a "citadel of classical Latinity"¹¹ – they fell victim to their own success, as, for centuries, they were studied primarily with historical, linguistic, and, above all, didactic interest rather than a literary-aesthetic sensibility.

Carl Nipperdey's monumental 1847 edition of Caesar's *Commentarii* along with the *Corpus Caesarianum* (comprising Hirtius' eighth book of the *Gallic Wars* as well as the *Alexandrian*, *African*, and *Hispanic Wars*) is

⁴ On Caesar as an intellectual, see Fantham (2009) and Schiesaro (2010). Krebs is currently preparing a fuller treatment: Krebs (forthcoming b).

⁵ On Caesar and Tacitus: Krebs (2011); for Caesar the orator and ethnographer, cf. van der Blom 193–205 and Riggsby 68–74 in this volume.

⁶ Cf. Morello 223–33 in this volume. ⁷ Cf. Corbeil 215–22 and Casali 206–14 in this volume.

⁸ Cf. Corbeil 145–56 in this volume.

⁹ Cf. Raaflaub and Rüpke 13–28 and 58–67 in this volume. ¹⁰ Griffin (2009).

¹¹ Frese (1900, 3, our translation). On Caesar's style, cf. Krebs 110–30 in this volume.

widely considered a landmark in Caesarian studies. Since it is also in many ways paradigmatic, it offers an excellent starting point for a survey of modern scholarship. Its introduction, two hundred and fifty pages addressing *Quaestiones Caesarianae*, “Caesarian Questions,” dedicated two hundred pages to text-critical discussions of individual passages. Nipperdey approached his author as if he were infallible, unfailingly logical, and intolerant of any stylistic irregularity: Caesar *could* not have written that the tide came in twice within twelve hours, for surely he *must* have known better (*BG* 3.12.1, Nipperdey 67 *neque Caesarem in hac re errasse credibile*); nor should his pen be credited with a redundant expression such as *intermisso loci spatio* (literally, “with a spatial distance left in-between,” *BG* 5.15.4), as *spatium* alone in its literal meaning applies to *locus* already (*propria uis est, ut de loco intelligatur*, Nipperdey 80). In consequence, Nipperdey frequently altered the (often unanimous) manuscript readings and produced a somewhat idiosyncratic text. Both Nipperdey’s notion of his author, Caesar, as infallible and his approach to his texts, the *Commentarii*, as monoliths of classical Latinity set the style: the “critical appendix” (*kritischer Anhang*) of the standard edition cum commentary by Kraner, Dittenberger, and Meusel (1961) provides ample documentation thereof, as does the list of conjectures Meusel assembled for his lexicon, which totals ninety-three double-columned pages.¹² In more recent years, however, scholars and editors such as Wolfgang Hering have deemed many of these “emendations” unconvincing (1987) (in fact, Rice Holmes condemned this custom already in 1899, xviii (see Rice Holmes (1911)); Michael Winterbottom remarked that most editions of Caesar are “marked by remarkable indifference to what the manuscripts actually read” (1983, 35); and others, such as P. T. Eden, Lindsay Hall, and, most recently, Cynthia Damon, have emphasized the irregularities in Caesar, thus breathing Roman life back into the marble bust.¹³ But the (in retrospect) misconceived effort to cleanse and regularize Caesar loudly bespeaks the interest in securing him as the logical school author of classical Latinity.

Ahead of his extensive text-critical discussion, Nipperdey surveyed the evidence as well as arguments pertaining to a number of issues he deemed central, starting with the possible dates and forms of composition and publication of the *Commentarii* (3–8).¹⁴ The evidence is scant: praise for

¹² Meusel (1844–1916, vol. 2, part 2, 1–93) *Tabula Coniecturarum* (*BG*, 1–36; *BC*, 37–93).

¹³ Eden (1962), Hall (1998), and Damon, who has a whole section dedicated to “novel and unusual expressions in Caesar’s *Bellum Civile*” (2015, 97–126).

¹⁴ Cf. Raafflaub 18–22, Krebs 41–2 and Nousek 107–8 in this volume.

the style of the *BG* in Cicero's *Brutus* (46 BCE) provides a *terminus ante quem* for its appearance; and a statement by Pollio (reported by Suetonius, *Iul.* 56) suggests that the *BC* was published only after Caesar's death in 44. This leaves ample space for ingenuity and disagreements. Nipperdey himself believed that Caesar had composed the *BG* all at once around 50 BCE (as opposed to year by year), to then be published more or less immediately around 49 at the beginning of the civil war. But the arguments he and others advanced in support failed to prove conclusive. When F. E. Adcock reviewed the arguments in 1956, he concluded that it seemed "more probable than not that, while Caesar *wrote* his seven commentaries on the War in Gaul in stages, he *published* them all at once."¹⁵ But this opinion has not carried the day either. Remarkably, some of the arguments have been used *in utramque partem*: the stylistic evolution, for instance, as expressed in the increase of direct speeches and changes of preferred syntactical structures and vocabulary, has often been advanced as evidence of the *seriatim* publication (Schlicher, 1936); others, meanwhile, interpreted the very same development as a literary device Caesar created in the *BG* and then reproduced in the *BC*.¹⁶ Similarly, while no one denies that books three and five contrast Sabinus' first praiseworthy (3.17–19) and then blameworthy conduct (5.26–38), some have seen the former episode as a set-up for the latter, implying that Caesar wrote book three in foreknowledge of book five (Collins 1952, 88–96), while others have read this very contrast as evidence that Caesar was ignorant of the events to be narrated in book five when he wrote book three (Seel, 1961, iii).¹⁷ The debate continues: more recently T. P. Wiseman has re-emphasized how Caesar would have benefitted from the circulation and public reading of a year-by-year account, while C. B. Krebs pointed to the sudden appearance of Lucretian echoes in the later books of the *BG* as an argument in favor of serial composition.¹⁸ As for the *BC*, while most scholars believe that it was published posthumously, there seems to be even less agreement on the date(s) of composition and the question whether Caesar left it unfinished.¹⁹

Closely entwined with the question of composition and publication is that of the possible form and circulation of "notes" that various ancient sources attribute to Caesar (Plut. *Caes.* 22.2, App. *Celt.* fr. 18.3). This

¹⁵ Adcock (1956, 89).

¹⁶ Von Albrecht (1997, 414). For helpful summaries of the scholarly debate in English, see Adcock (1956, 77–89), Collins (1963, 49–51), and Riggsby (2006, 9–15).

¹⁷ Grillo (2016, 259–62); cf. further Grillo 160–3 in this volume.

¹⁸ Wiseman (1998), Krebs (2013a).

¹⁹ For a summary of the various positions, see Grillo (2012, 178–80).

second question is further complicated by the fact that we know of the customary reports Caesar sent to the senate at the end of each campaign year (*BG* 2.35.4, 4.38.5, 7.90.7), not to mention possible interim reports or letters to friends and acquaintances (Suet. *Iul.* 56.6 and Gell. *NA* 17.9.1). To what, if any, extent are the *Commentarii* indebted to any of these sources (the military reports in particular), whether for content or for style? Michel Rambaud devoted considerable attention to this issue and elucidated numerous features that the *Commentarii* and these reports seem to share (1953, reprinted 1966, 19–43, 77–96); and Eva Odelman, in an equally ground-breaking but less noticed work, brought to light the various debts Caesar's style owes to the language of Roman administration.²⁰

Stylistic concerns also bulk large in Nipperdey's discussion of the *corpus Caesarianum*, those four texts written by mostly unidentifiable staff-members of Caesar's (wider) circle. Their genesis, for both of the individual *bella* and the entire *corpus*, their differences in style, and their authorship, all of which he discussed, have continued to pique scholars and have recently received renewed attention, not least for what they can tell us about the state of Latin prose at the time.²¹ The same critical acumen was directed to the transmission and manuscripts of the Caesarian *Commentarii* – the reliability of the various manuscripts and their groupings – and, more particularly, to the question of possible interpolations into Caesar's own texts. The ethnographic and geographic digressions in particular were much doubted in their authenticity, both on linguistic and structural grounds, until Franz Beckmann demonstrated in 1930 that no activity by an interpolator was demonstrable. Since then, skeptics have been few and far between, and most accept the passages in question as genuine. “Nonetheless, the idea of interpolation in *De Bello Gallico* [and *De Bello Civili*, our addition] may not be quite dead yet.”²²

The questions Nipperdey highlighted have shaped the debate, as Hans Oppermann acknowledged when, in 1974, he reviewed the “problems and status quo in Caesarian scholarship” (*Probleme und heutiger Stand der Caesarforschung*).²³ But among those problems, which he himself proposed to reevaluate with the help of a “comprehensive profile of Caesar's personality . . . [as] yardstick,”²⁴ there are two issues that had hardly figured

²⁰ Her work, *Études sur quelques reflets du style administratif chez César*, was published in 1972.

²¹ See Gaertner and Hausburg (2013, 22–30, with n. 51) and Gaertner 263–76 in this volume.

²² Riggsby (2006, 12), with further discussion and references. ²³ Oppermann (1974, 485).

²⁴ “Gesamtbild der Persönlichkeit Caesars . . . [als] allgemeinen Maßstab,” Oppermann (1974, 487, the emphasis in the English translation above is ours). Thus Oppermann succumbed, in his own way, to the cult of Caesar's personality that had enthralled German scholars in particular for many decades.

in the *Quaestiones*. First, Caesar’s “reliability” (511). Caesar’s union of agent and author had always raised skepticism, even among his contemporaries (Suet. *Iul.* 56.4); and while it had been discussed variously in the second half of the nineteenth century, the “propagandistic” aspects of the *Commentarii* came under closest scrutiny after World War Two. Michel Rambaud, mentioned above, in 1953 offered a detailed and comprehensive rhetorical analysis of Caesar’s *déformation historique*. He conceded that Caesar narrated real events, “*mais du côté qui convient à ses intérêts, et les formes de son récit suscitent chez le lecteur une impression fausse.*”²⁵ The bulk of the book is devoted to the rhetorical techniques of “demonstration” and “persuasion” by which historical reality is warped. Coinciding with three other studies to the same effect, *La déformation historique* caused a lively controversy;²⁶ and while the controversy has calmed down over the last two decades and propaganda is no longer so pressing a question, the influence of Rambaud’s study can still be felt, and its sophistication makes it mandatory reading for anyone interested in Caesar.

The second issue that occupied considerable space in the 1974 review concerned the *literary* characteristics of the *Commentarii* and their literary genre. Oppermann himself had made substantial contributions to both questions. He (and others) confidently reconstructed the history of the *commentarius* genre and declared the *Gallic* and *Civil War* its “classical works.”²⁷ But even if the *commentarius* continued to receive acute attention, today very few would share this confidence: so scant is the evidence of other *commentarii*, so vague the term itself, that the generic approach to Caesar’s *Commentarii* seems to have reached its impasse. Our appreciation of their literary qualities, on the other hand, has only grown since Oppermann’s study. The third-person narrative – intended, he argued, to preserve the impression of “a simple reconstruction of what had really happened”²⁸ – continues to be the subject of subtle analyses. And his observations on “the functions of space and time,” and, more particularly, on how episodes were connected and

²⁵ Rambaud (1966, 364).

²⁶ This controversy, which predates Rambaud (cf. e.g. Stevens (1952) for the *BG* and Barwick (1951) and Treu (1948) for the *BC*), is helpfully summarized by Collins (1952 and 1972). On propaganda, see Krebs 29–42 in this volume.

²⁷ Oppermann (1933, 6). Cf. also Klotz (1910, 1–25) on the *literarische Charakter des Bellum Gallicum und Bellum Civile*. On the *commentarius*, cf. Nousek 97–109 in this volume.

²⁸ “[A]ls einfache Nachbildung dessen, was wirklich geschehen ist,” Oppermann (1933, 105). For more recent discussions: Pelling (2009a and 2013), Grillo (2011) and Batstone 48–9, Pitcher 238–40, and Chassignet, 261–2 in this volume.

vivid effects were brought about, would later in the century be differentiated further with the help of the tools supplied by narratology.²⁹

Just a few years after Oppermann's survey, in the late 1970s, a major shift occurred in the study of ancient historiography. In *Clio's Cosmetics* T. P. Wiseman argued that the Roman historians were much closer to the poets and orators than to their modern counterparts, similar, as they were, in regards to aims, methods, and subject matter: "persuasion is his [the Roman historian's] business no less than the orator's."³⁰ Focusing in particular on the historians of the late Roman Republic, Wiseman detailed how they resorted to the treasury of rhetoric to compose content and weave a plausible rather than factual text; he also emphasized that their audience would have rather expected them to do just that. The muse of history, he concluded, liked make-up just as much as her sisters. About a decade later, in 1988, A. J. Woodman pursued this line of inquiry further. In *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* he revealed through careful readings of Thucydides (the alleged paragon of facticity), Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus that the writing of ancient history was first and foremost a literary endeavor, with the historian conceiving of himself primarily as a literary artist, or, in the words of T. J. Luce, "the heir of Homer."³¹ Woodman explored the central role that *inventio*, the "discovery" of suitable materials, played in the historian's crafting of his verisimilar historical narrative. His conclusion was that, aside from a few incontestable historical hard facts, historical narratives were built from the storehouse of literature and with the techniques of rhetoric.

Reviewers of both books were quick to predict that they would cause a lively controversy; they were right.³² But irrespective of how "truthful" the ancient historians *actually* were, it is now standard practice to regard their texts as literature engaged with the Greek and Roman literary traditions, participatory in contemporary discourses, and inevitably shaped by the all-pervasive influence of rhetoric. Indeed, this *historiographical turn* has, for most of the extant classical historians, resulted in unprecedented sophisticated readings of their narratives.

²⁹ Another important contribution at the time, Barwick's study of *Caesar's Commentarii und das Corpus Caesarianum* (1938) also helped to advance our appreciation of Caesar's style and narrative, even though his remarks are embedded in a highly debatable argument about the composition of the *corpus Caesarianum* (a question that occupied this generation of scholars). For examples of literary approaches to Caesar, cf. Grillo 157–69 in this volume.

³⁰ Wiseman (1979, 39). ³¹ Luce (1989, 174).

³² Cornell (1982, 203), Luce (1989, 174). For a recent contribution to the debate cf. Lendon (2009); cf. also Thorne 304–17 in this volume.

Caesar's *Commentarii* have been somewhat slow to attract that new attention, even if, as some recent works have demonstrated, they are ultimately no exception. Whatever the degree to which they fell under Clio's province, Caesar certainly knew how to use rhetorical and literary devices; and the celebrated "nudity" of their style is a studied pose, as C. S. Kraus, among others, has noted (2009, 159–65). Accordingly, Batstone and Damon's literary approach to the *Civil War* (2006), Riggsby's discourse analyses of the *Gallic War* (2006) and Grillo's study of *The Art of Caesar's Bellum Civile* (2012) have put to good account narratological, intertextual, and semantic tools and demonstrated that, thanks to their literary complexity, both the *BG* and the *BC* fully repay the same scrutiny that Latin poets and other historians enjoyed long before Caesar. Much work remains to be done in these areas and while this *Companion* provides an overview of the approaches that have been taken to Caesar's works, it also aims to encourage further exploration.

Other, partly related areas provide perhaps even more fertile fields for future research. As a man of letters, Caesar certainly not only knew but actively engaged with his Greek and Roman predecessors. Yet the generic difference of the *Commentarii* from *historia* and, more generally, their alleged overall sparseness, not to mention the scant and controversial evidence of other *Commentarii* have discouraged inquiries into the literary sources and models of both the *BG* and the *BC*.³³ Similarly, while his contribution may reasonably be assumed to have left a mark on Latin literature, what evidence is there of his influence on later Latin prose and poetry?³⁴ And what of later imitators outside Latin literature?³⁵ The final section of this *Companion* turns to these and related questions, though, by necessity, selectively and *exempli causa*; several of them surely await a monograph treatment.

To return to our starting point, then, Caesar is still with us – but, as the new approaches to the *Commentarii* indicate, wearing a new suit of clothes. Cicero in his *Pro Marcello* effusively predicted that Caesar's military and political actions would ensure that his "life [would] flourish in the memory of all times" (*quae* [sc. *vita*] *vigebit memoria saeculorum omnium*, *Marcell.* 28); but he knew why he withheld judgment on them.

³³ Cf. Pitcher 237–8 and Chassignet 249–62 in this volume. On Caesar's *Sisenna* and Caesar and Thucydides, see Krebs (2014 and 2016); on Caesar and Polybius, see Grillo (2016).

³⁴ Cf. Kraus 277–88 and Joseph 289–303 in this volume. ³⁵ Cf. Schadee 318–31 in this volume.

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Caesar's literary accomplishments have also earned him immortality, and of a less controversial quality to boot.

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