# *Introduction*

"Such force dwells in him, such sharpness, and such passion that it seems that he spoke with the same vigor with which he fought" (*tanta in eo vis est, id acumen, ea concitatio, ut illum eodem animo dixisse quo bellavit appareat*, Quint. 10.1.114). In expressing this judgment about Caesar, Quintilian famously set forth an old truism: besides being a general and a politician, Caesar was also an orator and a man of letters.[1] For instance, Cicero, who no less famously praised the style of the *Commentarii* (*Brut.* 262), anxiously awaited Caesar's remarks on his verses: "but ho there!" – he asked his brother Quintus – "I feel you are concealing something from me: what did Caesar really think of my poetry?" (*Sed heus tu! Celari videor a te. Quo modo nam, mi frater, de nostris versibus Caesar? QF* 2.16.5). And Caesar, responding from Gaul, praised that poetry no less than Quintus' service in his army, thus acting as a general, intellectual, friend, and, of course, a politician. During the Gallic war letters, the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (*BG*) and the *De Analogia*, which was dedicated to Cicero, helped Caesar to remain present to the aristocratic circles of leading politicians and intellectuals while appealing to the imagination of the Roman people.[2] Caesar's proven oratorical skills assisted his ambitions also at the time of the civil war: when he was working on the *Commentarii de Bello Civili* (*BC*), he kept engaging in the politico-literary debate by composing the *Anticato* and by appealing to his friends and to the senate with letters, which he was the first statesman to collect in book format (Suet. *DJ* 56).

Today Caesar's actions and conquests still fascinate (or disgust) scholars and the general public alike, as they have done for generations. And yet his literary works are far less appreciated. The lacunose tradition partially accounts for such a fate, since most of his writings are lost: of all his orations,

[1] Also according to Suetonius, "Caesar equaled, if he did not surpass, the greatest orators and generals the world has ever seen" (*eloquentia militarique re aut aequauit praestantissimorum gloriam aut excessit*, Suet. *DJ* 55).

[2] Wiseman 1998: 1–9 and Osgood 2009: 328–58.

linguistic treatises, polemic *libelli*, verses, tragedies, and letters, only a few fragments survive. The tradition, however, is only partially responsible: in the *BG* and in the *BC* we can appreciate two of the most pure and elegant examples of Latin literary prose; and nevertheless for too long the *BG* has been reduced to a convenient tool for teaching Latin, and the *BC* to propaganda.

In particular, the *BC* has received little attention and has long remained unappreciated and misunderstood. The present study sets out to reconsider its style, rhetoric, and architecture in order to disclose its art and ideology. These goals are complementary. To look at the *BC* merely as a (good or bad) source of historical information ignores its literary nature and limits one's appreciation not only of its artistic value but also of its historical significance. The comparison between Caesar and other ancient sources, in fact, can reveal much more than who lied and where: such "deformations" of truth as there are in the *BC*, rather than simply proving Caesar wrong, also reveal his anxieties and unveil how he carries out his agenda. By observing how Caesar deploys his literary skills to address the problems that troubled him, one is in a better position to apprehend the *BC* as a work of literature, with its peculiar art and creed, and to evaluate all of this in its literary and socio-political context, where multiple discourses intersect.

## BETWEEN ANCIENT AND MODERN ADMIRERS (AND DETRACTORS) OF CAESAR

The approach described above is embedded both in current Caesarian scholarship, which most recently has started re-evaluating the literary qualities of the *Commentarii*, and in present studies of classical historiography that acknowledge the indissoluble unity of literary form and historical reconstruction in ancient historians' works. For instance, Batstone and Damon treat the *BC* as "an unfinished masterpiece"; Riggsby concentrates on the historical impact of the *BG*; and Woodman, who has repeatedly called attention to the rhetorical nature of classical historiography, recently stated that style does not "take a second place to the 'real business' of historiography, which is content . . . style and content are indivisible."[3]

Caesar's works, and in particular the *BC*, have suffered from approaches which have separated content from style and ended up misjudging both. It is true that Caesar's contemporaries, Pollio and Cicero, already called

[3] Batstone and Damon 2006: 1; Riggsby 2006: 1–5; Woodman 2007: 142.

attention to the distortions of his writings and to his bare style respectively.[4] But both the simple style and the historical inaccuracies of the *BC* have somehow become misleading clichés, which call for a reassessment of both its form and its ideology.

On the one hand those who worry about its "content" have treated the *BC* as a more or less successful piece of propaganda, with varying degrees of falsification. This approach culminated in the work of Rambaud, whose 1953 volume with the programmatic title *L'art de la déformation historique dans les* Commentaires *de César* put forward the most systematic and extreme case for Caesar's intentional and ideologically motivated reworking of historical events. In Rambaud's view, Caesar writes the *Commentarii* as propaganda intended to distort its subject matter; Caesar's representations serve only his own interests and give the reader a false impression of events. Rambaud's work stirred a lively debate, and some of his observations remain valid. Rambaud argues that Caesar develops his narrative through a process of fragmentation, which consists of juxtaposing sequences of factual statements without stressing (or while hiding) their interrelation.[5] In writing about *consilium*, for example, Rambaud believes that Caesar used his judgment to avoid facing dangers, and that to emphasize "ses fonctions de chef" he refers to his behavior with words like *consilium*, *arbitrari*, *intellegere*, etc.[6] But in fact, Caesar employs these expressions both of himself and of his enemies, and his *déformation historique* operates more subtly than would be the case if Caesar simply claimed such qualities for himself.[7] Rambaud, perhaps beginning with an anti-Caesarian bias, sets out to prove his thesis without grasping the centrality of the *Commentarii*'s technique of characterization and too often without appreciating their art.

On the other hand, those who have focused on style have exaggerated its simplicity; and while the pages of the Latin grammars by Gildersleeve,

[4] Cicero pronounced his famous judgment in the *Brutus* (262). Kraus has an interesting way of reading these words in their context (2005: 111–12), and argues that Cicero's expression *nudi, recti, venusti* means "nude, erect and sexy." Pollio's judgment is reported by Suetonius (*DJ* 56.4).

[5] Rambaud 1966: 98: "L'historien établit des faits en regroupant des indices et rattache les faits entre eux par des relations causales. César, suivant une intention tout opposée, s'efforce souvent de rompre la continuité des événements et d'empêcher cette synthèse de l'historien ou la reconstitution spontanée des lecteurs." Cf. also pp. 363–4 and 370–4. All quotations and references to Rambaud's *L'art de la déformation* in the present work refer to the second edition (1966), following the first publication of 1953.

[6] Rambaud 1966: 250–1.

[7] For *consilium* applied to the enemy cf. *BG* 3.8.3 and 5.34.1 and *BC* 1.1.3 and 3.30.2; for *arbitrari* cf. *BG* 1.2.5 and 6.16.3 and *BC* 1.4.3 and 3.22.1. In the *BC intellegere* occurs nine times: only twice does it refer to Caesar (*BC* 3.10.3 and 3.17.6), once to Curio (*BC* 2.42.1), and in its six other occurrences to the enemies (cf. also *BG* 3.9.3 and 7.20.8). Throughout this book I refer to the *BC* edition by Klotz (1969).

Kroll, Marouzeau, and Pisani were filled with examples from Caesar's *Commentarii*, the ideological implications of his language remained unappreciated and under-studied. In 1962 P. T. Eden paved the way for a deeper understanding of Caesar's style with an exemplary study of his careful diction, demonstrating his talent for large-scale narrative organization. Eden also noted, for the first time to my knowledge, that Caesar repeats "words in close context with a different meaning" and stated that "the difference of meaning can be deduced quite easily from the context"; but concluded that "such clumsiness as exists is a stylistic fault and does not obstruct the sense."[8] One of my aims here will be to show that this "stylistic fault" in fact constitutes a powerful device that Caesar deploys masterfully to construct multiple layers of meaning and maintain a neutral narrative tone.

These developments in Caesarian studies invite us to reconsider critically the judgments of Cicero and Pollio. With regard to Caesar's style, it must be noticed that bare does not mean simple, and, in truth, Caesar is not simple at all. As von Albrecht, Gotoff, and Damon have shown, there is a "contradiction in Caesar's works between apparent artlessness and actual perfection";[9] Caesar in fact uses "a variety of sentence typologies" and "achieves great expressiveness through the use of varied and often subtle techniques";[10] and, as a result, "despite the clarity, despite the purity, Caesar is one of the most challenging Latin authors, particularly in the *Bellum Civile*."[11] With regard to Pollio's judgment concerning Caesar's inaccuracies, it must be taken into account that Pollio himself wrote an account of the civil war, that writers of historiography typically critiqued their predecessors as a means of constructing their own authority, and that Pollio generously indulged in such critiques, as his remarks against Sallust and Livy prove.[12] Hence, it is safe to believe that Pollio was at least

[8] Eden 1962: 85. [9] Von Albrecht 1989: 54–67.

[10] Gotoff 1984: 14–15: "Not only does a practical criticism of Caesar's composition demonstrate a variety of sentence typologies, but it makes clear that Caesar composed beyond the limit of a single sentence, no matter how complex." And p. 18: "Suffice it for now to say that if Caesar is still to be identified with the *genus humile*, that level of style must be expanded beyond the limitations imposed by, say, Cicero to include a composition that can be periodic, complex, and capable of great expressiveness through the use of varied and often subtle techniques."

[11] Damon 1994: 184–5.

[12] Pollio rebuked Sallust for his overly archaic style: "thus affirms A. Pollio, in the book in which he reproaches the works of Sallust for being overloaded with excessive striving for archaic vocabulary" (*Asinius Pollio, in libro quo Sallustii scripta reprehendit ut nimia priscorum verborum adfectatione oblita, ita tradit*, Suet. *Gramm.* 10.2); he also criticized Livy for his *patavinitas* (*Pollio reprendit in Livio Patavinitatem: licet omnia Italica pro Romanis habeam*, Quint. 1.5.57, cf. 8.1.3). Pollio, however, set out to be the *continuator Sallustii*: his *Historiae* begin from 60 BC, which is the point where Sallust's end (Zecchini 1982: 1281–6). The practice of criticizing previous and contemporary historians in order to establish one's own authority is as old as historiography. For instance, Herodotus criticizes Hecataeus and Thucydides criticizes Herodotus; cf. Marincola 1997: 218–19 and 236.

as concerned with expounding his own version of the civil war as with restoring the truth.

In short, if Caesar's "stylistic nudity is indeed a custom" (Kraus 2009: 164),[13] and if his subtle narrative techniques conceal a specific agenda, one can productively approach the *BC* by asking: how does Caesar use his acknowledged intellectual abilities to promulgate his version of the civil war? By what literary strategies does he construct his story? And how does his apparent artlessness support his ideology at the interface between the cultural and political contexts of his time? Close readings and contextualization of relevant passages help provide answers to these questions, proposing new ways to approach the style and content of the *BC*.

## OLD AND NEW APPROACHES

### *Intra- and inter-textuality*

In 1994, Cynthia Damon advocated a method of reading the *BC* that "aims at fashioning a net of memory and understanding by tying the knots which link episodes and characters that are found on the long strand of narrative."[14] I cannot think of a piece of secondary literature to which I am more indebted for the present work, since part of my aim is to reconstruct this "net of memory," by examining both the literary strategies that weave the web and its ideological implications. In this respect intratextuality and intertextuality, both understudied in Caesar, play a fundamental role in my analysis and call for a few preliminary observations.

At first sight the reader of the *BC* is struck by the repetition of key words and formulas. For instance, formulaic language closely connects the soldiers' adhesion to Caesar before crossing the Rubicon (1.7.8) and before crossing the Adriatic (3.6.1), thus aligning the army's with the people's support in his march through Italy and Greece. By this intratextual repetition Caesar signals his troops' unchanged loyalty and suggests that such loyalty extends from his soldiers to the other citizens. This intratextual manifestation of devotion to Caesar comes as a response to his request for support; and the language of this request finds intertextual parallels in Cicero's epistles. In short, both intratextuality and intertextuality

[13] Cf. Perrotta 1948: 7: "La semplicità di Cesare è, anzitutto, un dono naturale, ma è anche una conquista: l'eleganza cesariana mostra le tracce di un'elaborazione profonda."
[14] Damon 1994: 184–5.

contribute to the unfolding of a powerful subtext:[15] intratextuality invites the reader to connect the dots that shape Caesar's narrative, while intertextual analysis places the *BC* within larger discourses.

The text not only displays connections internally and between itself and specific passages of the *BG*; it also refers to broader *topoi*, which are negotiated and reshaped according to the narrator's specific needs. For instance, Caesar's uses of *luxuria* and *tardus* are embedded in a system of literary references, and the recurrence both of catch-words, like *innocentia*, *dignitas*, and *fortuna*, and of demagogical formulas, such as *libertatem defendere* and *pacem petere*, arises from the contemporary political-ideological debate, as Raaflaub has noted (1974: 227–39). As a participant in this debate Caesar changes its terms by coloring these expressions with nuances that help his cause. Through the appeal to ever-changeable codes of reference, therefore, Caesar simultaneously places the *BC* within the literary tradition and engages the contemporary political debate.

These linguistic links, which I argue lie at the core of the art of the *BC*, guide the readers' perception of the narrated events. Intratextuality, in fact, "is about how bits need to be read in the light of the other bits, but it is also about the bittiness of literature, its uncomfortable squareness-in-round-(w)holeness."[16] For instance, the study of *celeritas* in Chapter 1 below exemplifies how intratextual language invites the audience to see bits of Caesar's swiftness against bits of Pompey's. Recurring words and formulas also engage one's ability to negotiate meanings within the "bittiness of the *BC*." Caesar's art in fact does not consist in openly falsifying the narrated events so much as in directing the reader to infer the particular ethical points that he wants to make. This process places great demands upon readers and takes its strength precisely from the fact that it relies upon their participation, rather than upon their passive acceptance of any particular reconstruction.

Intertextuality provides the necessary tools for interpreting the *BC* by acknowledging in a similar way that the construction of meaning occurs at the encounter between the text and the reader.[17] This understanding proves that the much-debated problem of Caesar's "*déformation*" or "*Tendenz*" or "propaganda" is reductive and misleading. Comparing the *BC* with other sources can reveal untruths; but more than this, through literary devices like intertextuality the *BC* shapes our interaction with contemporary and

[15] Cf. Rossi 2000: 240, who notes that Caesar "weaves efficaciously into his narrative an important ideological and political subtext that informs the narrative of the *BC*."
[16] Sharrock and Morales 2000: 7.
[17] For this understanding of intertextuality, see Hinds 1998: 21; and Fowler 1997a: 24 = 2000: 127.

competing discourses.[18] In this sense one can see a relation between literacy and power, as Bowman and Woolf note: "when texts are available, the power of authors and exegetes to impose an 'authorised' reading is ranged against the power of readers to generate new interpretations."[19] Did Caesar lie in describing the Pompeians as cowards? Regardless of one's response to this question, it is hard to deny that Caesar's narrative is tainted with subjective traits suiting a specific agenda.[20] According to this agenda, the *BC* simultaneously takes part in the current debate about virtues and parallels Caesar's plans to outdo his enemies' *virtus* in statuary. As a result, one might expect more lies in a work of propaganda, as Collins has noted (1972: 942–9); and yet, by constructing a subtle net of references within the *BC* and outside it, Caesar often leaves the readers with a tendentious perception of events. The *BC* in fact is not a piece of propaganda, but a work of literature, and in literature allusions can count as political gestures and advance an ideological program.[21] In this respect, and in many others, style and content are inseparable.[22]

The dynamics of allusion also restore the *BC* to its historical context. In considering the age of Augustus, Zanker has illustrated the interplay between literature and images and provided a model for productive contextualization.[23] Caesar anticipates Augustus in many respects, including his plan to broadcast the same message through multiple media:[24] the diverse manifestations of his self-representation include literature, polemic *libelli*, orations, buildings and urban plans, minting coins and writing letters, and even his own physical appearance.[25] These strategies all participate in the same discourse, and each medium has a pivotal role in the

[18] Riggsby has successfully shown many ways by which the *BG* interacts with contemporary discourses (2006: 1–5 and *passim*).

[19] Bowman and Woolf 1994: 7.

[20] Barwick 1951 uses the term *Tendenz* to indicate the ideology that colors Caesar's narrative in the *BC*, and Collins 1972: 943 uses *tendance* with a similar meaning, but he also considers Caesar's writings (in particular the *BC*) as "propaganda."

[21] Perrotta rightly states that the political nature of the *Commentarii* is undeniable, "ma ammettere tutto questo, non vuol dire considerare i *Commentarii* un'opera di propaganda politica" (1948: 12). For the political value of some intertextual allusions, see Barchiesi 2001: 149.

[22] On the ideological implications of intertextuality and historiography, Clauss observes that, once "we see Catiline in Hannibal in Livy's account, it becomes difficult afterwards not to see Hannibal in Catiline in Sallust's narrative" (1997: 182). The same applies to Pompey and Ariovistus, or to the treacherous and cruel Gauls and the Pompeians (chapters three and five). For similar observations, see too O'Gorman 2009: 238–9: "'being' Hannibal for Cicero constituted part of a Roman's learning how to 'be' Roman."

[23] Zanker, original 1987, translated into English in 1988. The age of Augustus sees more contributions of this type than the end of the Republic, e.g. Nicolet 1988; Raaflaub and Toher 1990; and Galinsky 1996.

[24] Cf. Nousek 2008: 290–307. [25] Kraus 2005: 104–15.

construction of his public persona. Contextualization then entails both considering the *BC* within its cultural and political milieu and inquiring into its specific contribution to Caesar's program of self-fashioning.

The *BG* is critical for contextualizing the *BC*. As Henderson notes, in fact, Caesar creates a sense of continuity between the two *Commentarii*: his "tenacious construction" establishes such a common system of referentiality across the two works that "in this poetics, there will be no holding the boundary between Gaul and Italy, which Caesar and his text must cross and re-cross as they progress their work."[26] One corollary of this is that the *BG* sets the generic expectations for the *BC*. This must have been the case for Caesar's immediate audience no less than it is for us; as things now stand, both Caesar's effort at establishing such generic expectations for his contemporaries and our scattered grasp of the genre of the *Commentarii* before Caesar invite one to read the *BC* against the *BG*.[27] Here again literary creation is only part of Caesar's broader plan for self-fashioning: for instance, in 48–47 BC Caesar established continuity between the two wars also by consistently minting coins representing his conquest of Gaul, a convenient means to celebrate his military might in connection with (and without mentioning) the civil war.[28]

### *Rhetoric, semantic analysis, and narratology*

"If Caesar had had the time to be exclusively in the courts, no other Roman would be spoken of in comparison with Cicero" (*C. vero Caesar si foro tantum vacasset, non alius ex nostris contra Ciceronem nominaretur*, Quint. 10.114; cf. Suet. *DJ* 55.2).[29] Given that Caesar was one of the finest orators of his time, and given scholars' recent interest in the rhetorical character of Latin historiography, it is surprising how little attention the literary and rhetorical qualities of the *Commentarii* have received. Caesar, in fact, upholds his version of the war through refined rhetorical strategies. Oratorical devices shape the micro- and the macro-structure of the *BC*: analysis of word choice, sentence construction, figures of speech, and use of *clausulae* will be instrumental for each chapter of this study, as will close readings of relevant passages.[30] Forensic strategies of characterization also

[26] Henderson 1998: 57. [27] For the genre, date, and composition of the *BC*, see Appendix 2.
[28] *RRC* 452; cf. 448.2a and Sear 1998: 9–10.
[29] Cicero expresses a similar judgment: *de Caesare . . . iudico . . . illum omnium fere oratorum Latine loqui elegantissime* (*Brut.* 252). Cf. Leeman 2001: 97–110.
[30] On the elegant style of Caesar's speeches, see Deichgräber, whose analysis of the fragments shows Caesar's care in choosing words and *clausulae* (1950: 112–23).

inform the grand rhetoric of the *BC*: on the one hand, Caesar smears the Pompeians in a manner typical of oratory, casting them as stupid (Chapter 1 below), unrestrained (Chapter 2), disloyal (Chapter 3), luxurious and cruel (Chapter 5); and on the other, the mechanisms of oratory help him to show which citizens deserve to be a part of the Roman community and which do not.

In the *De Analogia*, Caesar affirms that the choice of words is the foundation of eloquence (*verborum dilectum originem esse eloquentiae*, Cic. *Brut.* 252). Accordingly, his vocabulary choices can reveal another aspect of the *BC*'s art. Caesar attributes the same words to his own and to the enemy's side, attaching to them now a positive and now a negative connotation: he shows how speed in a general can be a virtue or a vice; he juxtaposes conflicting senses of the same word, such as *pudor* or *misericordia*, to demonstrate how his understanding differs from the enemy's; he appropriates some catch-words to which Pompeian propaganda also attempted to lay claim, such as *pax* and *ius*; he uses *iusiurandum* and *sacramentum* in a technical sense to mark Pompeians as Gauls and to show how both differ from himself; and he stretches the meaning of expressions like *in amicitia manere* to cast his conduct as more acceptable in Roman terms.

Caesar's choices regarding the narrator and the variety of focalizations are not less meaningful. Toward the beginning of the *BC*, the authority of the narrator is built up by different voices: the citizens of Brundisium confirm what he states at 1.5; the senators' maltreatment of Caesar justifies his concern and disgust; and both Auximates and the Pompeian soldiers help him to identify Caesar with Rome (1.13.1 and 3.31.4). The cooperation between the narrator and the general creates multiple possibilities for magnifying the authority of the former and the mastery of the latter: through Curio the narrator supports the general (2.32 and 2.42), and through his response to Lentulus the general builds up the narrator's authority (1.22); similarly, at Dyrrachium the narrator's appeals to *fortuna* absolve the general by describing both the soldiers' panic and Pompey's demerits.

According to Grethlein and Rengakos, in fact, narratology constitutes a "heuristic tool for interpretation" to "present observations which, though without claim on objectivity, are sufficiently formal to enrich various readings."[31] Similarly, de Jong speaks of an approach to narrative which concentrates on "the *formal devices within a text* which authors employ to enchant or persuade their audiences" (2004c: xii). Indeed, narratological

[31] Grethlein and Rengakos 2009: 3. Grethlein and Rengakos specify that, "in combination with other approaches, narratology can help to elucidate the *content of the form*, more specifically the meaning generated by narrative structures, and thereby deepen our understanding of ancient texts" (p. 11).

readings of Thucydides, Xenophon, and Livy, to cite a few examples, have enriched our understanding of these authors: like Thucydides, Caesar uses inferred motivation for characterization; like Xenophon, he chooses an unintrusive narrator, who is kept distinguished from the general; and like Caesar, Livy alternates uses of internal focalization to play with different levels of knowledge.[32] Often in the *BC*, the reader's perception of the events is guided by shifting points of view: at Ilerda the change of focalization from one army to the other portrays the Pompeians as naïve and shortsighted; focalization through Cato misleads one's impression both of the status of the war and of the Pompeians' morale; and later Caesar's and Pompey's conduct (good and bad) is reported "objectively" in the Pompeians' words. Thus focalization through the enemies' eyes contributes to their caricature and corroborates the bond between Caesar and Rome.

The plot construction also alters the meaning of key episodes. In the *BC* Caesar addresses his soldiers *before* crossing the Rubicon (without even mentioning the Rubicon), thereby presenting his (concealed) decision to march on Rome as a response to the soldiers' will (1.7);[33] conversely, Pompey addresses his soldiers a long time after Dyrrachium, and the reworked chronology transforms his triumphant words into a boast.

Altogether the *BC* displays a wide array of literary devices, which weave a complex plot, color one's perception of the narrative, and, upon scrutiny, unveil both Caesar's ideology and his stylistic skills. Two artificial divisions which have hindered the understanding of the *BC* need therefore to be revisited: one division separated Caesar the writer from the orator, intellectual, politician and general, and the other separated the work's style and content. As a work of literature, however, the *BC* is filled with layers of implications: to the several facets of Caesar's personality correspond both the various meanings of the *BC* and the various literary devices which participate in constructing such meanings.

## OVERVIEW

Chapter 1, "The swift and the slow: Caesar's art of characterization," offers an introduction to Caesar's narrative strategies through the study of *celeritas*, a term which is often considered a specifically Caesarian trait. Seemingly

[32] On Thucydides, see Hornblower 1994: 131–66 and Rood 2004a; on Xenophon, see Gray 2004: 377–88; on Livy, see Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 2009: 527–54; for Caesar, see Kraus' narratological case study of the battle of Massilia (2007a: 371–8).

[33] Similarly, in the *BG* Caesar uses geography and a rhetorical rearrangement of space, as demonstrated by Krebs 2006: 111–36.